As we examine two more decades in TMEA’s history, it becomes more meaningful when we do so through the lens of our nation’s history—this was the era of the Vietnam War, civil rights protests, the assassinations of JFK and MLK, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Moon landing, women’s and gay rights, the Watergate scandal and resignation of President Nixon, the energy crisis, and much more. Perhaps our association’s own struggle between state independence and national unification was influenced by the tenor of the time.

TMEA in the 1960s

The 1960s were a time of change in music education, in our staff, constitution, and convention. It was also in this decade that TMEA became serious about our need to impact the public’s perception of public school music education.

Some issues from our past continued into the ‘60s. School administrator concerns of the ‘40s that led to UIL running music contests resurfaced in 1960 when certain administrators attempted to curtail or even eliminate student performers from our convention. Magazine editor D.O. Wiley wrote in response:

The inspiration that is generated at our clinics seems to us to have almost miraculous results over a long period of years. Some 25 years ago, when we attempted our first statewide clinic, our music program, as a whole, was very ordinary, if not rather shoddy. With the coming of the clinics, literally hundreds of youngsters began to blossom. It would be hard for us to believe that the clinics, and the competition-festivals that were sponsored by our association for lo these many years, did not contribute to the inspiration of, and largely develop, our fine school music programs.

Despite the objections, our tradition continued, as TMEA was able to convince administrators of the value and remind them that three years before, we had decreased student participation from 2,000 to only 750. (Today we welcome over 4,000 students to perform at our convention.)

In the early 1960s, D.O. Wiley stepped down as our Executive Secretary following 20 years of service, and in 1963, the Executive Board hired Joe Lenzo. He was Texas Choral Directors Association Executive Director at the time and agreed to take on the role for an annual salary of $8,000. Lenzo would be the fourth of only six executives to serve TMEA in its 100 years, and unlike all others in that job to date, Lenzo had not served as a TMEA President.

Throughout the ’60s TMEA members were called on to develop curriculum guides for teaching music in public schools. These would be adopted and distributed by TEA. TMEA leaders looked to this project to strengthen the cause for inclusion of music education credits in more college entrance plans and to give unmusical administrators guidance in setting up and evaluating their school music programs. The method by which the study was conducted was thought to be quite innovative, given it departed from the routine of committee meetings. These guides that were released in mid ’60s demonstrated the importance of continuous music education from kindergarten through twelfth grade.

The early ‘60s also saw the membership’s adoption of a completely revised constitution. This 1963 revision brought with it the end of a 15-year constitutional limitation of membership to whites only (for more detail on this event in our history, read the installment of this series in the October issue).

Music’s Role in Healing a Nation

Those who are old enough to remember November 22, 1963, can tell you exactly where they were when they learned President Kennedy had been assassinated. Even those of us without a direct recollection have some sense of the profound sorrow that followed this event. And in the midst of our grief, we turned to music.

Two days following the assassination of his friend, Leonard Bernstein led the New York Philharmonic in a performance of Mahler’s Second Symphony—The Resurrection—in tribute to the memory of the president. Bernstein then delivered these words we have turned to in the face of subsequent national tragedies:

We musicians, like everyone else, are numb with sorrow at this murder, and with rage at the senselessness of the crime.
But this sorrow and rage will not inflame us to seek retribution; rather they will inflame our art. Our music will never again be quite the same. This will be our reply to violence: to make music more intensely, more beautifully, more devotedly than ever before. And with each note we will honor the spirit of John Kennedy, commemorate his courage, and reaffirm his faith in the Triumph of the Mind.

In his January 1964 column, Joe Lenzo responded to this national tragedy and to Kennedy’s influence by challenging Texas music educators:

During our former President’s shortened term of office, our country suffered a rebirth of the spirit of national pride which has been characteristic of the growth of our democratic independence. Throughout the world our national image has regained a great deal of its lost prestige. This came about because of the emphasis placed on the belief in the capabilities and future of our young people. This was not left to blind faith, rather an active leadership in the promotion and improvement of the total educational program.

I believe that future historians will find this emphasis one of, if not the most significant action, during the recent administration. This total educational program is well under way. Continual nourishment of it is a challenge to all American educators.

How does it affect us as music educators? Giving every child a musical background is not a new thesis. Nowhere in the world is music considered a frill or extracurricular except where we, as music educators, have failed to do our job.

Teaching all pupils some music understanding is no more difficult than teaching all pupils math, science, or any other academic study, but it does call for more than just a good organizational director—it calls for good overall music teacher. Developing a good overall music program in any school or school system is not an overnight job. It takes time and preparation, but is it not what we are being paid to do?

Promoting Music Education

In the early ’60s, TMEA worked to elevate exposure of music programs and music in general. The State Fair of Texas offered a perfect venue to go big! For several years, TMEA sponsored the Texas Music Festival featuring bands, orchestras, and choruses. In 1961, over 25,000 attended the grand finale that featured thousands of musicians and was broadcast on multiple TV stations. To expand interest and coverage, TMEA presented awards to well-known individuals in the music industry. Across the years, recipients included Richard Rogers, Henry Mancini, Herb Alpert, and Meredith Wilson, composer of The Music Man.

As state policy makers were proposing changes that would impact our teachers and students, TMEA increased its advocacy for music education. While TMEA looked to members to take up the cause, officers decided to use a surplus of cash to fund a structured public relations campaign. Their aim was to increase the public’s understanding and appreciation of school music education.
Celebrating TMEA’s Centennial

TMEA’s PR Committee wanted to educate the general public on the need for school music, reeducate school administrators and school boards on the value of music, and disseminate information on the value and function of TMEA. The committee chair wrote, “The ultimate responsibility for any opinions formed concerning music education is inevitably that of the individual music educator. His daily relationships and performance will ultimately determine the opinion his community has formed of music education as a whole, not just of him.”

TMEA at 50 Years

TMEA celebrated its Golden Anniversary in 1974. Given our current centennial commemoration, that year might seem puzzling. Understand though that TMEA leaders had declared the 1924 formation of Texas Band Teachers Association as the beginning of our association. After the dust settled on our 50th observance, they revised that designation to be the 1920 formation of Texas Bandmasters Association (since that association was the predecessor association of TBTA).

In February 1974, TMEA Past-President and UIL State Director of Music Nelson Patrick wrote a reflection on TMEA’s 50 years:

The 1974 TMEA anniversary convention stands out as a symbol closing a frontier era in Texas music education. At the same time, it is symbolic of a pioneering spirit in continuum as we chart our way through the maze of economic, educational, and social changes of today. Just as music in the schools came about following changes in our social institutions after World War I, we are faced with similar problems today. The Vietnam War, social transitions of the sixties, and now economic adjustments resulting from the energy crisis have catapulted us into a new era. What happens to music education depends upon how well we resolve these problems as they arise.

He went on to highlight the continued struggle for an all-inclusive music education:

What about those who are not receiving music? What do we do to encourage more participation in orchestra and string instruction? Through various devices, most states are bringing music to a much higher percent of their school children than we. What are our plans to resolve these problems? Our lifestyles are being changed daily by social readjustments, new values, and economic fluctuations. This might well be the time for us to put music education on a broader music foundation instead of being adjunct to some other activity, as is so often the case. Whatever the next fifty years might hold for us, there is no doubt that we can and will solve whatever problems arise with the same pioneering spirit that prevailed in 1924. Our 50th anniversary then can symbolize the opening of a new frontier and the acceptance of new challenges without self-imposed limitations.

May 1967 Southwestern Musician Combined with the Texas Music Educator

TMEA promoted Texas Music Education Week to increase public awareness and support for music education. This week, declared by Governor John Connally, became the launching point of a multiyear public relations program that required the donation of tens of thousands of dollars in advertising time and space. The extensive PR program included education about the different functions of UIL and TMEA and magazine articles and clinics on public relations. Newspapers, radio and television stations, and outdoor advertising carried our message.

In 1968, Texas Music Education Week featured billboards, radio and TV spots with messages from German-American pianist, composer, arranger, and conductor André Previn. That year, the PR firm offered clinics at our convention to help attendees learn how to do more work locally to support this campaign.

This yet-unmatched PR campaign came to a close when the Executive Board reported that the surplus funding had been depleted. As opposed to the 1966 Board, this group of leaders faced a deficit in funds to support the now expanded offerings for members at the convention and beyond. While they discussed increasing membership dues to $10 (unchanged since 1957), they ultimately decided to increase convention fees from $5 to $7.50, hoping that would be enough.

May 1967 Southwestern Musician Combined with the Texas Music Educator

Set your goals high—set your standards high—your quest should be excellence in music education. Nothing less will be worthy of the Texas Music Educators Association.

—from Bill Cormack’s final column as TMEA President, in which he pointed out that he was the first president of TMEA’s next 50 years.
Independence or National Unity?

Most state music educators associations were founded as affiliates of the national association—Music Educators National Conference (renamed to National Association for Music Educators). But, like proud and independent Texans, our founders established our association on their own.

Almost 20 years after the start of our association, TMEA leaders decided on a cooperative affiliation with MENC; however, our constitution wasn’t amended to legitimize that relationship. In 1947, TMEA members voted to join actively with MENC. While still not in our constitution, this vote resulted in three options for TMEA members paying their dues. They could also pay full MENC dues ($7) or partial MENC dues ($5), or they could choose Option III, TMEA membership only ($4).

In 1948, MENC accepted TMEA as an affiliate “subject to completion of technical requirements.” They expected TMEA to amend its constitution to require members to also be active members in MENC (the standard for other state affiliates).

Throughout the ’40s and ’50s, MENC employed more of a soft-sell approach, encouraging TMEA to amend its constitution in compliance with MENC policy. While some TMEA members always believed we should have a national affiliation, during this time, a general anti-MENC sentiment was growing in Texas. They don’t rubber-stamp in Texas. Texans are fiercely independent and have a voice. The grassroots people run our association.

In 1966, MENC granted TMEA a three-year extension during which leaders were to convince our members of the mutual benefit of unification. But after Ohio’s MEA asked MENC for the same deal that Texas was getting—MENC’s approach became much more hard-lined. Their leaders sternly warned TMEA that our constitution violated our affiliated status. Our leaders continued to defy those warnings by not bringing a constitutional change to the membership.

After years of heated communications, the TMEA Board finally agreed to have its members vote on unification with MENC at the 1973 general membership meeting. The constitutional change was communicated in advance, and TMEA leaders avoided making specific recommendations to the members, other than encouraging them to be informed so they could make their own decision.

TMEA invited MENC leaders to be present at this meeting for the vote. TMEA President J.R. McEntyre recalled:

We invited all the MENC National Executive Board people to come speak at the TMEA convention general session. They did talk, and talked at the division meetings also, trying to persuade everyone to unify. This was also the time when we voted, and the place was packed! It was also packed because there was also going to be a vote regarding the TMEA 50th anniversary celebration extravaganza. This event had been planned, brainstormed, and promoted to gigantic proportions, to the extent that many members had serious reservations about the whole idea. So, here were the two big agenda items to be voted upon. First the membership voted soundly against the anniversary plans. Understand now, that the MENC people were all seated up on the platform, watching the membership ‘zap’ the TMEA executive committee . . . I mean ‘destroy us!’ Then the next thing to vote on was MENC unification. The motion was drastically voted down. So, the MENC people saw, firsthand, that ‘they don’t rubber-stamp in Texas.’ Texans are fiercely independent and have a voice. The grassroots people run our association. It was not long before MENC finally shut us off.

Soon after that 1973 convention, MENC leadership voted to suspend TMEA’s affiliation as of June 1974, with a complete revocation scheduled for June 1975 (again, unless TMEA could satisfy the constitutional requirements of full unification of dues). Some in TMEA continued to appeal to the membership to unify, believing that we needed a national voice and should have influence over national policy. Yet, many remained skeptical and didn’t believe MENC and TMEA’s philosophies aligned (there was a general belief that MENC focused mostly on college-level issues and TMEA was about the daily work of music educators in the field). In 1974, the issue was brought before TMEA’s general membership for a second vote. The results were 517 votes against unification and 265 votes for it.

In 1974, MENC President Charles Benner reflected on TMEA’s reluctance to fully unify:

I think that TMEA had experienced a great amount of growth in instrumental music, really ever since World War II, due to the leadership, aggressiveness, and imagination of their teachers. Texas responded to what has been regarded as a ‘Texas manner’—it was big! It was big, big, big! So I think it was a time when TMEA grew to the extent that it felt it was probably ‘bigger’ than MENC. If MENC wanted to join TMEA, then maybe it should, but Texas was too big, its conventions were too big, and there was too much money down there for TMEA to feel the need to affiliate with a national organization.

After it was clear that unification was not in TMEA’s future, work began to set up TMEC, a separate Texas affiliate of MENC. And while the road to setting up this new organization was bumpy, TMEA leaders worked diligently with MENC to ensure the formation of this affiliate. Ultimately, a constitution was adopted and approved in 1975.
TMEA Members Elect Their First Female President

It was 1975—the second wave of the feminist movement was gaining ground—and TMEA members elected their first female President-Elect, Barbara Eads. While she had previously served as TMEA State Orchestra Chair, Eads’s teaching experience included K–12, band, choir, orchestra, drum and bugle corps, and college courses, as well as fine arts administration. Following the 1976 convention, where she served as President, she reflected:

_There were only two major items which might color our memories of a successful meeting—one, the heat and lack of air conditioning in the convention center, and two the housing situation. Although we rejoice in the steady growth of membership and attendance at the convention, TMEA must also suffer some of the consequences that go along with growing pains._

Eads would be the first of nine female presidents in our 100-year history.

In October 1978, TMEA suffered the sudden death of Executive Secretary Joe Lenzo. The Executive Board had to fill in through the 1979 convention, and Dennis Bros. Printers, the 64-year publisher of our association magazine, worked beyond their scope to ensure we continued mailing a magazine in the absence of its editor.

With the position now vacant, the Executive Board began evaluating the location of our TMEA office and the hiring of a new Executive Secretary. Seven months after Lenzo’s death, in May 1979, they hired TMEA Past-President Bill Cormack to fill the role. In June, the Board moved the office to Austin to be more accessible to the membership and to have better communications with UIL, TEA, and state governmental agencies.

Immediately after being hired, Cormack led a fight against legislation that threatened the very existence of fine arts in the state curriculum. In his first column as magazine editor, he reported how, with grassroots support, House Bill 921 didn’t pass (for more details on TMEA’s work in influencing state policy, read the Executive Director’s Notes on page 8).

Looking to the Future

With a half-century in our past, TMEA leaders decided to explore the direction of music education in Texas to help bring the future into focus. Through a formal symposium, TMEA would take a philosophical look at itself and develop a plan of action to move forward with confidence, security, and unity, ensuring continued growth for the association and improved music education for the people of Texas.

After about two years of investigation and planning, each division was charged with selecting symposium representatives during their February 1977 business meetings.

In her magazine column, President Barbara Eads appealed to members to be deliberate in selecting their representative: _“How do we pick who we think past their batons? We will need people who may or may not be consistent sweepstakes winners, but who are also knowledgeable, able to express themselves, open-minded and willing to look for new answers for the future.”_

After this three-day event, President James A. Moore wrote in reflection, “I personally feel that the TMEA Symposium will prove to be one of the most significant activities in the recent history of the association, not only for what we were able to do in the three days, but for the hope of what can be achieved in the future.”

The following year, President John Bridges asked Barbara Eads to head up a committee to form a new study—smaller in scope, and more practical in nature. This committee proposed another symposium for the summer of 1978 on the topic “Communicating with Key Publics: Public Opinion and Policy Making.” This public relations workshop was ultimately held June 14–16, 1979, at Southern Methodist University. Their charge was to develop a handbook detailing the steps necessary for developing a successful professional relationship with school administrators and the general public.

Since that first symposium in 1977, TMEA has continued to host similar events to gain input from a representative sample of the membership so that we can continue to improve TMEA’s offerings and improve music education for all students.

TMEA’s Growth Continues

As our reflections of these two decades comes to a close, we find it in stark contrast to the 1960 beginning when we were being asked to limit student participation at our convention. Instead, in 1979, TMEA was expanding its All-State organizations, with the addition of a Jazz Ensemble. This brought us to six All-State ensembles—growth that has continued, now with 15 groups and the addition of an All-State Mariachi slated for 2021.

We all know very popular, well respected directors who have been most successful on the podium, but can they be successful in their contributions to the Symposium? In other words, can they think past their batons? We will need people who may or may not be consistent sweepstakes winners, but who are also knowledgeable, able to express themselves, open-minded and willing to look for new answers for the future.”

Next month is our convention program preview issue. Look to future issues in 2020 for highlights of the remaining 40 years of our history.