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From MD/DC Chapter President Catherine Stewart

Dear Membership: This is my last letter to you as President. First, I want to extend a warm welcome to the new President, Daniel Levitov and the new President-Elect, Matt Tifford. I know they will be great leaders for our chapter.

I also want to thank all of you for giving me the opportunity to serve as your President. I have met and worked with so many wonderful people. It has been life changing to be in the leadership of a national organization.

I appreciate that you have sent me to the ASTA National Conference for the past four years. At the conferences I have been privileged to meet some of the most outstanding teachers and performers in the country. Even better, I have brought several of them here for workshops; Mark Wood, Bridgid Bibbins, Brian Lewis, and Kurt Sassmannshaus. Keep an eye out in 2013—Dean Marshall and Barrage will be here.

I am very proud that our chapter has received two awards while I have been President. Maryland Classic Youth Orchestra presented ASTA with the Chester Petranek Award for Outstanding Community Service in enriching the musical life of the Washington metropolitan area, and we received “2012 Best Web Site” from our ASTA National Board.

I have enjoyed hosting the Studio Teacher Meetings for the past four years. The meetings have been a wonderful way to meet other teachers and exchange ideas. I hope many more of you will join us, share your expertise and enjoy the fellowship of other teachers.

I’ve enjoyed contributing to *Stringendo* for the past two years. I have invited several stars in their field to write for us, such as Washington Post critic Robert Battey and performance expert, Noa Kageyama. I have particularly enjoyed the reminiscences of our board’s youth orchestra experiences, favorite private teachers and school teachers.

To further our ASTA mission of promoting string playing and teaching, our chapter is joining with Maryland State Music Teachers Association to co-present the Strings Plus Chamber Music Festival. I hope all of you will participate in this Festival.

I am honored and humbled to receive the 2012 Service to Strings Award. Judy Silverman must share this award too, because she started me on my path of service. I met Judy in 1977 when I was a student at University of Maryland. A few years later she asked me to judge for the MSMTA Solo Festival, then she asked me to co-chair the MSMTA Solo Festival. I’ve been saying “yes” ever since and have benefitted in so many ways from her encouragement and support.

This recognition of my accomplishments is very gratifying. I’ve chaired festivals and competitions, such as the Gretchen Hood, and Strings Plus Chamber Festival. I’ve judged numerous competitions, such as Landon Symphonette and Brewster Competition. I was on the original ASTACAP committee that helped create the program. I was awarded “Teacher of the Year” by our ASTA chapter in 1998. I’ve directed the National Philharmonic Camps—Middle School and High School. I taught orchestra at Baneker Middle School as a long-term sub when the program was going to be cut. I was the Administrative Director of Modern Early Music Institute, getting that program off the ground. I am director of “Stewart’s Stellar Strings Studio and Scale Camp.” I just finished my term as President of ASTA MD/DC Chapter. I’ve had the joy of teaching many, many students over the years and best of all having many of them become my friends and colleagues.

But through all of these 35 years of my service to strings, Judy has always been there as my mentor. I appreciate her guidance. Much to my delight, I’ve been told that people can’t say “no” to me either. Thanks Judy! You taught me well!

Thanks to all of you members, once again, for giving me this opportunity to serve you.

Cathy Stewart

Message from the President-Elect

by Daniel Levitov

Dear members of ASTA MD/DC Chapter: On the plane trip back from the ASTA National Conference in Atlanta, I was already thinking about our chapter and what I could bring back to share with all of you. The conference had many highlights. The first day consisted—as it did last year—of the leadership workshop for state chapter officers. We heard about the financial strength of our organization (we are in very good shape, by the way!), the make-up of the ASTA membership, and the challenges that face us in the future.

Since my presentation was not until Friday, I figured Thursday would be a day to see other presentations and catch up with old friends. But I didn't realize my friends would be asking me to help them in their presentations! A quick call to Carriage House Violins (from Boston), and I had a borrowed cello and I was ready to go. Susan C. Brown gave an excellent session on how to take a middle school or high school orchestra and break the members up into small ensembles to work on chamber music, technique, and orchestral repertoire. Whether it be three violins, or a bass and a viola, mixed-up combinations can liven up the classroom and pay dividends in terms of student interest and preparation. Juliet White-Smith, past president of the American Viola Society, integrated her teaching expertise, intellect, and humor in her presentation titled "Breaking the Talent Code." I assisted her by playing some Bach while she improvised an accompaniment based on the roots and chord tones. Then she played "Arpeggione" and I accompanied her. She explained that when done in private lessons, these little improvisations can be fun and will help students to be sensitive to harmonic changes and phrase shapes.

That night it was the Atlanta Symphony, and then the next morning it was my turn to present. My session was titled "Growing Your Own." In it I proposed that teaching the ideal private lesson consists not of transmitting knowledge from teacher to student, but empowering students to understand music the way we teachers do. In other words, the best and most lasting kind of learning comes when teachers help students become their own best instructors.

At the end of the conference, something came back to me that our national President-Elect Bob Phillips said the first day. He told the chapter officers that we should not be asking ourselves what does ASTA membership do for us, but instead we should ask ourselves if we want to live in a society where music instruction is valued, and if we want to be part of an organization that is dedicated to supporting us and our interests, both locally and nationally. His statement made me think that back here in the Maryland/D.C. area, our chapter could do more to spread the word and get more people involved. As I transition from being President-Elect to President of our chapter, I would like to work to increase our membership. I ask each of you who is reading this message right now, to think of the musicians in your network, and find out if they are ASTA members. If they are not, I ask you to be an ambassador for our chapter! Invite them to an event with you, or share their names with us. We want to keep growing and we would like your help!

Thank you for being such an important and valuable member of our ASTA community.



**Please visit our
MD/DC Chapter website!
www.asta.net**

2013 National Solo Competition Repertoire

I. JUNIOR DIVISION

*Junior division is open to musicians under the age of 19.
(Born on or after March 20, 1994)*

VIOLIN

Bach: Any movement from the Solo Sonatas or Partitas
Bloch: Nigun
Any piece of the contestant's choice

VIOLA

Bach: Any movement from the Solo Cello Suites
Bruch: Romance, Op. 85
Any piece of the contestant's choice

CELLO

Bach: Any movement from the Solo Suites
Frescobaldi-Cassadó: Toccata
Any piece of the contestant's choice

DOUBLE BASS

Bach: Any movement from the Solo Cello Suites
Franz Anton Hoffmeister: Concerto No. 1, 1st Movement (with piano parts for solo tuning or orchestral tuning), published by Hoffmeister/obtainable through Lemur Music Co.
Any piece of the contestant's choice

GUITAR

Bach: Any movement from a solo work
Francisco Tárrega: Capricho árabe
Any piece or pieces of the contestant's choice

HARP

Bach: Any movement from a solo work
Naderman: Sonatina #5
Any piece of the contestant's choice

II. SENIOR DIVISION

*Senior division is open to musicians ages 19–25.
(Born on or after March 20, 1988 and before March 20, 1994)*

VIOLIN

Bach: Any movement from the Solo Sonatas or Partitas
Kreisler: Recitative and Scherzo
Any piece of the contestant's choice

VIOLA

Bach: Any movement from the Solo Cello Suites
Weber: Andante and Rondo Ungarese
Any piece of the contestant's choice

CELLO

Bach: Any movement from the Solo Suites
Frescobaldi-Cassadó: Requeiebros
Any piece of the contestant's choice

DOUBLE BASS

Bach: Any movement from the Solo Cello Suites
Schubert: Arpeggione Sonata (Movement I), Stuart Sankey, Editor, published by International.
Any piece of the contestant's choice

GUITAR

Bach: Gigue and Double from Suite, BWV 997 (any edition)
Francisco Tárrega: Fantasia on Themes from La Traviata
Any piece or pieces of the contestant's choice

HARP

Bach: Any movement from a solo work
Guridi: Viejo Zortzico
Any piece of the contestant's choice

Note: MD/DC Chapter members who would like to enter any of their students in this competition, please contact Competitions Chair Marissa Murphy for further information. Her address, phone number, and email address are on the Inside Front Cover.

Teaching to Reality

by Lori Barnet, Cello Forum Editor

Guiding a student through the intricacies of the technique and musicianship of any string instrument is a complex and challenging responsibility, akin perhaps to parenting. And as with parenting, knowing when to introduce specific elements of the knowledge the student needs to understand his instrument can be very challenging. My personal teaching history has been limited primarily to college-age students and to coaching secondary school students in orchestral sectionals and small chamber ensembles. In both environments, I have often wished that the realities of being a cellist had been raised sooner in the musical educations of these emerging players and that they were encouraged to take ownership of choices and decisions at an earlier age.

Young students begin with the technical basics of the cello—bow grip, left hand position—and with musical basics—reading bass clef, deciphering rhythmic notation, and interpreting dynamic and articulation markings. Gradually, additional clefs and the challenges of bowings and fingerings are introduced, along with double stops and more intricate rhythms. Greater attention to dynamics and articulations is expected. The teacher usually marks bowings and fingerings in etudes and elementary solo pieces for the student to master, and in this way the student gains familiarity with the cello and its fundamental techniques. Over the longer term, repertoire of increasing technical difficulty, complexity and musical challenge is introduced and finally a competent player emerges, right?

So when do we tell our students the truth about this powerful instrument? Many of us wait until that first youth orchestra audition to explain how, despite all the music the student has so diligently studied, in an orchestra someone else usually gets the melody. “Not fair!” is the typical reaction, and with no prior discussion about all the wonderful things they do get to play, the result can be an entire section that is bored because they believe the music is too easy, and simultaneously difficult to engage as they haven’t been taught to appreciate and execute well what they do play. Here are some complaints I commonly heard

during my tenure as cello coach at MCYO and in my work at the National Philharmonic Summer String Institutes:

1. “There’s nothing to do—it’s just eighth notes.”

The ability to shape a bass line is the most basic responsibility of an ensemble cellist. Continuo playing is the foundation of the instrument’s existence, and introducing students at an early point in their studies to how to do this should be a priority of every cello teacher. It’s the perfect vehicle for introducing nuances of dynamics. (The line may be all piano, but leading your colleagues towards the next downbeat or harmonic change can be enhanced by a subtle crescendo or other manipulation.) The concept of organizing a “monotonous” rhythm to support the melody helps everyone play more musically and demonstrates how much flexibility there is in almost any phrase. Grouping those pesky eighth notes works very well—in a phrase in 4/4, there are almost never 8 equal eighth notes. Which ones have more importance and why? Are they in pairs? Is the phrase supported by conceiving them as 5 + 3, 4+4, 1+7, etc.? Not only do you get a more musical result, but churning out those eighth notes morphs from a boring exercise to a challenging responsibility.

2. “I never practice pizzicato. I mean, you just pluck the string wherever.”

Oh really? Maybe that’s why pizzicato playing often sounds uninteresting, lacks direction, and is interrupted by uneven exchanges to and from arco. The cello is capable of beautiful pizzicato, second only to the harp and strummed instruments, but like anything else, mastery is elusive if not practiced. Teachers should demonstrate the changes in tone and dynamics that come by simply moving the right hand higher or lower on the fingerboard. What happens when the player alters the angle of the pluck? A more vertical pull is less resonant and potentially more accented and leads directly to the Bartok *pizz.* Strums that are parallel to the strings produce tighter chords. The greater the angle across the strings, the more

rolled the chord, which then introduces the concept of a legato, slurred pizzicato. Different fingers produce different tone qualities and the ability to *pizz* with multiple fingers is invaluable. Ravel quartet and Britten Simple Symphony are obvious examples of how a good foundation in pizzicato benefits any player. Changes from *pizz* to *arco* and back should be practiced within the rhythm of the piece. What happens when you change your bow grip and in what order? Do you need to anticipate a return to *arco* by getting there in stages? Practice the grip change with an accelerando so you can control it at any tempo. Phrasing is essential in any musical line, whether it's melody or accompaniment, *pizzicato* or *arco*.

3. "I don't have a fingering."

When does a teacher begin to ask the student to attempt his own fingering solution for a passage? I would argue for an earlier introduction of this essential skill. Understanding the fingerboard and the available options for producing the required pitches is a lengthy process, and the sooner a player can begin to consider what choices are available and their relative merits, the better. Once a student leaves first position, he or she has choices for where to play most pitches, and eventually those options increase along with the player's familiarity with all parts of the fingerboard. How to choose? The most obvious choice is the timbral differences among the strings—what kind of sound suits the passage? In the context of the notes, what fingerings allow you to play the pitches with minimal shifting or string crossings or best suits the cellist with a small hand? Early exposure to identifying intervals and knowing what pitches are under the fingers at any place on the fingerboard supports being able to make informed choices. Do you want to slide a bit for musical effect? Can your fingering make that possible or even enhance it? Will your choices influence your colleagues in their interpretations? Not having the melody does not exclude a cellist from musical leadership.

4. "I need a bowing."

This is the granddaddy of them all. It is the use of the bow that is the most potent expressive tool a string player has, and reducing it to 'up' and 'down' does a disservice to the development of the student. Emphasis on experimenting with bow pressure and speed and on where the bow is placed

between fingerboard and bridge can encourage exploration of nuanced tone colors and dynamics. Placement also includes what part of the bow is used, so how to maneuver from one end of the stick to the other seamlessly is an important and challenging skill that should be practiced. This can be readily accomplished using scales and exercises, but why not also apply it to a passage of repertoire where the expression can be impacted and musical results are immediately apparent? Students should also understand that down and up strokes produce inherently different sounds, that the up bow is reactive to the down bow. How can this be harnessed to help the music speak? Can the bowing being organized to produce the details of the score with less effort by the player, leaving more attention and energy for inspiration and spontaneity?

As with fingerings, students should be encouraged to take ownership of bowing decisions earlier in their studies. What mood do they wish to create? Is there a musical element that is driving bowing decisions, such as dynamics or articulations? Once priorities for the decision-making process have been established, where is it necessary to compromise by retaking, hooking, breaking a slur, or some other manipulation? Why is a particular point in the phrase chosen for an adjustment? If the teacher expects this of the pupil, follows up with a discussion of the merits of the student's choices, and explores where perhaps another option would have been more effective, I believe students will mature technically and musically, and have more ownership of, and pride in, their performances.

Players who know how to make their own stylistic choices will be happier in their role in an ensemble and more readily accept and appreciate that interpretation is about nuance and subtlety, and is not just for or about the melody. Every element of a musical composition deserves respectful attention. Expression can be built from the bottom up if players understand how to shape their parts and take pride in their contribution to the final performance.



Favorite Orchestra Teachers

by various board members, ASTA MD/DC Chapter

Judy Silverman, Youth Orchestra Liaison

Dr. Joel Berman—Professor Emeritus of the University of Maryland, one of the first members of ASTA I met and with whom I studied violin and pedagogy—was the first person to have faith in me and to refer me a student (now a professional player in North Carolina). I will be forever grateful for his support and guidance in the fields of performance and teaching. He encouraged my observing him teach different age students and supported the belief that musical playing and correct technique in very young players was possible and should be encouraged.

I never took lessons in public school but certainly am deeply appreciative of my orchestra directors, Frieda Klayman in elementary school and Herman Melnick in High School. In those days in Newark, New Jersey, public school orchestras often consisted of 10 clarinets, 7 flutes, 6 guitars, 2 cellos, and 8 violins, but we learned a lot and always had fun—enough to motivate me to stay with music my whole life, to start and play in community orchestras, to study continuously, and to teach.

Jeffrey Schoyen, Eastern Shore Co-Representative

I was a fifth grader when a string program came to my suburban Atlanta school. I was very lucky to have a conscientious and detail-oriented teacher, Karen Bussell. Ms. Bussell was very generous with her time and created an after-school orchestra that was my first ensemble experience. I am most thankful to her for encouraging my parents to find a private cello teacher for me after one year. She was a violinist, and she realized early on that I needed a cello teacher to augment my public school string study.

Mary Findley, D.C. Representative

My junior high and high school orchestra teacher had a beautiful resonant bass voice and spoke to us students as though we were college students, so, of course, we responded as pretty grown-up players—none of the spitballs, joking around, teacher yelling, etc., that one can experience with a less respectful teacher. He had a leg deformity and

walked with a cane with a lot of difficulty. Since he never referred to it, we all learned to ignore it and to treat someone with a disability as an everyday, normal person. Our orchestra started out very small because the combined junior high/high school was only 3 years old. We had brand-new shiny Roth violas, cellos, and basses that the school had just bought. The teacher encouraged me to play the cello because my violin skills were way beyond the level of the other players. I enjoyed the challenge and played cello not only in the school orchestra but also in the local youth orchestra, in church, and in our family chamber ensemble all the way to high school graduation, while continuing private violin lessons with a member of the Detroit Symphony. I really appreciated his patience and skill as he built the orchestra from scratch into a decent performing group.

Cathy Stewart, President

Emily Cook was the orchestra teacher at Longfellow Elementary School and Highland Junior High School. She started me in a group at school and was also my first private violin teacher. I remember she used to take me home with her after school and give me a snack before teaching my lesson. In seventh grade—I had been playing violin for a year and had just started third position—more players were needed for All State. Mrs. Cook recommended me even though there was no way I was advanced enough to be in that group. Marvin Rabin was the conductor. I still remember the thrill of being in All State and how much I improved from such an immense challenge. Mrs. Cook knew I would rise to the occasion and what a motivator it would be. She was right. When I was in ninth grade, she arranged a scholarship for me to attend Stephen Foster Music camp. I improved so much in just a couple of weeks at the camp. Roland and Almita Vamos taught there very early in their careers.

When I was in high school, Mrs. Cook started my teaching career. She had me assist her at a summer music program. I remember learning just enough bass to help the beginning bass student. When I was 16, she started sending elementary school children from her school program for me to teach. For two years,

I had ten private violin students. Mrs. Cook made a huge impact in my life. She nurtured me, recognized my talents, and provided opportunities for me to develop. I wouldn't be playing and teaching violin if it hadn't been for her.

Julianna Chitwood, Events Chair

One of the strongest advocates for me and my musical education growing up was Celia Bachelder. She was my middle school and high school orchestra conductor, a member of the local symphony where I grew up in Kingsport, Tennessee, and a private violin instructor for many years. "Mrs. B" was a constant source of information for area string players and made it her mission to find and create events that would fuel enthusiasm in her orchestra students. She filled a void when there were not many violin teachers in the area by arranging for a violinist from the Knoxville Symphony to come to teach advancing students. She noticed everything, it seemed—weeks after I had fallen onto my violin and smashed it to smithereens, Mrs. B was in regular contact with my parents, expressing her concern that I was still very upset about the incident. Mrs. B laughed with us and told us when we had to knuckle down. She embraced what we thought was funny (like an imaginary bass player on whom we blamed everything from intonation problems to tardiness) and played right along, yet always managed to get her points across as well.

There is a Facebook page dedicated to one of her greatest legacies—the Dobyns-Bennett High School Orchestra, which featured over sixty string players in a small east Tennessee town back in my days of the late 1980s! Through this Facebook page, the DB Orchestra Alumni are busy planning the next alumni concert, which is always dedicated to Mrs. Bachelder.

Marion Spahn, Co-Public Schools Representative

The orchestra director of my small public school high school wore many hats. He conducted the senior and junior high school orchestras and taught the beginner band and string instrumental group lessons in the feeder elementary schools. With such a schedule it was easy to categorize him as "a jack of all trades, master of none." However, Mr. Howard Cook was an accomplished double bass performer. Despite his busy work load, he prepared us for County and All-State orchestras and encouraged us to become members of the Philadelphia Youth

Orchestra. He procured season tickets for us to hear the Philadelphia Orchestra so that their incredible string sound would forever be the foundation of our musical memory. He demanded high standards of my siblings and friends even as we sat in a less than fertile land of local music making. His voice was loud, his attitude often curmudgeonly. Why then did my siblings and I grow up to become public school music teachers? I believe that he planted in us the seed of love of music and devotion to the craft. We did not strive to be like him, only to *love* music and to *live* music as he did. Bravo, Mr. Howard Cook, to a job well done.

Mark Pfannschmidt, Viola Forum Editor

All of my junior and senior high school orchestra teachers were excellent, but I'd have to say that the most important one was my teacher at Fred Moore Junior High in Anoka, Minnesota. Kenneth Davenport had been a bassist in the Minneapolis Symphony under Dorati. Even though he was almost 70 at the time, he was jolly, full of life, and worked us really hard, yet we had so much fun working with him! When I was in seventh grade, he needed a strong player in the viola section. At the time I was sitting third chair in the first violin section, and he could see that I wanted to be principal, but the two girls ahead of me were talented, *and they practiced*. So he asked me if I would be interested in switching to the viola, *adding he would make me first chair!*

Mr. Davenport's dedication to his string program didn't stop at the end of the school year. He continued working with us during the summer vacation—as a volunteer! Every student who didn't have a private teacher was given the opportunity to have a weekly private lesson in the summer. During the school year, I was in the orchestra room for at least an hour after school most days, reading through string quartet and quintet repertoire and arrangements with several of my classmates. He had an extensive library and was always giving us new things to learn. When I was in ninth grade, he arranged for our quintet to meet each day for a full period during the school day. (This group included those two girls who practiced.) We had so much fun! I particularly remember our quartet traveling with him to demonstrate string instruments to the fourth graders. We played one jazzy tune while he improvised on his bass—which was one of the three known Guarneri basses!

I was so glad years later to have the opportunity to call him up and personally thank him for his kindness to me during those years. He was very glad to have heard from me and to find out what I was doing.

Paul Scimonelli, Bass Forum Editor and Private School Representative

I have had the good fortune of having extraordinary teachers and mentors in my career but none more pivotal than the late Dr. Gordon Epperson, Professor Emeritus of Cello at the University of Arizona. Good grades and my bass playing skills gained me entrance to the University and a partial scholarship to pursue my Master's degree in performance in 1976. Fortunately for me, Dr. Epperson's class, Aesthetics of Music, was a degree requirement. Here I learned to understand the beauties and meanings beneath the mere notes of music, delving into the philosophies of Edmund Gurney, Alfred North Whitehead, Susanne Langer, Bennett Reimer, and others. Both challenging and fascinatingly thought provoking, I took to the course with a gusto and bravura brought on by an acute case of naïveté. When I went to the U. of A., there was no bass teacher on the faculty, and I was the only one pursuing a bass performance degree at that time. Gordon, being the only low strings teacher at the time, became both my academic and musical advisor. However, please allow me to give a bit of background on Dr. Epperson.

Gordon Epperson was born on January 18, 1921, in Williston, Florida, the son of a professional baseball player. He began playing piano at 7 and cello at 9, becoming accomplished on both instruments. He earned a bachelor of music degree at Cincinnati Conservatory of Music in 1941, a master's degree in music at Eastman in 1949, and a DMA at Boston University in 1960. He served in the U.S. Army during World War II from December 1943 to March 1946. He was a concert cellist and teacher with symphony orchestras in Indianapolis, Cincinnati, Seattle, and Rochester. He made a Town Hall debut in New York City in 1956 and did a Carnegie Hall recital in 1963. His proud companion, a 1665 Amati cello, traveled in a fully paid seat next to him on every airline flight to every concert. Dr. Epperson served as a faculty member at the University of Puget Sound, 1946–1952; Louisiana State University, 1952–1961; and The Ohio State University, 1961–1967; before coming to the University of Arizona.

Charming audiences and students alike with his warmth, musical passion, and avuncular wit, he made time to write books and numerous articles on music and the theory and practice of the arts. His books include *The Art of Cello Teaching* (Alfred), *The Musical Symbol* (Da Capo Press), *The Mind of Edmund Gurney* (Fairleigh Dickenson University Press), a volume of poetry: *Sonnets From India*, and a novel: *The Guru of Malad* (Xlibris Corp). His recordings on the Centaur label include works by Barber, Martinu, Bartok, Bovicchi, Ysaye, Crumb, and Kodaly.

I had the pleasure of spending an hour of blissful reminiscence with Gordon in 2006. I had come to the University of Arizona for a bass symposium and had made it a point to contact Gordon to arrange a time to visit. He was, as always, most gracious. He was genuinely interested in my work as the Director of Strings at the Landon School in Maryland, and we discussed the tactics of dealing with boys attempting to learn about life and a stringed instrument at the same time. He patiently listened as I prattled on about my family: my two boys and their intendeds and my daughter and her love for singing and drama. With great pride, he led me to his studio and showed me his collection of grateful students. Although a bass player, I asked if I could reside on his wall and he said he would be happy and honored to include me. This was Gordon Epperson.

My afternoon with Gordon was a true epiphany for me. My wife has always believed in the theory that "if it is meant to be, it is meant to be." I have always felt my life has been a Forrest Gump-like "feather in the wind" journey, and I have had very few "what if" moments. However, leaving Tucson and the U. of A. has always been my greatest "what if." If I would have stayed, I probably would have made Dr. Epperson and others at the U. of A. quite happy, and I'm sure I would have continued my academic endeavors at the University. More children, different friends, different life, to be sure. But what if I had never gone to Tucson? I would have never met Gordon Epperson. I would have never learned about musical truth or how to seek it. I would have never understood how to look, listen, and accept music for more than just its visceral nature. He was an academic role model for me. He taught me to think. It was my work with him, my taking his Aesthetics of Music class and the writing I did for him, that earned me entrance to the doctoral program at Catholic University in Washington, which ultimately got me my current position at the Landon School in Bethesda, which set me on my current life's journey. He literally changed my life. Going to Tucson was meant to be.



What ASTA Has Done for Me

by various board members, ASTA MD/DC Chapter

Judy Silverman, Youth Orchestra Liaison

ASTA has provided me with a network of close string teacher friends—people I can count on for friendship and advice. I welcome the activities for teachers and students alike and the chance to grow by participating. The ASTA journal which comes monthly has been a source of many ideas that I've enjoyed sharing with new young teachers who haven't joined yet but are considering joining. ASTA's local website has provided up-to-date information and reminders of activities our chapter has sponsored. ASTA is a community I'm proud to be a part of. Margaret Wright—ASTA member and ASTA MD/DC Teacher of the Year for violin, viola, and chamber music—has probably exerted the most influence on my teaching. She encouraged me to attend a National ASTA Conference with her in Indianapolis quite a few years ago. We had a fantastic time. I couldn't believe how much I learned during those three days. I never would have gone without her encouragement. Margie also patiently helped me develop skills in teaching scales, pieces, and etudes, as well as in coaching chamber music. Margie was the person who encouraged me to develop a chamber music program in my studio. So you can see I owe ASTA quite a lot.

Jeffrey Schoyen, Eastern Shore Co-Representative

ASTA is a great resource for me. Most recently it's served as an outlet at various times for presentations or articles. These days I feel fortunate to have our chapter's publication, *Stringendo*, which serves as a place where string teachers share ideas.

Mary Findley, D.C. Representative

For me the best thing about ASTA is the *American String Teacher*. I've learned so much about how teaching and class management is done creatively in other cities and states, in private lessons, and in school settings. I also have benefited from articles about composers, reviews of recently-published books and compositions, discussions of how to prepare for auditions, and reports from conferences and workshops. My favorite article in the most recent

issue (February 2012) is "Period Style Cadenzas for Mozart's Violin Concertos" by Zachary Ebin, which will be useful in assisting students in constructing their own classical-era cadenzas.

Julianna Chitwood, Events Chair

What membership in ASTA MD/DC Chapter does for me (and what it can do for you!):

1. Connects me with peers who are "in the trenches" of studio teaching, like myself. There are many ways our ASTA chapter gives support to teachers; the pedagogy workshops, in particular, are appealing to me, but our chapter has regular studio teacher meetings on a variety of topics and an annual meeting featuring wonderful speakers.
2. Supports my students by providing stimulating experiences and great feedback. The ASTACAP Exams really help my students focus, and now we have two dates from which to choose! Events like The Mark Woods Experience and Fiddle Day allow for students (and often teachers) to consider new approaches to music-making.
3. Provides affordable instrumental insurance through Merz-Huber, one of the best in the business. This way I can spend more energy on playing and teaching and not worry about the big "What if's" regarding my instrument.

Dorée Huneven, Past-President

ASTA has given me more and more as the years have passed. I started out having social interaction with fellow teachers when I moved to Maryland from Virginia. After a few years of getting one article a year as Violin Forum Chair for *Stringendo*, I graduated to being the editor, gathering all the articles for each issue, which was new and enlightening. Before I knew it, I was President-Elect, learning about getting advertisers for *Stringendo* and attending the National Conference, which boosted my knowledge of teaching in my private studio, and exposed me to many leading and fascinating people in the world of string teaching. My mind opened to a huge range of knowledge of strings and teaching. As President of ASTA MD/DC Chapter, I discovered that

I actually had leadership skills. This was a complete surprise, as I had never been the leader of any group before in my life. Our chapter garnered two national awards, Best Newsletter and Most Improved Chapter, during that time. As Past-President, I have continued to learn how to help stage the same activities every year, such as ASTACAP Exams and Fiddle Day, as well as put on the biennial elections. Learn, learn, learn! ASTA has taught me so much—how to work together with colleagues, how to share ideas and build new ones, how to lead, how to think. I continue enthusiastically to receive challenges and knowledge from this open-minded and supremely supportive organization.

Marion Spahn, Co-Public Schools Representative

My association with the members of ASTA has brought a more colorful, nuanced expression to my own identity as a string educator. Each member of the board is devoted in a unique way to string teaching and performing. By sharing our enthusiasm with each other and working to bring programs to the larger string community, I feel affirmed as a teacher and person. Keep the spark burning, ASTA board, and continue to grow our musical community!

Cathy Stewart, President

At the Conference State Leadership workshop this year, we were asked two questions “What can you do for ASTA?” and “What can ASTA do for you?” I think most people focus on the 2nd question. However, I have found if I ask “what can I do?” the benefits are tremendous. My first such experience was four years ago when I needed to gather some items for the silent auction being held at the conference. I had never asked businesses for anything and I must admit that I was completely intimidated by the prospect. Much to my surprise, people were delighted to make donations and actually thanked me for giving them the opportunity. The universal opinion of the business people was that they wouldn’t be in business without teachers and giving to ASTA helped them thank us.

I directly benefitted from this “giving” experience because I built relationships with the businesses and people that support our chapter. I learned that by asking people to help, I am giving them an opportunity to better connect with their target clientele. When I went to my first ASTA Conference,

I talked to vendors and invited them to advertise in *Stringendo*. Once again, I was surprised how many of them were delighted to know about us, wanted to support us and advertise either in *Stringendo* or on our web site. I have personal relationships with the people I met and count many of them as business mentors and friends.

I also learned to talk to people about the things I am working on and am excited about. You never know what will come from that. A few years ago, I was talking to Matt Tifford about ASTA and invited him to be on the board. He was too busy, but said he would like to be part of things in the future. Sure enough when time opened up for him, he called me and now he is President-Elect! Had I simply sat back and “taken” from ASTA, none of this would have happened.

So my ASTA experiences have given me confidence. I’ve learned I’m good at talking to people and bringing people together. I’ve enjoyed being around so many highly energetic, positive, and successful people and you can be sure I’ll continue to “be around” you all. Thank you for the opportunity to serve.



Thoughts on Teaching

by Doris Gazda

Contributor's note: ASTA members who have been involved with MD/DC Chapter for a couple of decades or more will recall that Doris Gazda used to teach strings in Maryland, and was an active member of our chapter. In fact, it was Doris who came up with the word Stringendo as the title of our newsletter! Since moving to Arizona in the 1990's, Doris has become one of the "stars" of the music publishing world with her string method books, along with other successful music education materials. Some of her words of wisdom appeared in the Autumn 2000 issue of Stringendo. With her permission, they are reprinted below.

—Lorraine Combs

On Reading Music:

By the third grade, 99% of our string students are reading books and using computers. They may not know how to deal with math problems in fractions, but all of them know how to add up the money in their pockets. By not providing books for them to look at, we are denying them independence. What should they take home to practice on? One of the reasons some children have difficulty learning music reading is that teachers make a big thing about it. It should be a natural process that is simply a part of learning to play the instrument.

One of the most important items to recognize is that children learn to read a language by reading and *writing*. Few of us take time for music writing in our teaching. This is not music theory. It is really just making it possible for children to learn the written language of music, just as reading and writing together is taught when they learn to read words. I have children write *only* what they are able to play. If they are playing open strings, then they write open strings. They must be able to play what they write. At first they can copy two or four measures and then play it. Once they start to write, they play what they write and take pride in their writing. When they write and play, the reading is easy. You don't even have to talk about reading.

Another thing that I do is to have them take a finger and point to the notes in a line of music while I play it two or three times. One time they might count aloud and the next time say note names. I walk behind them so that I can watch to see if they are following along correctly with their fingers. When I ask them to play it, many know it by ear, but they

also know how to follow along reading the notes. Note reading just becomes an automatic result of listening and playing. Those who play the music easily will start to figure out how to read a piece that they have never heard. Isn't that neat! Isn't that fun! Imagine the excitement when they come to school and tell you that they figured out how to play a piece that has not been introduced in class!

We need to use the existing language of music and teach toward truly understanding the system. Our avoidance of teaching music reading brings to mind another area of music learning that we avoid: intervals. If we use the terminology of intervals from the beginning, our students would not only hear the intervals by ear (which they do automatically,) but also be able to name them. In many, instances, music students have no knowledge of names of intervals until they get to college theory classes. I know this from students who have actually told me so. When tuning, we can use the terms "perfect fifth" or "perfect fourth." When we place the first finger on a string it is a "major second" above the open string. This repeats with the same term for the sound of the relationship between open and first finger on each of the strings. So, instead of saying, "Play the first finger note," we can sometimes say, "Play the note that is a major second above the open string." That way, we are gradually teaching the language of music. Be sure that students realize that we use the first seven letters of the alphabet over and over again in ascending or descending order. If they know that a certain note is an "A" and they understand the system, they will never have to ask a teacher the name of the note on the line above the "A." For instance, if they memorize the names of lines and spaces, they may learn to read notes as separate, named entities with

no relationship to other notes. F-A-C-E followed by Every Good... may get in the way of understanding how to read alphabetically. If they learn the F-A-C-E method, it may be quite a while before they suddenly realize that G is in between F and A.

On Bowing and Tone:

This may be an unusual approach to developing tone, but I find it works. Have the student play harmonics with the whole bow at a forte level.

The bow has to go straight and engage the string solidly or else it will produce a cipher or a glassy sound. Students like the sound of a good harmonic tone. At the forte level they need to have good bow control. Show the student how to move it evenly and have a feeling of weight in the arm. While continuing to play with the same feel in the bow, the student should depress a finger to the string, then alternate back and forth between the harmonic and the stopped note. To do this well, good bowing is critical.



The Righter Side

Why Regular People Don't Like Classical Music

Why don't regular people like classical music? For example, music performed by a symphony orchestra that plays serious programs of classical music featuring numerous notes, sharps, flats, clefs, bassoons, deceased audience members, etc.

Anyway, Mervin Muffitt, the music director of a well known local orchestra, in a recent interview in our local newspaper states that he has been asked to conduct a series of concerts for next season; the goal being to get people into the concert hall other than those who usually come. He asks these questions: "What would get the average Joe into the concert hall? Do you go to classical music concerts? Why or why not?"

Our first task is to define exactly what we mean by "classical music." When we look in volume "M" of our son's World Book Encyclopedia, we come to the section on music, which states: "There are two chief kinds of Western music, classical and popular." Thus we see that "classical music" is defined, technically, as "music that is not popular." This could be one reason why the "average Joe" does not care for it.

I myself am not a big fan. I will go to a classical concert only under very special circumstances, such as that I have been told to make a ransom payment there. But until I read the interview with Mr. Muffitt, I never knew why I felt this way. I've been thinking about it, and I have come up with what I believe are the three main problems with classical music:

It's confusing. With "popular" music, you understand what's happening. For example, in the song "Long Tall Sally," when Little Richard sings, "Long Tall Sally, she's built for speed," you can be certain that the next line is going to follow logically: "She got everything that Uncle John need." And then there will be the chorus, or, as it is known technically, the 'ooh baby' part. Whereas in classical music, you never know *what* will happen next. Sometimes the musicians stop completely in the middle of the song, thereby causing the average Joe, who is hoping

that the song is over, to start clapping, whereupon the deceased audience members come back to life and give him dirty looks, and he feels like a big dope. It would help if there were an electronic basketball-style clock hanging from the conductor's back, indicating how much time is left in the song. Speaking of which:

It takes too long. The Shangri-Las, performing "Leader of the Pack," take only about four minutes to tell a dramatic and moving story including a motorcycle crash. A classical orchestra can take five times that long just to sit down. There needs to be more of an emphasis on speed. There could be Symphony Sprints, wherein two orchestras would compete head-to-head to see who could get through a given piece of music the fastest. There could even be defense, wherein for example the trombone players would void their spit valves at the opposing violin section. This would be good, because:

It needs more action. When I was in college, I saw the great blues harmonica player James Cotton give a performance of "Rockin' Robin" wherein he stuck his harmonica into his mouth, held his arms out sideways like an airplane, and toppled headfirst off of an eight-foot stage into the crowd, where he landed safely on a cushion of college students and completed the song in the prone position. That same year—I did not see this personally, but I have friends who did—the great blues guitarist Buddy Guy gave a club performance wherein, while taking a solo, he went into the men's room (he had a long guitar cord), closed the door, apparently relieved himself, flushed, reopened the door and came back out and never stopped playing.

You do not forget musical experiences such as those.

I am not saying that classical musicians should do these things. It would be difficult to get, say, a harp into a restroom stall. I am just saying, Mr. Muffitt, that until the average Joe can expect this level of entertainment from classical music, he is probably going to stay home watching TV, stuck to his sofa like moss on a rock.

