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From the Editor's Desk

The resignation of Chapter President Jeffrey Aaron has caused an interruption in the MD/DC Chapter's flow of activities. The sudden extra burden has been taken on by our President-Elect, now President Bill Hawthorne. Please call Bill with any suggestions, offers to help, and general support. And read his President's Message on the following page! Our chapter's Executive Board Meeting for the Autumn 1998 quarter was held at Bill Hawthorne's home on Sunday, November 15, 1998. Bill and yours truly were the only members present. Lya Stern and Anne-Marie Shaw called in sick. (A visitor attended—a possum who Bill says shows up occasionally on the deck to eat leftover cat food, but he didn't seem interested in becoming a member.) Most of the meeting was taken up by me filling in our new President on chapter operations. It only occurred to us later that no one was taking minutes, so this paragraph in my Editor's message will have to suffice. Among the items discussed:

- An Urban Outreach Program grant of \$500 was awarded to the Princes George's County Orchestra.
- Bill will contact advertisers about renewals of their ads.
- Bill will make reservations for the **1999 MD/DC Chapter Brunch and Annual Meeting. Location: The Columbia Inn, Columbia, Maryland. Date: Sunday, May 16, 1999, at 10:00 A.M.** Plan now to attend. Each one of you can inject new life into your chapter by participating!

Many thanks to Dr. Carolyn Barrett for her article in this issue and thanks to MD/DC member Julianna Chitwood for soliciting the article.

Ronald Mutchnik's "Posture and Balance" workshops have been so successful that he has been asked to present the same material at a session during the upcoming convention in Los Angeles in March 1999! Read his article discussing the substance of his workshop in this issue.

Shortly after the Summer 1998 *Stringendo* appeared in members' mailboxes, a "Letter to the Editor" arrived in my own mailbox. This was a first for me! The letter appears on page 12. Except for her name—Mary Nill—I have no idea who the author is. She's not a member of ASTA WITH NSOA, and she put no return address on her envelope, which had a Baltimore postmark. After a few phone calls to Student Information Offices of colleges in the area, and with no results, I gave up. I thought her ideas had merit, however, and I hope you

readers will agree. Mary, if you are reading this, thanks for the letter, and give me a call to say hello.

During the past several years, *Stringendo* has printed items taken from the ASTA-L Discussion List on the Internet. The National Office has requested that State Editors no longer print these items.

O.K., here it is again: We still need someone to volunteer to make all the phone calls and update the Adult Orchestras in MD and DC List, which has been missing from *Stringendo* for several years. Believe me when I say this—the updated list will not appear again until a volunteer steps forward. All you will get is this irritating message on the Editor's page.

Soon after receiving this delayed Autumn 1998 issue, you will receive your Winter 1998-99 *Stringendo*, which I am laying out even as we speak (even as we type?). It will contain the updated lists for the MD/DC Certificate Program for Violin, Viola, and Cello. In addition, a description of the program and instructions for enrolling your students in the June 1999 event will be included. Lya Stern, chairman of the program, will be sending out duplicate information to members. Share your extra copies with colleagues, and if they are not ASTA WITH NSOA members, get them to join!

All the State Editors of ASTA WITH NSOA chapters received new forms for membership applications to include in our newsletters. These new forms reflect an increase in the yearly dues. Please take a few seconds to look at this new form on page 20. I am as puzzled about the increases as you probably are. According to a spokesman at the National Office, there will be an article in the February 1999 issue explaining the need for the significant increases.♪

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President's Message

by Bill Hawthorne

ASTA WITH NSOA MD/DC President



Warmest greetings to everyone in ASTA WITH NSOA. I'm very excited about this year's activities in our fine organization. This past spring as President-Elect, I looked forward to my two years of watching and "learning the ropes." Then I would have taken over the helm in the year 2000 as President of the MD/DC Chapter. However, as fate would have it, with the recent resignation of Jeffrey Aaron I suddenly find myself as President. I wish to thank Past President Lya Stern for her guidance. A special thanks goes to our editor Lorraine Combs for her immense amount of help that has kept me afloat.

The furtherance of excellence in string teaching has been my top priority for the past thirty-five years. I'm exceedingly grateful to hold this position in ASTA WITH NSOA so that I may be of assistance to lend and share knowledge with our string teaching community here in Maryland and the District of Columbia, as well as nationally.

As both a public school string instructor and a private instructor in my home studio, one of my objectives is to develop a more closely knit work-

ing relationship between the two factions. I am continuously receiving requests from other public school string teachers asking for information on who is teaching a particular string instrument in or near their area. Of course, I have encouraged these individuals to join ASTA WITH NSOA so they can see for themselves right where American String Teachers are located, and can choose someone near them right from our list of members. I would welcome any suggestions or ideas that you might have concerning this project.

I firmly believe that shared knowledge and ideas from our collective body of members can enrich us all in our teaching profession. As an example: one of my best bass teachers was a violist! (I won't elaborate on that subject now, but I'm sure it may open the door for still more bass and viola jokes.)

In closing, I would like to thank all of the ASTA WITH NSOA volunteers that make this organization the fine organization that it is today. ♪

September 10, 1998

To: Ellen Barclay, Executive Director, ASTA with NSOA

Dear Ms. Barclay:

Currently I have the honor of serving in two volunteer positions for ASTA with NSOA. I am the national bass editor for the AST and state president for the MD/DC Chapter.

My responsibilities are progressing well as the bass editor. We have received articles thus far from three highly respected authors—Daniel Swaim, Lucas Drew, and Gary Karr. Others are forthcoming.

Time and business constraints are preventing me from doing the kind of job that I know is necessary as state president. I feel that it is necessary for me to step down in this capacity. Please accept my resignation following the semi-monthly, September 27, 1998, MD/DC Executive Board meeting which I am hosting in my home.

I greatly appreciate all of the support that I continue to receive from national and state ASTA with NSOA members. Thank you very much.

I look forward to continuing on the team as the bass editor.

Thank you.

Jeffrey Aaron

CC: Lya Stern, Past President
William Hawthorne, President-Elect
Anne-Marie Shaw, Secretary/Treasurer
Lorraine Combs, Editor

ASTA WITH NSOA MD/DC Chapter Executive Board Meeting

September 27, 1998, 7:30 P.M. Members present: Jeffrey Aaron, William Hawthorne, Lya Stern, Lorraine Combs and Anne-Marie Shaw.

Meeting called to order by President Jeffrey Aaron.

As of this meeting, Jeff is resigning his position as President, and Bill is officially taking over all Presidential duties. His phone number has been changed to 410-741-0882.

The Spring Banquet will take place on May 16, 1999, from 10:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M. at the Columbia Inn.

The Prince George's County Philharmonic has been awarded a \$500 national grant for their Urban Outreach program. Currently, there is no special projects grant in process for 1998/99.

Ray Irving has agreed to be the new Bass Forum editor. There are still no Harp or Guitar Forum editors.

Jeff would like to begin a reciprocal relationship with MMEA by giving a workshop and inviting all MMEA members.

Contest information needs to be listed in *Stringendo*. In the future, MENC should provide the list to the *Stringendo* editor by the end of the summer in order for it to be published in the fall edition.

The cover of *Stringendo* will reflect the merge with NSOA, which has resulted in 30 new local members and 900 new members nationally. Also, the National Office's zip code has been changed to 20191.

A subcommittee of Jeff and Bill has been formed to rewrite the mission statement to include NSOA.

Because there is no current President-Elect, Bill will also take on the duty of soliciting advertisements for the Fall issue of *Stringendo*.

Treasurer's Report (updated to 8/31/98)

Checking Account

Total Deposits: 1,144.37

Total Withdrawals: 827.00

Current Balance: 1,627.90

No change in Savings Account

(Balance as of 6/30/98: 2,133.53)

Next executive board meeting to take place on November 15, 1999, at 7:45 P.M. at Bill Hawthorne's home. Meeting adjourned at 9:30 P.M.

Minutes submitted by Anne-Marie Shaw



New Brain Research and the Suzuki Method

by Dr. Carolyn Barrett

Paper presented at the SAA 8th Conference

In a 1969 article in *Talent Education*, Dr. Suzuki said: “The human life-force, in responding to stimuli afforded by the environment, enables development through the acquisition of ability... this grand life-force has the ability, contingent on one’s environment

Research is beginning to show that environmental factors can influence brain development in infants and young children. Music education, in particular, is being shown to create neurological pathways in the brain that otherwise would not be there.

and upbringing, to grow and develop into the lowliest specimen, or the most beautiful or most superb.” I can remember being astonished by such statements as I read them in the early years of my Suzuki involvement. Dr. Suzuki was actually asserting that we could increase a child’s potential, that we could create talent and ability in a child by the way we nurtured that child. The news seemed too good to be true—such a wonderful thought for everyone, adults included. Dr. Suzuki talks about dealing with scorn from people who saw only genetics and inborn differences as essential. He commented that these factors were of course operative, but asserted it was far more important to consider how the vast resources of the life-force foster human potential. At that time, Suzuki could argue

only from such sources as the example of Kamala, the child raised by wolves, and his own experience and vision. Now scientific evidence is beginning to come in to support Dr. Suzuki’s contentions. Research is beginning to show that environmental factors can influence brain development in infants and young children. Music education, in particular, is being shown to create neurological pathways in the brain that otherwise would not be there. Indeed, it seems to be true that early music training, given in a

serene loving environment, does increase the capacity and potential

Seventeen of the nineteen kids who received music lessons increased their spatial-temporal IQs by a 46 percent mean. Those children who received no music lessons only improved by a 6 percent mean.

of children. The neurological pathways created by keyboard training have been shown to increase spatial IQ by a 46 percent mean in pre-school children (“Learning” by A.J.S. Rayl in *OMNI*, Winter 1995, p.14). “The magnitude of the improvement in spatial-temporal reasoning from music training was greater than one standard deviation, equivalent to an increase from the 50th percentile on the WPPSI-R [Wechsler Preschool and Primary

Scale of Intelligence-Revised Performance Subtest] to above the 85th percentile” (Rauscher, Shaw et al, “Music training causes long-term enhancement of preschool children’s spatial-temporal reasoning,” *Neurological Research*, 1997, Volume 19, February). That is an increase of 35 percentile points.

Seventeen of the nineteen kids who received music lessons increased their spatial-temporal IQs by a 46 percent mean. Those children who received no music lessons only improved by a 6 percent mean, which is less than expected by chance (Rayl). Shaw, Peterson and Grandin describe the results of the Rauscher study in a recent invited article for *Arts Education Policy Review*: “Four standard age-calibrated spatial reasoning tests were given at the beginning and at the end of the study; ...a highly significant improvement of large magnitude was found for the Keyboard group in the spatial-temporal reasoning test... The control groups did not improve significantly on any of the tests... There are enormous educational implications of

these results” (“Spatial-Temporal versus Language-Analytic Reasoning: The Role of Music Training”). The results of this study also indicate that the Language/Analytic (LA) areas of the brain are separate from the Spatial-Temporal (ST) area of the brain that was impacted by keyboard lessons. The LA areas showed no effect from the keyboard training. The April 23 issue of *Nature* carries an article citing studies from Europe showing with magnetic

source imaging that the ST area of the brain is larger in musicians than in the general populace. This is especially true of musicians who started their music training at an early age (*The Washington Post*, 27 April 1998).

This is exciting news for the Suzuki movement as it puts us on the cutting edge of some of the most important findings in education today. Moreover, we are experts in doing exactly what seems to be needed to create the increased potential in children, thanks to Dr. Suzuki's vision. It is important that we speak out to the larger educational community which, incredibly, at this time, is thinking of cutting music from the curricula. We have the capacity to move in and initiate programs which will benefit children immensely and help solve the crisis faced by U.S. education right now with regard to its low achievement as compared to educational systems in other countries (Shaw, Peterson, and Grandin).

Another important contribution the Suzuki movement could make is to offer its population for studies to help replicate in greater numbers the findings that are being reported by scientific researchers. This is a time of great opportunity for anyone capable of creating a carefully designed series of studies to show the effect of Suzuki training on the IQ and achievement of Suzuki students. Dr. Suzuki's wisdom and foresight included not only the ideas of starting to teach children when they were very young and to teach them music, but also to teach with love. These are the three key elements to higher functioning. A child can be taught music at an early age with harsh unloving methods and s/he may become a good musician but

will not have the beautiful heart that Dr. Suzuki wanted to foster. Indeed, s/he will probably have personality problems and be an unhappy, miserable human being in spite of having acquired skill in music. Teaching by the use of loving attention is the key ingredient in this threesome. Psychologists are, in fact, learning that being brought up in abusive, frightening situations is perhaps even physiologically damaging to children, causing the production of strong chemicals in

...the Spatial-Temporal area of the brain is larger in musicians than in the general populace. This is especially true of musicians who started their music training at an early age.

their brains which damage the brain and cause a variety of disorders including Attention Deficit Disorder, Schizophrenia, Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome, and many more. Don Campbell in *The Mozart Effect* details the soothing therapeutic effect music can have when used and taught in a loving, serene manner.

Let us take a brief look at some of the studies that have been done to date, how they support Dr. Suzuki's basic philosophy, and how we can help them carry Dr. Suzuki's message in scientific and educational circles. In particular, let us look at some of the studies by Gordon Shaw and his colleagues and see how these have played out in the popular press as well as in scientific and educational circles.

Of particular interest to musicians is an article from a conference on pre-school education in Athens, Greece in 1996. In it, Dr. Shaw describes how inherent brain patterns, when mapped onto various pitches and instruments, produce recognizable

styles of music. The mapping was done with evolutions from trion model brain-firing patterns, Shaw's model of the brain which he developed with colleague Dr. Xiaodan Leng. A cassette tape of trion music was available from Shaw at the Athens conference. (You can also hear "brain music" on the audio cassette of the National Public Radio broadcast "Gray Matters: Music and the Brain," [Dana Alliance for Brain Initiatives, March 1998].) Shaw and Leng's work was motivated

by their structured neuronal model of the cerebral cortex which hypothesized a causal connection between music training and spatial ability (Leng and Shaw, "Toward a neural theory of higher brain function using music as a window," *Concepts Neurosci.*, 2[1991] 229-258). "Musical activity," they proposed, "strengthens neural firing patterns organized in a spatial-temporal code over large regions of the cortex. These firing patterns are also exploited by spatial reasoning tasks. This model, together with studies which show correlations between music training and spatial tasks, led to the following prediction: Music, which is cross-culturally appreciated from birth, can be used to develop these inherent brain patterns along with their associated behaviors."

Studies in 1992 and 1990 demonstrated that sophisticated cognitive abilities are present in children as young as five months (K. Wynn, "Addition and subtraction by human infants," *Nature* 358:749 [1992] and E.S. Spelke, "Principles of object perception," *Cognitive Science*, 14:29 [1990]). Similarly, musical abilities are evident in infants (S.A. Trehub, "Infants' perception of music patterns," *Perception and Psychophysics* 41:635 [1987] and

C.L. Krumhansl and P.W. Jusczyk, "Infants' perception of phrase structure in music," *Psychological*

Music plays a very special role among higher brain functions as it is universally appreciated even at birth...music is a "pre-language" which can enhance the cortex's ability to accomplish pattern development, thus improving other higher brain functions.

Science 1:70[1990]). Music then may serve as a "pre-language" (with centers distinct from language centers in the cortex [I. Peretz et al, "Functional dissociations following bilateral lesions of auditory cortex, *Brain* 117:1283 (1994)]), available at an early age, which can access inherent cortical spatial-temporal firing patterns and enhance the cortex's ability to accomplish pattern development.

Rauscher, Shaw and Ky explain in a 1995 article ("Listening to Mozart enhances spatial-temporal reasoning: towards a neurophysiological basis," *Neuroscience Letters* 185 [1995] 44-47) that the trion model is a highly structured mathematical realization of the Mountcastle organizational principle in which the cortical column is the basic neural network of the cortex, and is comprised of subunit mini-columns, the idealized trions. This principle was described in *The Mindful Brain* (MIT, Cambridge), edited by Mountcastle and Edelman in 1978. A columnar network of trions has a large repertoire of inherent, quasi-stable, periodic, spatial-temporal firing patterns which can be excited. They can be enhanced by small changes in connection

strengths via a Hebb learning rule and probabilistically evolve from one to another in natural sequences.

These inherent patterns form the common neural language of the cortex. The results were striking when evolutions of the patterns were mapped onto various pitches and instruments producing recognizable styles of music.

Music plays a very special role among higher brain functions as it is universally appreciated even at birth (Krumhansl and Jusczyk, 1990). Leng and Shaw (1991) proposed that music is a "pre-language" which can enhance the cortex's ability to accomplish pattern development, thus improving other higher brain functions. These ideas led Leng and Shaw to behavioral experiments to test the prediction

College students scored significantly higher on spatial-temporal reasoning after listening to a Mozart Sonata (K. 448 for two pianos), but not after listening to silence or to minimalist music. These experiments were the first to demonstrate a causal link for music enhancing spatial-temporal reasoning.

that music training at an early age, when the child's cortex is very plastic, would enhance the ability to use pattern development in spatial-temporal reasoning. It became clear to Shaw and Fran Rauscher, a psychologist who became involved in testing results, that the behavioral experiments started with pre-school children in September 1992 would take years at considerable financial

cost. Thus, they came up with the idea for the "Mozart effect" experiments (Rauscher, Shaw and Ky, 1995), which could be done relatively quickly.

They decided to test what would happen to brain functioning if people listened to Mozart's music before performing a difficult task. Mozart was also chosen because he was composing at the age of four. Shaw and his colleagues expected that Mozart was exploiting the inherent repertoire of spatial-temporal firing patterns in the cortex. College students scored significantly higher on spatial-temporal reasoning after listening to a Mozart Sonata (K.448 for two pianos), but not after listening to silence or to minimalist music (Shaw, Rauscher and Ky, 1995).

These experiments were the first to demonstrate a causal link for music enhancing spatial-temporal reasoning. (Spatial-temporal reasoning is the ability to anticipate how objects will fit together in space, over time.

Children use spatial-temporal reasoning for completing puzzles. As we get older it enables us to solve higher math problems, or to think several moves ahead while playing chess.)

In the 1995 study by Rauscher, Shaw and Ky (Listening), 79 students participated for five consecutive days with 16 paper folding and cutting items,

choosing the designs that would result after certain folds and cuts were executed on a piece of paper. They were divided into three groups with equivalent abilities. One group heard ten minutes of Mozart's Sonata K.448 before testing, one group sat in silence for ten minutes, and the third group heard something different each day. This was done for five consecutive days. The Mozart

group performed significantly better than the other groups. Rauscher and colleagues proposed that the

...music training produces long-term modifications in underlying neural circuitry in regions not primarily concerned with music.

mechanisms for the enhancement of spatial reasoning by music include the following: 1) Listening to music helps “organize” the cortical firing patterns so that they do not wash out for other pattern development functions, in particular, the right hemisphere processes of spatial-temporal task performance. 2) Music acts as an “exercise” for exciting and priming the common repertoire and sequential flow of the cortical firing patterns responsible for higher brain functions. 3) The cortical symmetry operations among the inherent patterns are enhanced and facilitated by music. The paper concluded that perhaps the cortex’s response to music is the “Rosetta Stone” for the “code” or internal language of higher brain function.

In 1996 and 1997 Rauscher, Shaw, and colleagues went on to test the hypothesis that music training for young children enhances spatial-temporal reasoning. Seventy-eight preschool children participated in this study. Thirty-four children received private piano keyboard lessons, 20 children received private computer lessons, and 24 children provided other controls. Four standard, age-calibrated, spatial reasoning tests were given before and after training. Significant improvement on the spatial-temporal test was found for the keyboard group only. The improvement was significant

enough that the authors felt it suggested music training produces long-term modifications in underlying neural circuitry in regions not primarily concerned with music. They proposed that an improvement of the magnitude reported might enhance the learning of standard curricula, such as mathematics and science, that draw heavily upon spatial-temporal reasoning.

These results, i.e., that music training enhances spatial-temporal learning in preschool children, are of major educational interest. Shaw cautions that much more scientific research is necessary before we understand the full educational implications of music training

The magnitude of the improvement in spatial-temporal reasoning from music training was very substantial and statistically significant.

enhancing how children think and reason, but proposes that enhancement from music training should greatly improve young children’s learning of subjects that draw heavily upon spatial-temporal reasoning, such as math and science. Shaw believes it would be of enormous worldwide interest to investigate, in a controlled manner, the possible enhancements of spatial-temporal reasoning as a result of teaching music to young children. Finding a relatively inexpensive and convenient way to produce the enhancements he found from giving private piano keyboard lessons would be incredibly useful (Shaw, Athens address, Greek Conference of Pre-School Education).

The long-term enhancement

found in the study represented an increase of more than a factor of 100 over previous listening experiments. The study suggests that music training, unlike listening, produces long-term modifications in underlying neural circuitry in regions not primarily concerned with music, a finding of educational importance for all children. The magnitude of the improvement in spatial-temporal reasoning from music training was very substantial and statistically significant.

Shaw stresses that further research is imperative to fully understand how to implement these results in the school system. He stressed that this research is also necessary to make these exciting new findings convincing to the scientific community. He suggests that parents and music teachers battle those responsible for funding cuts in music education and make them aware of the new neuroscience and behavioral research concerning our young children’s minds and how they think and reason (Athens address). Those of us in the Suzuki community can perhaps do even more to help design research and provide data on how we have seen music enhance learning in the children in the Suzuki community.



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Dr. Carolyn Barrett is a Suzuki teacher in Reston, Virginia and is the author of the book The Magic of Matsumoto: The Suzuki Method of Education.

Workshop on Posture and Balance for Violinists and Violists

by Ronald Mutchnik

The workshop held in my home on September 14, 1998, dealt with basic posture and balance, and how they relate to all aspects of left- and right-hand technique. The principles presented in the workshop were the result of much observation and investigation over the years (and more than a little frustration and confusion along the way) in an attempt to find a comfortable way of supporting the instrument and be able to feel secure and pain-free in applying the technical skills needed to communicate music with confidence and conviction. What follows are the basic ideas that came out of this search.

1. The feet, both seated and standing, should be kept apart (no further than the distance from shoulder to shoulder) in the shape of a “V,” with the heels closer together than the toes, but not touching each other.

2. The knees should be slightly bent to allow a springiness in one’s stance and never locked.

3. The lower back should maintain its natural backwards “C” curve and never be forced into a leaning-back position with hips thrust forward (even if the knees are bent). This position will cause undue strain on the back and is an unnecessary, exaggerated posture.

4. The spine should retain its natural “S” curve and not collapse or slouch nor become unduly upright and rigid.

5. The neck should retain its natural “C” curve (beware the chinrest/shoulder rest combination that eliminates this curvature).

6. The head should be upright and looking straight ahead, as if talking to someone the same height as you. It need not tilt or turn permanently to the right or left, but be capable of moving in either direction as you wish.

7. The angle of the violin as it juts out from the chin/jaw area is critical! Here is where the majority of problems in all areas of technique originate and the teacher must be extremely observant and careful to adjust this angle from time to time to suit the student’s developing physiology. In general, the classic 45-degree angle does not seem to work. An angle closer to 60 degrees or a little beyond allows most people of average arm length to position the left hand on the violin with a minimum of wrist turning to

enable the fingers to reach comfortably over top the strings. To bring the hand around to the right by twisting the elbow and with it the muscle that supports the shoulder blade is a recipe for disaster and could lead to permanent damage. The elbow should remain close to the ribs and not need to stretch outward much beyond this position. The left shoulder should not pull inward but instead remain neutral so that the upper chest stays open and not pinched or constricted. With this posture, the elbow need make only a slight swing to the right as the hand is balanced on each successively lower-pitched string.

8. The chinrest to the left of the tailpiece works better for persons of average or shorter length arms. A chinrest over the tailpiece will be fine for folks with longer than average arms. A combination of built-up chinrest and shoulder rest that fills in the gap between the ledge of one’s upper chest and the underside of the jaw will give a secure but flexible fit to those with longer than average necks and/or sloping shoulders. Never raise the left shoulder to fill in the gap. Using no shoulder rest may work for some, but ease of shifting and continuous vibrato will be more awkward. Those who eschew the use of a standard shoulder rest occasionally use at least some kind of padding to bring greater stability to the instrument. There are many kinds of chinrests and shoulder rests to choose from, and, once again, the teacher must be very observant with regard to the student’s physiology. Do be careful of the chinrest molded to fit the contours of the jaw and chin. If one changes angles of the head and neck while playing, such position-specific chinrests will no longer feel secure. The chinrest needs to be deep enough and wide enough to accommodate at least a few different positions or movements with the head, neck, chin, and jaw.

9. When standing in front of a music stand, keep to the left of the stand. As long as your instrument is parallel with the edge of the stage, so your tone travels centrally out to the audience (as opposed to favoring one side or the other), you will be able to see the music in front of you and never need to drop your scroll!

10. When seated in an orchestra,



staying to the left of the stand will only be possible for the inside player. Each player should position his/her chair to create a space between the two chairs that is shaped in an upside down “V.” This arrangement makes it possible not only to avoid the bows getting locked in combat, but also to prevent the scrolls from blocking the other player’s view of the music. The bow of the inside player should be located behind the violin of the outside player. In addition, with the feet and legs apart forming the “V” shape described at the beginning of the article, the bow, playing across the highest string, will still find a path between the legs without hitting the right knee. Also, staying towards the edge of the chair (but not on the edge!) will allow for a rocking motion from the hips that helps bring one closer to the music without compromising the posture of one’s back, and maintains a clear view of the conductor and the surrounding players. Leaning into the back of the chair is not good for one’s spine and encourages slouching and other visually disturbing postures.

11. Because of the leftward angling of the scroll, the bow will travel out in front of you rather than off to the side. To reach to the tip, the arm will swing forward from the shoulder without the shoulder rising up. This movement is advantageous for several reasons. The weight of the relaxed, hanging arm can be more readily felt at the weakest part of the bow, the tip, and therefore not require inappropriate finger pressure to “dig in” to get more sound. Also, the wrist and forearm will not feel the need to torque as much and therefore not risk getting tight, especially in the elbow joint. Finally, it is easier to release or hold back weight in this position because one can suspend the arm more naturally in front rather than off to the side. Hanging the bow arm off to the side creates a wider gap between the arms and tends to make one feel split in two, with the hands and arms at odds with each other rather than operating in sync closer to one’s center of gravity.

The rest of the workshop dealt with the application of these principles to the movement of the fingers up and down in any given position, shifting from one position to another, vibrato, doublestops, triplestops, and extensions and contractions of the hand and fingers, bow strokes, string crossings, and tone production.

The saying “a picture is worth a thousand words” is especially applicable to playing instruments as challenging as the violin and viola. To elucidate the points made in this article, a soon-to-be-released video on this subject will be an additional guide and serve as a useful reference for both teacher and student alike. 

Baltimore-born, Ronald Mutchnik studied locally with internationally renowned violinist Robert Gerle and continued studies at New England Conservatory in Boston with Joseph Gingold and Masuko Ushioda. He continued post-graduate studies at the Tel Aviv University in Israel with Yair Kless.

He has won several state competitions and has appeared as recitalist and orchestral soloist in various locations, including Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Minnesota, and Louisiana. He has been a member of contemporary chamber groups such as Res Musica, as well as early music instrumental groups. He continues as first violinist of the Avanti String Quartet and as a member of the Columbia-based “Sundays at Three” Chamber Music Series. Currently he is assistant concertmaster of the Baltimore Chamber Orchestra and concertmaster of the Handel Choir’s Festival Orchestra and the Columbia Pro Contare. He is on the faculties of Goucher College and the University of Maryland Baltimore County.

Recently, Mutchnik appeared in the made-in-Maryland movie “Washington Square,” in which he performed an original composition written especially for the film.

He teaches privately and participates in the Baltimore Symphony’s Arts Excel program in addition to serving as lecturer and adjudicator of national and state string conventions and competitions. He is a Past-President of ASTA MD/DC Chapter.

Anyone who would like to have more information on the subject of this article is welcome to call Ronald Mutchnik at 410-461-0618.

“This is the surrounding stuff that allows you to play.”

—Marty Taglieri
(commenting on Ronald Mutchnik’s Balance and Posture workshop)

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor:

In response to the freshman in the last *Stringendo* issue seeking advice as a first semester music student at a university, my advice, based on my own freshman experience, would be:

1. Teachers can't read a student's mind. They are approachable, no matter how in awe freshmen are of them. Muster up the courage to visit them during their office hours and get to know them as people. You will feel more relaxed after you ask them to clarify some part of a course that might frustrate you. It does not hurt to expose your ignorance. They are there to help; if you keep secret what you don't understand they will find out anyway on an exam. So speak up! Grades are important. Don't forget—graduate schools require at least a "B" average to get in and you need letters of reference from teachers to get a job. If people knew everything, they wouldn't need college, so don't be afraid to ask questions.

2. During summer breaks students really should work on any weaknesses. (For instance, most students find aural dictation in music theory courses difficult to master.) Pre-register for the fall. Ask faculty members which books they plan to use, get copies from other students or the bookstore, and read them over the summer. That makes it easier to get all "A"s for the fall semester. If you have a strong music background from high school, taking a summer class lightens the load in the fall so you have more time to practice and socialize.

3. I didn't necessarily like all the different styles of music I was required to learn, but the faculty wanted to develop well-rounded students. So I practiced until it was perfect to get an "A" in the course. Then I'd pull out the music my ears longed to hear. Occasionally, I would lose all sense of time practicing until the security guard knocked on the practice room door and announced it was closing time.

4. Stay focused on practicing. (Have the discipline to keep the opposite sex out of the practice room!) Focus on your long term goal—your degree. Then practice the difficult

passages. Practicing is easy when you love to hear the sound of the instrument. You will love the way music vibrates from the strings through your fingers all through the body to the soul. (I'm miserable when I don't practice every day because my muscles have become conditioned to holding the instrument—as if it were an extension of me.) Think about how disappointed your parents, teachers, and the public will be if you don't practice for concerts, wasting the talent God gave you. You owe it to them to do your best!

5. I volunteered as a lab monitor for the computer lab in which all the pianos and computer programs were located. I had to make sure all the students signed in and out, besides making sure they treated the equipment with respect. It was a great way to make friends. I learned all the students' names, which instructors were easy, which ones students feared, who gave easy exams, and who gave the hardest exams. I discovered every frustration a student experiences by listening as a friend.

6. Be open to learning other disciplines besides music. After reading all the textbooks for the whole program, I switched to a triple major: studying allied health, paralegal studies, and theology. Music is still a part of me but only one part!

7. Avoid the temptation to abuse your body with sodas, beer, and junk food. Drink milk, juice, plenty of water, and eat nourishing meals. Practicing around mid-term and finals can be exhausting. Maintain a proper diet to strengthen your muscles and to keep your mind alert. If you do not pace yourself throughout the semester, stress is placed on your immune system. Don't forget about physical exercise. Exercising daily not only keeps the muscles in tone to practice, but prevents many ailments so many musicians seem to get (from sedentary lifestyles).

Good luck,
Mary Nill



ASTA WITH NSOA 1999 Composition Contest

Purpose:

To encourage the composition, publication, and performance of music of quality for the benefit of school orchestra programs.

1999 Category:

An original unpublished composition suitable for String Orchestra. Entries for elementary, middle school/junior high, and high school level string orchestra will be accepted. Compositions written for commission will not be accepted.

Prize:

National publicity and \$1,000. Upon publication, all royalties will remain the sole property of the composer. (The winner of the 1999 ASTA WITH NSOA Composition Contest will keep all royalties in addition to the \$1,000 cash prize.)

1999 Deadline:

Must be postmarked no later than April 1, 1999.

Specifications:

Manuscripts for this contest are evaluated by score analysis and a live performance. The length of the composition should be appropriate to the age level. The manuscript must be clear and legible and include the title and rehearsal numbers or letters. The string parts should be thoroughly edited with bowings and fingerings appropriate to the age level. Allow for page turns. Strings must have separate staves for 1st violin, 2nd violin, viola, cello, and double bass.

Submission of Manuscripts:

The manuscript and parts must not contain any identification of the composer. Six (6) copies of the score and a set of parts (8,8,5,5,3) are required. A taped recording of the composition is encouraged. Manuscripts, parts, and tapes will not be returned. Only one entry per composer will be allowed. Commissioned works will not be accepted.

Liability:

Although every effort will be made to protect and safeguard all manuscripts, neither ASTA WITH NSOA nor anyone connected with this contest will assume responsibility for loss or damage. It is strongly recommended that contestants keep the original copies of the score, parts, and tapes.

Selection Process:

In the Preliminary Round, all entries will be screened (score analysis) by a panel of three judges. Compositions selected for the Final Round will be performed by a high school orchestra for a panel of five judges. Only the winning composer's name will be announced. The identity of all other contestants will be held in strict confidence. ASTA WITH NSOA reserves the right to declare that a winner does not exist if the entry requirements and the musical standards are not fulfilled.

Publication:

ASTA WITH NSOA will assist the composer of the winning composition in gaining publication. The winning composition may be published by any publisher jointly agreed to by the composer and the ASTA WITH NSOA Executive Board. When published, the winning composition must carry the following designation: "Winner: 1999 ASTA WITH NSOA Composition Contest" on the score and on each part.

For an application form contact:

Michael L. Allen, Chair
ASTA WITH NSOA Composition Contest
2305 Kilkenny Drive West
Tallahassee, FL 32308

Phone: 850-644-4112
Fax: 850-644-2033
E-mail: allen_m@cmr.fsu.edu

Please include your mailing address and phone number.



Friday Morning Music Club

The Friday Morning Music Club announces its latest **auditions for student members**—held on January 23, 1999, at the Sumner School In Washington, D.C. Student members must be between the ages of 14 and 22 and be recommended by their private teachers. Student members are given the opportunity to participate in recitals and chamber music activities.

Audition requirements for specific categories are as follows:

A. Solo Piano and Instrumental: Student candidates for solo piano and other instruments shall perform from memory compositions from each of three contrasting periods and styles for a total duration of ten to fifteen minutes. Music may be used in the performance of sonatas for solo instrument with piano. If a sonata or suite is used, only one movement is required. Contemporary music may be played with a score.

B. Piano Accompaniment: Student candidates shall accompany compositions from three periods. If the candidate wishes to qualify to accompany instrumentalists, a sonata must be included in the audition.

C. Chamber Ensemble: Student candidates for Chamber Ensemble shall perform one movement each from three chamber works that represent different pe-

riods. Music may be used. Candidates in this category must audition in groups of three or more.

D. Composition: Student composer candidates shall submit two or more original compositions. These compositions shall be judged by the Performance Membership Committee for Composers.

E. Voice: Student candidates for voice shall perform from memory compositions from three contrasting periods and styles. One foreign language must be used and one work must be sung in English. For candidates aged 18–22, one selection must be an operatic or oratorio aria or arietta sung in the original key and language.

F. Other: Special arrangements will be made by the Audition Chairman for candidates in categories other than those listed above.

Teachers interested in receiving applications for their students should contact Mrs. Frances B. Kaplan at 301-657-2557 or Judy Silverman at 301-871-7492. Additionally, you may contact Ms. Silverman for further information on the Friday Morning Music Club.

The deadline for submitting applications was January 3, 1999.

Suzuki Workshop at Towson

The Suzuki Association of Greater Baltimore Area will host Terri Durbin in a two-day workshop at Towson State University.

Place: Fine Arts Building, Towson State University

Dates: Saturday, January 30, 1999, for students
Sunday, January 31, 1999, for Suzuki teachers

Student fee: \$5
Teacher's fee: \$40

Teachers may order lunch. Information on how to do this will be mailed upon request.

Please bring instruments!

Pre-registration for teachers is requested; students for the Saturday workshop may register at the door.

For further information, applications, and repertoire for the students, please call Cindy Swiss 410-889-8325, or Anne Lane Vosough 410-825-5557.

Please note: The editor apologizes to the members of the Friday Morning Music Club and to the members of the Suzuki Association of Greater Baltimore Area. This issue of *Stringendo* was published too late for readers to respond to these announcements. However, it is hoped that a few ASTA WITH NSOA members were able to observe the events.

Mary Graham Lasley 1999 Scholarship Competition

Sponsored by the Alexandria Symphony Orchestra and the Symphony Orchestra League of Alexandria, the competition is open to: 1) current full-time graduate and undergraduate students of music at any college, university, or conservatory in Virginia, D. C., or Maryland, or 2) residents of Virginia, D.C., and Maryland currently studying elsewhere. Contestants may be no more than 26 years of age as of March 21, 1999.

Competition takes place on Sunday, March 21, 1999, at Northern Virginia Community College in Alexandria. Three cash prizes, one \$1000 and two \$750, may be awarded with an opportunity for one of the winners to be invited to solo with the Alexandria Symphony at the discretion of the Music Director.

Applications must be postmarked no later than February 19, 1999. Please address further inquiries and correspondence to:

Lisa P. Waller
4209 S. 32nd Road
Arlington, VA 22206
703-379-6953

MD/DC Chapter wishes to thank Bill Gales of Gales' Violin Shop in College Park and Chuck Levin of Washington Music Center in Wheaton for their generous donations of musical instruments to needy students who are currently studying with ASTA WITH NSOA members.

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Corrections and Changes

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