In January 1968, a small group of people decided that California should have an organization that was affiliated with the Music Teachers National Association (MTNA.) Thus, with the encouragement and assistance of MTNA, the California Association of Professional Music Teachers (CAPMT) was born, although the official name was not settled until later that same year.

Marlowe Wilcox, president pro tem, wrote in January 1968, “The CMTA officers pro tem come from the ranks of both the private music teaching field and our college music departments.” This group “…consented to serve you until our first State Convention, which we are tentatively planning for January or February of 1969.” The first CAPMT officers were:

- Marlowe Wilcox, President
- Preston Stedman, VP Conventions
- John Norman, VP Publications
- Hazel Monfort, Secretary
- Isabelle Brolsma, Treasurer

The first State Convention was held at USC in February, 1969. The pre-convention registration fee for members was $3.00. The second State Convention was held in Long Beach in 1970, the registration fee was raised to $4.00 and a full board was elected and installed. That board consisted of:

- Dr. John Norman, President
- Dorothy Bishop, VP Conventions
- Frances M. Ihle, VP Auditions
- Sylvia Shepherd, VP Certification
- Jean Young, Secretary
- Dr. Stacey Carpenter, Treasurer

By August 1970, Dr. Erno Daniel became VP Conventions, Dr. Frank McGinnis became VP Auditions, and Andrew Clemmons became VP Editor. At this same convention District Presidents were named and installed. They were:

- Vernon W. Hillmer, Sunnyvale District
- Lorraine K. McKinley, San Diego District
- H. Joyce Wade, Palm Desert District
- Dr. Richard Carpenter, Sacramento District
- Alice F. Kitchen, Santa Monica District

Later, the Districts were re-zoned and they became the nine Districts of CAPMT.
Early in 1968, an invitation was sent to all California residents who were members-at-large of MTNA inviting them to charter membership in CMTA (not yet with the name “CAPMT” as later designated by MTNA.) The membership dues were $8.00.

The complete list of dedicated members serving as CAPMT State President is as follows:

- Marlowe Wilcox 1968-1969
- John Norman, NCTM 1969-1973
- Frank McGinnis, NCTM 1973-1977
- Katherine B. Hull, NCTM 1977-1981
- L’rayne Teasdale, NCTM 1981-1983
- Clara Jean Curzon 1983-1985
- Sandra Bostrom 1985-1990
- Rita Fuszek 1990-1992
- Janet M. Davidson, NCTM 1996-2000
- Sumy Takesue, NCTM 2000-2004
- Darlene Vlasek, NCTM 2004-2007
- Stephen Cook 2007-2009
- Scott McBride Smith, NCTM 2009-2010
- Sue Field 2010-2014
- Jennifer Snow 2014-

CAPMT was named “MTNA Local State Association of the Year” in 2004.

In 1988, CAPMT established the Lifetime Achievement Award to be bestowed annually on individuals and/or associations that have demonstrated outstanding leadership and service in the music community over a significant period of time.

In 2012, the CAPMT Chapter or District of the Year Award was established to encourage and reward chapters and districts that exemplify excellent leadership and member participation.