When we study TMEA’s history, we begin to imagine what life must have been like for teachers and students so many decades ago. How did programs survive during the depths of the Great Depression? How did teachers and students leave their homes for school each day amid their fear of a mainland attack or when terrified by the polio epidemic, which hit Texas harder than any other state? What was it like when teachers and students were excluded from our activities simply because they weren’t white?

In the TMEA archives, you won’t find detailed accounts responding to these more emotional questions. Our minutes and magazine articles offer mostly a business-centered perspective. Despite the complex challenges of the time—while the country was united and divided—the work of our association continued.

1940s: Growth Interrupted

Last month, our historical reflections ended in 1940, with music education in Texas taking a step forward as the state began furnishing music textbooks to public school students. With the recent addition of choral educators, TMEA had grown to 580 members. Also significant on our growth chart was the 1940 State Board election of the first paid Secretary-Treasurer of our association, Charles Eskridge, for a salary of $25/month. At the time, the average annual salary for Texas teachers was $1,079.

The association was also moving forward with more specified instruction at the annual clinic/convention. Teachers attended drum and drum major clinics. In the following years, clinics offered instruction on individual band and orchestra instruments.

At the 1941 convention in Waco, 362 members attended and 1,200 students participated. At a Board meeting during the convention, they decided to purchase Texas Music Educator. This made TMEA sole owner of its official publication. Jack Mahan, state publicity chair at the time, was designated as editor while Secretary-Treasurer Charles Eskridge handled the business manager duties.

While there had been rumblings in the past, in 1941 there was a greater push by superintendents to limit Texas participation in band contests. They had growing concern over the amount of funding and travel required to attend not only regional but also national contests. Superintendents were surveyed and they overwhelmingly expressed dissatisfaction over the current model. Some even called for elimination of all contests. This would be the starting point leading to the UIL taking over music contests for the state (learn more about how contests fit into our history in Executive Director Robert Floyd’s column on page 8).

The association’s progress mostly came to a halt after the U.S. entered World War II. In the February 1942 magazine that immediately preceded the convention, Editor Jack Mahan appealed to members not to become hermits, driven by their fears. “More than ever before, in the history of our Association, it is important that each and everyone of us do all in our power to cooperate. For every conventional demoralizing excuse that we can conceive of, there are ten-fold reasons for our presence . . . Unity of thought and action is the only salvation to our problems today . . . Cast our
fears and thus eliminate all of the undesirable excuses. Make only those excuses that will help to broaden, rather than narrow, one’s scope. We must think high to rise, think big to grow.” Despite his appeal, the Galveston event saw a noticeable shortage of students, and member attendance had dropped to 191.

Even with those small numbers, members still conducted business, adopting a new constitution that would place three administrators on each region contest committee, along with three music educators representing band, orchestra, and choir. Members hoped this involvement would convince administrators the contest situation was improving. However, by the time the new structure was in place and problems were waning, contests themselves were halted because of the war. Travel was restricted and other expenses were curtailed in support of the war effort.

This was also a time of multiple shifts in TMEA leadership, as those at home filled positions left by those going to war.

In the Shadow of the War

Now more than ever, we must look to music as the yardstick of civilization.

Two months after the U.S. had entered World War II in response to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, TMEA President Lyle Skinner and Secretary Charles Eskridge entreated the membership to continue their work and, through music, foster unity. The following was printed in the February 1942 Texas Music Educator:

DEDICATION
UNITY THROUGH MUSIC

In the early stages of our national emergency a popular theme was, “unity for defense”. Presently our theme is, “unity for victory”. Not too long, we hope, “unity for peace” will be our theme.

Good music is an exacting taskmaster—insatiable in its demands. These lessons are directly applicable to our national well-being. For, demobilization of music and the arts is incongruous with mobilization of arms. Too long now our citizenry has insisted on FORTISSIMO RIGHTS and PIANISSIMO RESPONSIBILITIES. Now, more than ever, we must look to music as the yardstick of civilization.

While our enemies hold their war clinics, and while we are engaged in a bitter contest between liberty and tyranny, let us now, more than ever turn to our clinics and contests for inherent lessons in unity. For here we may learn to build strength out of weakness, discipline out of disorder, and victory out of defeat which may one day be the deciding factor in the fate of a nation.

With so many TMEA officers serving in the armed forces and with travel and funding restrictions, TMEA did not hold conventions from 1943 to 1945. At their April 1943 meeting, the Board appointed D.O. Wiley to serve as Secretary-Treasurer (Wiley would continue in that capacity for another 20 years). While the typical business of the association was on hold, the Board initiated a drive to increase membership of elementary teachers as part of the Vocal Division. They also established the following policies:

• TMEA member schools should schedule Victory Concerts to aid in the sale of war bonds and stamps.
• Music instructors not in the armed forces should offer part-time support to nearby schools whose leaders were at war.
• Instructors should standardize marching instruction for bands to conform to the U.S. Infantry Drill Regulations.
• Local festivals and programs would replace regional, state, and national events to build up communities’ perception of the value of music (thus eliminating travel).
• The annual clinic/convention would be suspended for economic reasons.
• TMEA would maintain contact with members through regional meetings.
• TMEA would continue publishing, as financially possible, the member publication in some form.
Celebrating TMEA’s Centennial

Victory Concerts Raise Millions

TMEA launched a series of concerts that proved a great stimulus in the sale of war bonds. TMEA leaders and school administrators prevailed upon Texas Governor Coke R. Stevenson, who issued a proclamation designating eight dates in 1942–1943 for these concerts to be held across the state.

As early as the first of those eight dates, the success of the initiative was clear. Across Texas, $118,415 worth of war stamps and bonds had been sold at these first concerts. After the fourth concert date, U.S. Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Jr., wrote the following to the school administrators and music educators of Texas:

Through the Victory Concerts, your schools have given significant financial assistance to the worldwide offensive now being waged by our country and its allies. The $1,250,000 invested in War Savings Bonds and Stamps would pay for 2 heavy bombers, 2 medium bombers, 2 pursuit ships, and 2 medium tanks. Less concrete, but also of importance, is the contribution which these concerts have undoubtedly made in building morale and providing inspiration through good music.

It is my sincere hope that your remaining four concerts will be even more successful than the first, and that they will be further distinguished by the participation of all schools that have not yet joined in this effort.

Will you express to all those who have had part in this worthwhile project my deep appreciation of their patriotic understanding and support of the War Savings Program.

At the May 1943 conclusion of these events, almost $3 million in all had been raised. Because of wartime travel restrictions, the association had very little activity through 1943–1945 aside from the Victory Concerts. There were yearly Board meetings, but little could be accomplished. In just four years, membership had dropped from 580 to 164.

Without enough funds, TMEA couldn’t continue publishing Texas Music Educator. Occasional news sheets were distributed by D.O. Wiley, and for about five years, TMEA bought space for its news in Southwestern Musician (the official journal of Texas Music Teachers Association).

“Living in the United States with a median income during World War II meant earning about $2,000 a year. Despite the war’s hardships, 134 million Americans were asked to purchase war bonds to help fund the war. Starting at 10 cents each, stamps allowed people at any income level to be part of the effort. If you filled up a stamp album, you could turn it in for a bond.

Ultimately, more than 85 million Americans—half the population—purchased bonds totaling $185.7 billion.”

—From “Victory Concert at R.S. High School,” April 30, 1943, The Texas Mohair Weekly and the Rocksprings Record
Back to Business

With the war’s end in September 1945, music programs started becoming more active, and by 1946, war-related restrictions were being relaxed or lifted entirely. With very little planning time, TMEA revived the annual clinic/convention in Waco. Mahan recalled, “It was no easy matter to provide such facilities as hotels and eating places, but the hardships were gladly accepted.” TMEA State Band Chair Alto Tatum reflected on the return of the convention saying, “There was a geniality in the air that was refreshing and invigorating to all. Everyone smiled, everyone shook hands; and during the entire convention one always found groups talking, laughing, and swapping professional secrets.”

At this 1946 event, band, orchestra, and choral students returned to participate in All-State groups.

In 1947, the clinic/convention moved to Galveston, and the majority of the now 427 members attended. There were five All-State groups: two bands, two choirs, and one orchestra. This convention was also the first to extend to Wednesday, offering another half day to the previous format. At this event, the membership voted to recognize the UIL as the official channel through which music competition festivals be held.

TMEA continued to work with the State Department of Education, and in 1948, the state designated that music courses offered in high school, where affiliation and sufficient stress are placed on the work, now allow students one full credit per school year toward graduation or college entrance. Two years later, TMEA held a combined conference with university officials and public school administrators to study proposals on certification, accreditation, and preparation of music teachers.

Our organization evolved further when in 1950, the membership finally voted to add an Elementary Division set up in the same manner as Band, Orchestra, and Vocal (this same motion had failed three years prior, with 70 voting against and 26 for). This 1950 vote established the Elementary Division for “an experimental period.” They would have an elementary chairman and 10 elementary regional chairmen. Then TMEA President L.H. Buckner wrote, “This is certainly a step forward and will help our overall music program. We should all help and encourage our elementary music programs to grow and prosper, because after all, this is where we lay the foundation for our high school students.”

The final expansion of TMEA Divisions to date came in 1951 with the addition of our College Division. Its inaugural Chair, Clarence J. Best, stated this new division’s purpose as, “To be helpful without interfering with the established Divisions; to attempt to learn from the other Divisions what the colleges and universities of Texas can do to help the overall program of music education in Texas; to help, if possible, to adjust the college curriculums so that they can be of maximum worth to the established program in Texas, and to lend a helping hand wherever possible.”

The 1950s were marked by contest rule changes, refinements in our convention format, constitutional revisions, and modifications of the Texas Music Festival held during the State Fair. In the mid ’50s, TMEA began focusing on public relations efforts. By 1955, membership had grown to 1,124, nearly doubling in just five years. In 1959, D.O. Wiley became TMEA’s first full-time Executive Secretary for an annual salary of $2,500. At the same time TMEA purchased from Wiley the rights, printing machinery, and title to Southwestern Musician combined with Texas Music Educator for $4,000.

TMEA Denies Membership

Within the eight pages of the February 14, 1948 general membership meeting minutes are four short lines of text documenting a moment in our association’s history that appears to have transpired without debate.

The meeting was called to order, and each committee was asked to offer its report. The first report was by the Constitutional Committee, offered by Alto Tatum (1946–1947 State Band Chair). The minutes read:

This committee asked that the word "white" be inserted in Article 1, Section 2, Letter A following the first word of the paragraph and in the same Article and Section, Letter B following the first word. Mr. Tatum’s motion was seconded and carried.

With the passing of that motion, TMEA membership became limited to “any white person engaged in music education” and to “any white student of music or music lover.”

Examining U.S. history at that time, especially of the south, can help illuminate the context surrounding this 1948 change. However, it’s the absence of information in our minutes that seems to tell this story more clearly. Typically, TMEA’s minutes from this era offer extensive detail on motions that involved any discussion. Pages of minutes describe proposals and opinions on contest rule development, convention locations, organization finances, and more. In this case, however, no discussion is noted. A motion was made, seconded, and passed, making TMEA a whites-only professional association.

Four years later, the Supreme Court’s 1954 Brown v. Board of Education decision declared unconstitutional any state laws establishing racial segregation in public schools. While this ruling didn’t on its own end school segregation, it did fuel...
the civil rights movement that had been strengthening since the end of World War II. In TMEA’s records, we find no commentary at that time about the court’s decision or any discussion about its possible effects.

In February 1956, the TMEA Executive Board discussed integrating its educational meetings (not membership), but those seven board members decided to do nothing of the sort until Texas State Teachers Association did (the Board had been working to create an alignment with TSTA).

Our records’ next mention of race is from three years later at a February 1959 TMEA State Board meeting. Region Chair Cloys Webb offered a resolution on behalf of Region 11, recommending that TMEA amend any section of the constitution relating to the race of its members or participants in activities. Unlike in 1948, these minutes indicate that considerable discussion on the matter occurred, some of which “was a bit heated.” Ultimately, the resolution failed, as State Board members again hinged their opinions on TSTA’s position. From the minutes: “Immediate Past-President Dr. Patrick pointed out that a previous Board had decided that it would not be well for TMEA to integrate until TSTA first integrated. It was also pointed out that the Supreme Court had not ruled yet that private organizations have to integrate.”

While they still resisted integrating membership, a 1962 State Board vote allowed “any student of a TMEA member” to participate in All-State, thus integrating these ensembles.

The following year, TMEA members voted in a wholesale revision of their constitution, and in that version, the articles of membership no longer referenced race. However, neither the preceding board meeting minutes nor the magazine in which this version was published for review mention this significant membership change. Integration seems to have been quietly ushered in.

And while changes in institutional policies aren’t immediately reflected in society, 1963 remains significant as the end of TMEA’s 15-year constitutionally mandated segregation of membership.

**Texans’ Fierce Independence Stirs Controversy**

The ’40s and ’50s are marked by the beginning of a conflict that occupied the time and attention of TMEA leaders for many years.

Unlike other music educator groups, TMEA’s roots were independently planted in our state. Around the nation, state music educator associations were initially founded as state affiliates of the Music Educators National Conference (now National Association for Music Education).

The first mention in our records of this national organization is in 1938, when the TMEA Board of Directors decided to take up a “cooperative affiliation” with MENC. However, there is no information suggesting this materialized until 1947 when a vote passed that resulted in these TMEA membership options:

**Option I:** to pay for full membership in TMEA and MENC.

**Option II:** to pay full TMEA dues and partial MENC dues to be an MENC “associate member.”

**Option III:** to pay only TMEA dues and not be an MENC member.

None of these membership options were ever written into our constitution—they simply showed up as check box options on the membership form submitted with each member’s dues.

MENC leaders continued to appeal—or demand—that our constitution be revised and that all our members should be MENC members. While some TMEA leaders favored this stronger relationship with MENC, it’s not surprising that many proud Texans in our homegrown association weren’t inclined to relegate their independence.

In 1958, the State Board voted down a motion to eliminate Option III (TMEA-only membership), so that change wasn’t passed along to the general membership meeting for a vote. TMEA continued to offer these three membership options, and the issue of TMEA’s noncompliance with MENC’s membership requirements would continue to escalate until its final end in the mid ’70s.

Next month will include more detail on this struggle between collaboration and autonomy.

**Acknowledgements**

This article is based on a variety of historical documents housed in the TMEA archives, including meeting minutes and magazines. Two sources have been particularly helpful and are the foundation of much of this presentation: TMEA Past-President Jack Mahan’s 1949 master’s thesis and Ross Grant’s 1989 doctoral dissertation.