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President's Message

Dear ASTA MD/DC Chapter members:

Happy Spring! It has been an exciting year already. Our chapter was very well represented at the ASTA National Conference in Providence, Rhode Island. Everywhere I went, I saw friends and colleagues from home. With so many interesting sessions and exhibition booths, the conference was both invigorating and dizzying. I saw fantastic performances, caught up with music teachers I met at last year's conference, and presented as well. For those of you who have yet to attend a National Conference, I hope you will consider it for 2014. A highlight for me was accepting the Outstanding Chapter award at the leadership workshop. With all of the exciting things going on in our chapter (World on a String, ASTACAP, the Scholarship Award, and Solo Strings Festival), we are getting some National attention!

Please help us spread the word about what an important and vibrant organization ASTA is. And more importantly, help us to meet the musicians and music teachers in our community who have not yet become members of our organization. We would like to extend our reach, increase our membership, and find ways to serve you even better. Drop us a line by visiting our website or sending us an e-mail. We would really like to hear from you. Happy music making!

Daniel Levitov



2013 Studio Teachers Meetings

MD/DC Chapter is pleased to announce the return of our Studio Teachers Meetings.

When: Tuesday, May 28, 2013, 9:00–10:30 a.m. Future dates will be announced at the first meeting, and via the weekly chapter eNewsletter, and on our website: www.asta.net.

What: A chance for studio teachers to meet each other in a warm social setting, and learn how to hone their craft of running a studio and teaching strings through lectures, demonstrations, and discussions.

Our first meeting of the year will be “**How to Effortlessly Create a Great Studio Website in 10 Minutes,**” presented by Chapter President-Elect Matthew Tifford. Any attendee bringing a flash drive with photography for their website (jpg images under 5mb in size required) will leave with a fully functional and completely free (and advertisement free) website.

Where: The home of Matthew Tifford, 11235 Ashley Drive, North Bethesda, MD 20852.

Food and Drink: Snacks and drinks will be provided.

RSVP: Email Matthew Tifford at matt.tifford@asta.net or phone him at 301-770-4377.

If you would like to make a presentation at one of these meetings, or if you have an idea of what you would like to discuss or hear about, please contact Matthew so he can schedule it. We are delighted to hear from you!

ASTACAP: An Overview of the Program

by Lya Stern, ASTACAP chair, MD/DC Chapter

If you are a teacher not yet familiar with the **ASTA Certificate Advancement Program (ASTACAP)**, a valuable teaching resource and motivating tool for your students, please read this short summary.

ASTACAP starts at the Foundation Level and includes ten additional graded levels defined by scales, etudes, pieces and sight-reading from the equivalent of early Suzuki Book 1 to the standard concerto repertoire. ASTACAP is available for violin, viola, cello, bass, and harp. Originating in MD/DC Chapter in 1998, ASTACAP has been in use nationally for several years.

The exams are offered in MD/DC in the winter and in the spring. They provide an annual goal for students, guided by their teachers, to prepare and aim for a high standard of excellence. Upon completion of each level, each student receives a Certificate of Achievement issued by the ASTA National office, an achievement they and their parents are rightly proud of.

The exams are non-competitive, private, and conducted in a relaxed friendly atmosphere. The flexible repertoire requirements are adaptable to any teaching style and will serve the average student as well as the high achieving one.

Teachers use the ASTACAP exams as achievement goals for their students, to help motivate them and accelerate their rate of progress.

ASTACAP was established in MD/DC Chapter in 1998 and since then, the exams have taken

place once or twice every year. The winter exams are coordinated by Dorée Huneven and Julianna Chitwood. Together with the spring exams coordinated by Mark Pfannschmidt and Lya Stern, a total of 150–200 students take the exams in MD/DC every year.

ASTACAP has been in use nationally for several years, and thousands of students nationwide have taken the exams since the inception of the program.

We encourage all teachers who have not yet tried the program, especially viola, cello, and bass teachers to come observe the exams, talk to teachers who have used the program, read all about it and consider enrolling their students.

One of the best ways to learn about the program and get familiar with the standards and expectations is to observe the exams. Please contact any of the coordinators to find out how easy it is to be an observer.

The Winter exams took place on February 17, 2013, and the Spring exams are scheduled for May 5, 2013. Contact information for all coordinators, exam location, deadlines, plus a complete description of the curriculum, exam requirements and rules can be found on our website at: **www.asta.net/certificateprogram**.

We look forward to hearing from you for the benefit of your students and more rewarding teaching.



ASTACAP: My Experience

by Grace Hughes, violin student

This year I had my first experience with the ASTA Certificate Achievement Program (ASTACAP). My violin teacher, Ms. Ale Schneider, told me about the event, and it sounded like a great learning experience because I would get feedback on my playing. I enjoy auditions and performances, so the challenge of the ASTACAP was something I would enjoy.

The requirements for ASTACAP depend on the level. I was on Level 2; therefore my requirements were sight-reading, a song of choice, an etude of choice, and three scales with their arpeggios. In January, Ms. Ale and I started preparing my pieces. She assigned the “Theme from Witches’ Dance” by Paganini and Wohlfahrt Etude No. 7.

I prepared by memorizing “Witches’ Dance.” I had worked on “Witches’ Dance” with my previous teacher, so I found it easier to memorize than a new song. This gave us more time to work on smaller details. Ms. Ale taught me good techniques like dynamic control with my bow, a better bow hold, smooth spiccato, and intonation. I worked on having all my notes in tune and playing with good rhythm and tone.

I did not have to memorize my etude. When I practiced my etude, I worked hard on intonation, rhythm and speed. Sometimes I would speed up and make mistakes, so I used a metronome to keep a consistent speed.

I was already familiar with the G Major scale, but I had to memorize the F Major and the D Melodic Minor. I used my scale book and memorized them by playing them over and over again. After all my practicing, I can play these scales much better than before.

My exam preparation with Ms. Ale taught me what preparation really means. Normally, when I prepared for an audition, I went through the piece a few times and was done with it. With those auditions, I did not succeed. For the ASTACAP, I practiced five days a week for six weeks. I even took my violin on our Iowa vacation to practice. With the ASTACAP I learned and experienced the true meaning of proper audition preparation.

The exam was awesome! When I went to the synagogue where it was held, I felt confident but a little nervous. We went to the practicing room and unpacked. I had about 30 minutes of practice time. Soon it was time to go and perform, so I followed Ms. Ale to the audition room. As I walked in, my palms were sweating and my heart was beating hard, but I was ready. My judge was nice and calm, and she put me at ease. When I walked out of the room I felt great about myself and my performance. The ASTACAP taught me that effort and hard work were the keys to success. Two weeks after the exam, I got my results. My results were so good that I moved from Level 2 to Level 3! Yay!

It is great to do auditions because you learn from them. At the ASTACAP, my judge gave me written feedback on my performance. Feedback is important to me because it doesn’t lie. Sometimes I feel I did really well in my performance, but when I get feedback, some of the mistakes I did not notice are pointed out. I will take my feedback from the ASTACAP and use it to improve my violin technique and playing.

Ever since my experience with the ASTACAP, I have improved with my violin and auditions. The ASTACAP was a terrific learning experience for me and I can’t wait for the next ASTACAP!



Postscript from Grace’s teacher, Ale Schneider, Membership Chair of ASTA MD/DC Chapter and a Suzuki Violin Teacher: “For the last four years, my studio has participated in the ASTACAP exams. I feel this has benefited my studio and has been a great experience for my students. I hope Grace’s account of her experience will encourage other teachers and students to begin participating in this highly rewarding experience. The process of preparing an audition and receiving written feedback from another expert in the field is invaluable to the students. The ASTACAP exams are highly recommended for students of all levels!”

Conservatory Studio Questionnaire

by Rebecca Henry, 2013 ASTA MD/DC Service to Strings Award recipient

Faculty: Peabody Conservatory, Peabody Preparatory, Gettysburg College Sunderman Conservatory.

One of my former pre-college students entered Mark Kaplan's violin studio at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music several years ago and upon returning for a visit, she shared with me the questionnaire that Professor Kaplan had asked her to fill out prior to her freshman fall. She gave me the privilege of reading her answers and I was deeply moved by the honesty and sincerity in her responses, and even learned a few things about her that I had not realized despite working with her throughout high school.

I found Mr. Kaplan's questions to be immensely thought provoking and valuable and so I gave him a call and asked if he would mind if I used a slightly revised version for my incoming students at Gettysburg College and at Peabody. It has been a wonderful instigator of discussion and awareness. Some students reveal a lot, and others are more cautious, but even how they express themselves has helped me get to know them better and give thought to how best to approach our journey ahead. Mr. Kaplan says that he has started reviewing the questionnaire with his graduating students and observes that the conversations looking back on their original answers have been fascinating and provide an important sense of closure with students as they move on to their next adventure in music.

Mr. Kaplan gave permission to share my revised questionnaire as part of a panel discussion at the National ASTA Conference last month. I moderated a discussion titled "Stepping Sideways: Things to Consider When Navigating a Course of Development for a Student Who is New to Your Studio." I was joined by Phyllis Freeman (Maryland Talent Education), Andrea Priester Houde (West Virginia University), Shelley Beard Schleigh (Music School of Delaware) and Christian Tremblay (UMBC and Peabody Preparatory). You may access the questionnaire and details of that discussion by going to www.classicalmusiccity.com and searching "Rebecca Henry" or "Stepping Sideways."

Please feel free to adapt this questionnaire to your environment if you wish, and enjoy getting to know your students!

- Your contact information.
- How old are you?
- Where did you grow up?
- List your past teachers together with city/institution and dates of study.
- Do you play piano at all? Briefly describe your level.
- Do you play any other instruments?
- Do you sing? Conduct? Compose?
- About how much time do you spend practicing each day on a good day? Describe yourself as a practicer in detail. Do you like to practice?
- Do you practice scales regularly? Do you like scales? Do you think you learn a lot from them?
- Do you practice etudes regularly? Do you like etudes? Do you think you learn a lot from them?
- Which aspects of your viola/violin playing are your particular strengths?
- Is there anything specific that you think especially needs work?
- Describe your training and approximate level in music theory.
- Describe your training and approximate level in ear training.
- Do you enjoy sight-reading?
- Do you enjoy going to concerts?
- About how many and what kind of concerts do you go to per year?
- What orchestral experience have you had?
- What etudes and repertoire have you studied?
Etudes (list books), Concerti, Solo works (i.e. Bach, etc.), Sonatas with piano, Shorter works, Chamber Music (Quartets, trios, etc.)
- Are there any pieces you are eager to play soon?
- Are there any pieces you are eager to play that might be further down the line?
- Do you enjoy performing? Describe yourself as a performer. Do you feel that you play better in performance or in practice? Do you find that the nerves of performing help or hurt you in performance? Do you feel able to be spontaneous in concerts?
- What would you ultimately like to achieve on the violin/viola? What kind of musical and career goals would be yours if anything could happen?
- What would you ultimately like to achieve on the violin/viola? This time be very realistic: What kinds of musical and career goals and future employment expectations after you are finished with your schooling do you see as reasonable and interesting?
- What other things are particularly interesting to you aside from music?



Preparing for College Auditions

by Dr. Gerald Fischbach, Professor of Violin, University of Maryland
ASTA MD/DC Chapter Outstanding Teacher of the Year Award recipient

I. When should the process begin?

- A. High School Sophomore year: Discuss career options in music
 - 1. Performance
 - a. Concert Soloist
 - b. Chamber Music
 - c. Orchestra
 - d. Freelance
 - 2. Teaching
 - a. School teacher: grade, middle, high
 - b. Private studio
 - c. College, University teacher
 - 3. Other
 - a. Conducting, Composing
 - b. Arts Management
 - c. Music Industry, Music Technology, etc.
- B. High School Junior year
 - 1. Decide on likely career options
 - a. Music
 - b. Other
 - 2. Compile list of schools
 - a. Teacher options
 - b. University, conservatory
 - c. Public, private
 - d. Large, small
 - e. Budget considerations
 - 3. Research audition repertoire requirements, select repertoire options
 - 4. Consider scheduling visits to schools most interested in
 - a. Get a feel for the campus and the Music School/Department
 - b. Establish contact with a teacher
 - c. Sit in on a class, lesson, studio class
 - d. View orchestra rehearsal, attend concert or recital
 - 5. Create calendar of admission deadlines, audition dates, pre-screening deadlines
 - 6. Consider whom to ask for letters of recommendation
 - a. Private teacher
 - b. School orchestra director

- c. Youth orchestra director
 - d. Other music professional
 - C. High School Senior year, Fall semester
 - 1. Refine list of schools, submit application materials
 - 2. Refine list of repertoire
 - a. Impressive repertoire vs. impressive performance
 - b. Help the committee decide
 - 3. Refine and season repertoire
 - 4. (Inquire about sample lessons)

II. What are schools looking for?

- A. Intonation
- B. Tonal concept
- C. Well-organized technique
- D. Musical temperament, sense of style
- E. Polish, comprehensive attention to small details (Reflects well on home teacher!)
- F. Personal energy
- G. Respect for the occasion: dress, demeanor, etc.
- H. Excellent academic record

III. What's the audition like?

- A. Friendly
- B. Professional
- C. Preliminaries: understand where to unpack instrument, tune, warm up
- D. Duration: usually 10–15 minutes for undergrad
- E. First selection, subsequent
- F. Be prepared to be asked to stop
- G. Don't be *too* prepared to be asked to stop

IV. Then what? (How it works at the University of Maryland)

- A. School process after auditions
 - 1. Auditioning Committees rank and recommend
 - 2. Music School-level committee makes decisions based on strategic needs
 - 3. University Admissions Office academic decisions conveyed to School of Music
 - 4. Music may petition U. Admissions for reconsideration of borderline cases
 - 5. Letters (acceptance, scholarship awards; rejection, waitlist) sent to students

- (UMD: Late February; other schools, 2–4 weeks after last audition date)
- B. Student process after auditions
1. Before notification: bite nails, pace nervously, behave in surly fashion around loved ones
 2. After notification: select offer from first-choice school; inform school ASAP—no later than May 1
 3. Follow through according to selected school procedures

Sample Undergraduate Audition Repertoire

University of Maryland

Violin, Viola, Cello: Movement of solo Bach from memory; 1st (fast) mvt of major concerto, or comparable single-movement work, from memory; Standard etude

Double Bass: 3-octave major scale and arpeggio; 1st movement of a standard concerto, or 2 contrasting mvts from a baroque sonata or Bach cello suite; 2 orchestral excerpts from the standard audition repertoire

Harp: Movement of a concerto or solo work, from memory; mvt from a solo work or etude in a style that contrasts from the first selection; Two orchestral or operatic excerpts, one preferably to include a cadenza

Rutgers University

Violin: Scale in 3 octaves of applicant's choice; 4, 8, 24 to a bow, as well as spiccato; 2 mvts Solo Bach; concerto mvt; etude, caprice, showpiece, movement of a duo sonata, contemporary repertoire, etc.

Viola: Scales & arpeggios; etude; 1 mvt Bach solo cello; 1 contrasting work

Violoncello: 3-octave scale & arpeggio; Solo Bach mvt; concerto mvt or equivalent; etude

Double Bass: Scale; Baroque sonata 2 mvts; etude; Wagner "Die Meistersinger" Overture

Eastman School of Music

Violin: (Preliminary screening DVD/CD requirement; by December 1) Concerto movement; 2 contrasting solo Bach movements; 3-octave major and minor scales and arpeggios

Viola: Concerto mvt; sonata, etc. movement;

solo Bach; etude or caprice; 3-octave scale and arpeggio

Double Bass: Concerto mvt: contrasting solo work; 1 orchestral excerpt; 2 scales

Harp: 3 contrasting solo works; an etude selected from the Bach-Grandjany Etudes for Harp

Guitar: Three contrasting major works from different stylistic periods

Juilliard School of Music (Preliminary screening requirement for all instruments)

Violin: Slow and fast mvt from 19th- or 20th-century concerto; 2 mvts solo Bach; Paganini caprice; piece or mvt written since 1939; scales and arpeggios in three octaves with double stops

Viola: Scales and arpeggios; etude; 2 mvts solo Bach; sonata mvt or short work; concerto movement

Cello: Concerto; 2 mvts Solo Bach; virtuoso piece; work composed after 1945

Double Bass: 3-octave scale and arpeggio; etude; 2 mvts of a Baroque sonata; 1 orchestral excerpt

Indiana University (Preliminary screening requirement for most instruments)

Violin: Major concerto 1st mvt w/cadenza (if it has one), or 2nd & 3rd mvts; 2 mvts Solo Bach

Viola: Two contrasting pieces.

Violoncello: Two contrasting pieces

Double Bass: Two contrasting pieces; Two standard orchestral excerpts

Harp: Two of the works on website; Sight-reading is required

Guitar: Bach Prelude from Cello Suite #1; Sor study Villa-Lobos Prelude #4 & Study No. 1 or similar

University of Michigan

Violin: Concerto 1st mvt w/cadenza (if applicable); 2 mvts Solo Bach; caprice: Paganini, Wieniawski, Dont

Viola: Etude; 2 mvts standard repertoire other than Telemann Concerto or Bach's 1st Suite; scales and arpeggios

Cello: Etude; 2 mvts Solo Bach; allegro mvt, standard cello concerto

Double Bass: Etude; 2 solo pieces or movements; (optional) orchestral excerpts

Harp: 4-octave scales and arpeggios in 2 keys; etude; 2 substantial works of contrasting style and/or time period



Mentoring: The Unheralded Teaching Skill

by Gerald Fischbach

You ask me what I as a college teacher hope that the incoming freshmen have learned before college; what I wish they already had as a skill set or behavior pattern that is sometimes not there.

The skill set issue is pretty straightforward: fluid bow arm, lively, balanced left hand and arm, balanced body with flexibility in all joints. “Perfect” is the standard of choice; we can work with a student who falls somewhat short of that goal, and is reaching in that direction.

As you prepare a student for the audition circuit, you may want to borrow a tactic I sometimes resort to in preparing a student for the end-of-semester jury. I ask, “Will you please do me a favor? [Pause just a moment here, for effect.] I’d like to ask you to make me look good. [Student puzzlement, followed by laughter.] Now you know, and I know, that we’ve been working diligently on your bow hand, but we haven’t changed your habit yet—that old, stiff bow hand keeps sneaking back into your playing. At your jury [audition], everyone will know who your teacher is. So please do me a favor; please, please, make me look good! And by the way, if you do, you’ll make a better impression yourself, as well.” This approach is a little silly, but I’ve been surprised at how well it can work, I guess because it moves some of the student’s focus away from self-worry, to being a helpful representative of the teacher.

The “behavior pattern” issue cited in the first paragraph is less obvious. Sometimes, well-taught students with a flair for expressive playing receive quite a shock as new college freshmen when they discover how serious their fellow students are, and what a total commitment of time and focus are required to be a music major. Nothing in their prior experience has prepared them for this reality. And nobody warned them! Music is terrifically time-intensive. Most undergraduate music programs require something like 80 credits in music—out of a total of 120, or about two-thirds of total credits! That’s more than twice as much as some other majors.

As if that weren’t enough in itself, hidden under those numbers is the fact that many of those music credits are unusually heavy: orchestra typically meets 6 hours a week and requires considerable

outside practice, and earns one credit; private lessons require 3 to 6 hours daily of practice, all for two to four credits; and so on. At the University of Maryland, we even have a required course (concert attendance) that is assigned zero credits! These under-valuations, practiced in various ways by almost all music schools, are clever ways of keeping the undergraduate degree program at the standard 120 credits, while still packing in all the course work deemed necessary for the undergraduate.

The bottom line is that music majors don’t have the time for socializing that students in other degree programs seem to find. It takes a special kind of dedication to prepare for a career in music, and the young high school student should be told that.

There’s one other mentoring responsibility I’d like to address, and to introduce it, I’d like to take us back more than four decades, to my early undergraduate days, to a remarkable summer music program that proved to be a life-changing event for me, in the way that it helped me to understand where I fit in the universe of other serious string students of my generation.

After my college sophomore year, I was lucky enough to attend the Congress of Strings, an eight-week, all-expenses-paid summer program sponsored by the American Federation of Musicians. Two students from every state of the Union were selected to attend. It was founded for the purpose of addressing the chronic shortage of American string players in major professional orchestras. Well! It seems to have worked! Nowadays, for every string audition for a major orchestra, there are literally hundreds of good candidates. And when it’s all over, one candidate gets the job—and hundreds don’t. (I think the explosive success of the Suzuki movement had a lot to do with this transformation, as well. For the record, the Congress of Strings ceased operations a number of years back.)

As a student’s love for playing begins seriously to develop into a desire to consider music as a profession, the student needs context: what are the various career options in music, where are the jobs, where do I fit in the universe of possibilities. It seems to me that our profession generally could do a better job of mentoring students along these

lines. Early in high school is probably a good time to begin the conversations about whether to major in music at college. The student is just reaching a stage of maturity capable of contemplating with a dash of reality the answer to the question, What do I want to be when I grow up? Glamorous concert and recording artist, touring the world and making lots of money? Not likely. Orchestra player? Maybe. Chamber musician? Sounds like fun; can you make a living doing that? Umm, what else is there? What's that? Teaching? Gosh, I hadn't thought of that. No, I don't think so. I want to perform!

At this point in the thought flow, you have some wonderful news for your student: *Teaching is a performing art!* It's another way to share with others, with passion and wide-ranging expressive nuance, your enthusiasm for music, your unique blend of thoughts and feelings about some of the greatest creations of the human spirit, some of the most profound manifestations of human genius.

Teaching has many ways to fit into a musician's life. It can be part of the balance of musical endeavors for the free-lance musician. It can be an enhancement to the professional experience of the orchestra

player. For the private studio teacher, the college professor, and the K-12 music teacher, it is the centerpiece assignment. It is this last option, the school music teacher, which most often is overlooked or undervalued as a career option. And that's too bad. Our profession is unbalanced at the supply end. We're cranking out far more orchestral musician candidates than there are vacancies, and far too few Music Education majors to meet the chronic teacher shortage, especially in strings. There are many reasons for this, and one of them is that high school students aren't mentored in that direction. Teaching in the schools comes with many fringe benefits: great calendar, job security, good salary, health insurance, retirement plans, nice alignment of vacation and holiday times with the schedule of one's children. Every day is interesting, new, and soul-fulfilling.

If you're reading this, given the target audience of this publication, I'm confident you're doing a fine job as a teacher. But do ask yourself this: Could I be doing a better job as mentor, providing my students with a clear picture of what it means to be a music major in college, and of the full range of needs and opportunities of our noble profession?



Connecting the Studios and Schools: Resources Within Our Neighborhood

by Scott Herman

One of the most overlooked resources we share as string teachers and conductors is each other. Being a school director, youth orchestra conductor, private teacher, and performer, I have had the unique opportunity to observe some amazing teachers and artists do their craft in a variety of musical situations. All of us can recall some great master classes, workshops, clinics, conferences, or concerts that we have attended. But there are some excellent resources right in our own backyards—the private studios and the orchestra classrooms. Ironically, these are the two learning environments that influence our students the most, yet there is often very little collaboration between the two. Here are a few ways that may improve the relationship.

Private teachers can ask their students to invite their school directors to studio events, such as recitals. Many teachers who teach orchestra in schools have been primarily trained as wind players. They may appreciate having an opportunity to attend a string event. Your students' personal invitations will be much more effective than a note or email. Some will support their students' outside musical interests, and will find the experience insightful. This is a fantastic way to introduce your studio and open the door for professional collaboration. In return, you can attend some community school performances, especially those that involve your students. The mutual support will aid in building stronger professional relationships.

Last fall I called our music office and initiated a hands-on workshop that Cathy Stewart presented for our Montgomery County elementary instrumental teachers, most of whom are wind players. (*Ed.: See the following article.*) The focus was starting players for success, addressing many of the fundamentals for first and second year players—like the bow hold, posture, etc. It was so well received and appreciated that she has been asked back for an encore engagement. There is clearly a need for and an interest in collaboration, but it may take a little effort to make it happen.

Private teachers, consider opening your doors and

allowing school directors to observe you in your studio. There is nothing better than seeing a great teacher work firsthand.

School directors, how about having someone come out and work with your students? One of the best things we can do for our students and for our professional growth is to invite a guest teacher/clinician/artist to work with them, either in lessons or master classes. Most of us who have invited guests agree that our students have gained from having others work with them. We ourselves have walked away with great new ideas and insights. It is nice having someone else reinforce our work. There can be a variety of ways to address a musical line or solve a technical passage. Let your students know that it is okay if they hear a different approach. We all know as professional players that it is important to be flexible and adapt to a variety of musical situations. That goes for students, as well.

Private teachers, if possible, volunteer some time to help coach in the schools, youth programs, etc. Not all school directors will open their doors, but there is a handful that will welcome the assistance. You can have a positive impact on the kids and teachers. It's a great way to get your name out if you are trying to build a studio.

In the Fairfax Symphony's SCORE program, a group of professional players and a conductor go into a school and model the students' school material for them in a side-by-side rehearsal or even a performance. Unfortunately, this type of program has not been funded in Montgomery County, but it would have a tremendous value here if someone stepped forward to initiate it. Your ideas are always welcome.



Scott Herman has been the Band and Orchestra Director at Cabin John Middle School for 25 years, and was a conductor with the Maryland Classic Youth Orchestras for 15 seasons. He is currently the Public School Representative for ASTA MD/DC Chapter, and was the 2009 recipient of the Maryland Music Educators Association "Teacher of the Year" award.

Setting Up For Success

by Catherine Stewart, ASTA MD/DC Chapter Past President

On November 12, 2012, I presented a workshop for the Montgomery County Public School elementary school instrumental music teachers, titled “Setting up for Success.” Most of the elementary school instrumental music teachers are not string players, and the purpose of the workshop was to help them with string issues. Learning about posture and set up seemed like the place to start. Without good posture, a stable violin, and a curved thumb and pinkie on the bow hand, it is very difficult to make a good sound or to play well.

Over 50 teachers attended the workshop, and most of them brought a violin, so they could participate in the “hands on” learning. I showed them how to hold their violin properly and make a good bow hold. We did many more repetitions of both putting the violin on the shoulder and setting up a good bow hold than was expected, and I saw a lot of improvement. I wanted to make the point that students need more repetition so they can burn new skills into their brains.

I discussed the importance of repeating the basics of posture at every lesson. I also suggested that they have violinists stand in their beginning class, as it is much easier to get good posture that way.

We had interesting discussions concerning shoulder rests and what will work in the classroom. Sponges from upholstery stores are popular because they are custom cut by the teachers and are inexpensive. Many families can’t afford to spend \$20 or more on a shoulder rest. There were lively discussions, during which teachers offered their tips for success and checked with me on technical issues. I also suggested that teachers create very detailed practice assignment sheets with specific numbers of repetitions of skills. Students need help with practice, and specific practice instructions make practicing easier.

The workshop was such a success that I was invited back, and on February 22, 2013, I presented another workshop—essentially a continuation of the previous one. The main thrust this time was bowing, but it turned into a question and answer session. The teachers seemed very happy to be able to check in with a violinist to see if they are on the right track.

I am delighted to be of service to the Public School Elementary instrumental music teachers. They are doing a very tough job, especially since most of them are actually brass and woodwind players.



Not Just Another “Performer Profile:” Andrea Hoag, Grammy-nominated Fiddler

by Jaque Lyman

On National Public Radio, when a news story somehow involves a corporation that is also a sponsor, the correspondent always includes a line that begins with something like “In the interests of full disclosure...” to cover NPR in case anyone tries to undermine the credibility of the piece by claiming the appearance of a conflict of interest.

I could start this profile with a disclaimer: “In the interest of full disclosure, the author of this article admits to having been previously acquainted with Andrea Hoag.”¹

Then I could write a reasonably objective but heart-warming account, assembled exclusively from the facts I gleaned during our “official” interview over coffee at Starbucks. (In the interest of full disclosure, she had a grande mocha, and I had a grande soy latte with more sugar-free caramel syrup in it than I will admit to in court.) That was precisely the sort of article I had anticipated writing—third person, professional, favorable but detached—like the other interviews I have been fortunate to have had printed in this publication. (In the interest of full disclosure, I am, in fact, the editor of this publication, so it is highly unlikely that I would reject my own submission.)

In actuality, I’ve known Andrea for eleven years, have taken fiddle lessons from her, done booking work for her, read her writing, been in a meditation group with her, shared a room with her at an ASTA conference, and enjoyed much conversation and camaraderie over coffee and on long walks around her old studio in Takoma Park. So—in the interests of full disclosure, this is not merely an unbiased,

detached analysis of an accomplished performer and composer; it is also the fond tribute of a friend.

It’s often tempting simply to start with the beginning of a person’s story, but since I’ve already admitted my personal biases, I might as well indulge a few more of them in my rendition of Andrea’s story.



Andrea Hoag

Photo credit: Susan Preston

I am fascinated by how people make the decision to be a professional artist. It is patently *not* like deciding to be an accountant or an engineer or a schoolteacher. Andrea made the decision when she was in her mid-twenties, while she was living in Alaska, working for a local public radio station as operations manager and producer of arts and music segments. She recounts her moment of choosing between her multiple interests: she could continue in public radio, she could pursue her writing (another lifelong passion), or she could throw

herself into music. She decided on music, but she assigned the decision a twenty-year grace period. If she couldn’t make a go of it by then, she would figure something else out. That was thirty years and a Grammy nomination ago.

We can trace her musical passion backward from that seminal decision to her early years in Seattle. She started violin in a school with a good program, and she was fascinated by the lofty tones of gypsy violinists, but, as she remembers on her website, “I wasn’t soaring yet or even feeling close.” She recalls a specific turning point when she was fifteen. She and her brother were listening to NPR when they heard the Holy Modal Rounders playing Appalachian fiddle tunes and string band music. She was taken by the more “traditional” fiddle sounds, the tonality, and the alien way of using the bow. She leapt into the style, took a hiatus from

¹ <http://www.andreahoag.com/>

college at twenty, and moved to southern Appalachia to immerse herself in the music. Looking back, that seems a prophetic jump, but she wouldn't make the definitive commitment for a few more years.

When she did make the decision, she initially intended to focus on Irish music, but she was ultimately lured away by the unique tonality and rhythms of Swedish music. In the early 1980s, she was awarded a fellowship and studied at Malungs Folkhögskola in Sweden, where she earned a certificate in Folk Violin

Pedagogy. While her specialty is Swedish fiddling, she retains her eclectic early interests today. She has performed with myriad artists, including Bruce Molsky, southern old-time fiddler; The Berntsons, a multi-generation musical family carrying on Scandinavian traditions; and hardanger-fiddler Loretta Kelley and bassist Charlie Pilzer, with whom she shared the Grammy nomination for the album *Hambo in the Snow*.



In addition to performing, teaching has always been a large part of Andrea's musical career. She maintains her own studio in Silver Spring, and has taught at innumerable festivals over the years. She has infinite respect for the traditions she conveys through the fiddle, and while she is meticulous in teaching their individual requirements, she strives to foster independence, creativity, and joy in her students. I can speak directly to her talents as a teacher: both my sister-in-law and I took lessons with her for years, and can testify to her patience, gentleness, and ingenuity in guiding students' understanding and skills. I remember, in particular, her helping me develop my fledgling improvisation skills: her combination of explaining, demonstrating, and simply throwing me off the deep end and making me just *do* it led to me eventually being able to take solos with my band. (Another "In the interest of full disclosure:" she never even winced at my abominable intonation and egregious note combinations—and there were ample opportunities.)

Over our espresso at Starbucks, Andrea identified the hardest aspect of being a professional musician as the economic insecurity, the having to plan ahead to compensate for the retirement plans and health insurance that many of us take for granted when

we work for organizations. But in typical Andrea fashion, she immediately identified what to her is the more important type of wealth—the psychic rewards of carrying on musical traditions and of being part of an unbroken chain in the conveyance of a priceless cultural inheritance.

While she has always taken this responsibility seriously, recently she has begun giving back to the world in the coin of her knowledge and skills in a totally new way. She has branched out into a new realm and created a nonprofit organization, Freyda's Hands, whose "mission is to provide opportunities for traditional folk musicians and other performing artists to collaborate across genres, and to educate the public about traditional performing folk arts and the collaborative process."² Its first endeavor, the Old Doors/New Worlds project, resulted in a CD and DVD and was an exploration in process and in collaboration between musicians of different traditions. The Dovetail Ensemble grew out of Old Doors/New Worlds and has an emphasis on artistic collaboration and creating cross-cultural educational programs for all levels. The group has a flexible membership, including Jodi Beder, cellist; Phil Wiggins, blues harmonica virtuoso; Owen Morrison, guitarist and composer; and Nic Gareiss, percussive dancer.

The Dovetail Ensemble is emblematic of Andrea's focus these days. Most exciting to her is creating educational programs in underprivileged areas. She wants to make a difference in others' lives through musical experience and through teaching the art of collaboration. A prime example of this is the World on a String program, a collaboration between Freyda's Hands, ASTA MD/DC Chapter, and The House of Musical Traditions. In addition to musical concepts, students learn how music works in different cultures. The inaugural program in November 2012 drew over eighty participants of all ages, and more programs are planned. In fact, the Dovetail Ensemble will host a mini-World on a String workshop and evening concert and dance on Saturday, April 27, 2013, at the Blum Ballroom in Adelphi, Maryland.³

² <http://www.freydashands.org/>

³ Blum Ballroom, 8300 Osage Terrace, Adelphi, MD. See www.freydashands.org or contact andrea@andreaHoag.com, 301-565-2777, for details. Workshop is 3:00–5:30, concert and dance 7:30–10:30, potluck dinner at 6:00.

In addition to her educational outreach, Andrea continues a busy performing schedule with many other artists and ensembles, among which are Kelley and Pilzer, her Grammy co-nominees; Annette Wasilik, eclectic songwriter; Maggie Sansone, hammer dulcimer player; Sharon Knowles, Scottish harpist; and Cabaret Sauvignon, with Dave Weisler, Karen Ashbrook, and Paul Oorts. She did, in fact, finish her college degree along the way, and, she still finds time to pursue her passion for writing: she belongs to a poetry group at the Writer's Center in Bethesda and she is getting a lot of experience in grant writing for Freyda's Hands. (One suspects that her fondness for

National Public Radio is still intact as well; after all, her music has been featured on NPR.)

Andrea made a crucial decision all those years ago, but when asked about the risks, she recalled a quote that is often attributed to Ray Bradbury: "Sometimes you have to jump and build your wings on the way down." While one might say that the girl who dreamed about "soaring" with the gypsy fiddlers has definitely "made it," Andrea doesn't think that way. Her current projects are not "culminations;" they are just part of an ongoing journey—and that journey keeps evolving.



Tell 'em a Story

How to Make Learning about Music Analysis Fun for Your Students

by Vasily Popov, MD/DC Chapter Cello Forum Editor

As teachers and performers we know how important it is to enrich and improve our students' performing techniques. We constantly experiment with various approaches to solve technical problems. We work on intonation, rhythm, articulation, as well as many other technical and musical aspects of the preparation of a piece for a performance.

Imagine being in an audience, or being a member of a jury panel listening to a student performing on a technical level that would be very close to ideal: everything is in tune, the rhythm is great, the tone is clean and projective, dynamic contrasts are present. However, in a few moments you find you are starting to get lost in the piece—fast passages run breathlessly into the lyrical moments, the route the performer is taking you on seems uncertain or unclear, even though you have heard the piece before. What is causing the performance to appear generally fine but not fulfilling, neither for the performer nor for the listener?

No question, the lack of expression in a performance could be the result of a performer feeling timid on stage. But it also can be the result of an insufficiently prepared “map” of the piece in the performer's mind. Whether one or the other, the reason is very similar: the notes are present but the story is missing.

The audience subconsciously wants to hear a story behind any performed music, be it “Ba-Ba, Black Sheep” or a Schnittke concerto. The performer must always analyze the musical form and harmonic structure of the piece in order to create a memorable story. On one hand, the results of the analysis are already the story itself. On the other hand, our students need to be encouraged to see a story behind the chords and the parts of the musical form.

Analysis of musical form and harmony are subjects mostly reserved for music majors in a conservatory. However, it is never too early to introduce these concepts to a music student of any age and level, since their benefits are immediately audible in any level of performance. The only difficulty is to find an

age-appropriate medium to introduce those concepts.

For students who have a minimal or non-existent knowledge of harmony, (the latter is always the case with complete beginners) here is a guide to help them create their own story based on the musical form.

The three easy steps listed below could help young musicians build their musical journeys and enjoy playing their musical instruments even more. This is mostly about beginners and early intermediate performers; however, advanced students might also find this guide useful.

Step One: Seeing the structure of the piece as a whole.

Students love it when phrases or parts of the music are repeated. They like patterns. This is the first thing that we want to help them find in a musical piece. We call it a pattern even if a part is repeated in a different key. The presence of a pattern will help them see the structure of the piece. I often start discussing the form of the piece with the student before they have learned to play it. In such cases I encourage the student to sing or hum the parts we are discussing. I sing or hum along, or play it on an instrument.

Step Two: Figuring out the tonal plan of the piece.

This step is a bit more complicated but it sounds scarier than it really is. The goal of this step is to create an approximate tonal plan without analyzing the harmony for every single note. Since, for most students, the word “theory” sounds scary, a game approach is highly recommended here. Here are some game suggestions:

- Play the first chord of the piece on your choice of instrument, quickly play or sing the material that follows it until the harmony changes, and then play the next chord. For simplicity always use the root position of the chord. Ask your student to raise his arm or stand up when he/she hears the chord change and put his arm down or sit down when the music goes back to the main key. This game is a great fun to play and it is refreshing for students.

- If the key changes from major to minor, ask the student to make smiley or sad expression on his/her face. This helps the student feel and begin to understand the difference between major and minor chords.
- “Identify the chord” game: ask your student to imagine that a double bass accompanies the piece. For a passage or a measure (depending on the material), the student has to come up with (“compose”) a bass note that the double bass should play. The note your student will be looking for should be the main chord note of the passage. You can play different bass notes while you play or sing the passage, and ask the student to try to find out which one would fit the passage best. Usually it takes two to three lessons for a student to feel more confident finding the right bass notes. Students are usually very proud of themselves when they begin to understand that the music is written in different keys and that they can identify them.

Step Three: The creation of the story.

This is the main goal and the most fun part of the entire process—when the student’s imagination will take the lead.

All of us have favorite things to do. Just about any activity can be used to create a story. From swimming competition to house construction, from attending a concert to eating ice cream—use your own and your student’s creativity.

Things that are helpful when creating the story:

- Encourage your student begin the story. You can ask about his favorite book, subject or an activity to do. If the student tells me about something I have never heard of, I never hesitate to ask questions. I even like it when the story will be about something I have never heard of. This helps to establish a dialogue with the student. And students like to be given a teacher’s role, too!
- Each story must culminate in a dramatic point. This point is very important for the completion of the musical form. It does not matter whether the climax looks very poetic or a little bit weird. It is important for the student to create this moment of the story, identify the musical material that goes with it and look forward to playing it.

Here are two examples of stories created by students from my studio (with just a little help from me).

- You are riding your bike in the park. Great weather, sunny, no clouds, perfect temperature, everything seems flawless. Then your wheel runs over a nail. The tire is flat. You do not have a spare tire. There is a pump, but there is no patch and the shop is far away. You look for a patch and do not find it. Then you feel something in your jacket. You find a hole in your pocket—the patch fell through the hole! You find it under the lining of the jacket! You fix your tire and successfully ride back home. (Charles Baudiot: Cello Concertino, 1st movement)

And another one. I like this one a lot.

- Early smoggy morning on the construction site. The crane is napping. Through his morning dreams the crane hears that the gates are opening and the big truck carrying a huge concrete plate is entering the construction site. The truck is so big that it has to make multiple turns to reach the parking place where it has to be unloaded. Finally it stops. The crane moves its huge winches raising the concrete plate on the 15th floor of the building with ease. Once the plate is in place, the crane moves the hook down and waits for a new load to come, enjoying its power. (Carl Davidoff: Study in G Major)

As mentioned before, everyone likes stories, but especially the youngsters. Their fantasy has no borders. Below are two examples of stories for possibly the most popular tune for beginners:

“Mozart’s Melody” or “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star.”

- For a student who likes animals: The cat goes in the kitchen and sees a bowl with milk hidden behind the closed kitchen cabinet door. The cat tries to scoop the door with his paw to open it (the middle section of the tune) and of course reaches a success, which is described in the third section: the door opens and the cat enjoys the milk.
- For a student who likes to do drawings: A boy/girl wants to draw. He/she takes a piece of paper but cannot locate the pencils on his/her desk. He/she opens the drawers, even goes to the guest room and looks everywhere there but without luck, then he/she goes back to his/her room and discovers that he/she completely forgot that he/

she took the pencils to school today and they are still in his/her backpack (end of the middle section of a Twinkle—ritenuto is possible here!), he/she takes them out and makes a beautiful drawing.

After all that, I would not be surprised at all if my reader asks me, should a student always play a piece thinking about cranes, bikes, cats or pencils? My answer is: of course not. The created story is just a momentary illustration—one of the many ways to wake up the imagination. It helps us to learn more

about ourselves and to get a little bit closer to the processes in a composer's mind, which consciously or subconsciously helped the creation of the piece. A picturesque story is like a metaphor that helps to develop an individual response to the objective harmonic and structural facts of the musical piece. It not only makes the work on technical aspects fun to do for both the student and the teacher, but it strengthens the process of the development of the young musician's personality.



Violin Master Class with Jonathan Carney

by Lorraine Combs, Stringendo Layout/Design, Website Administrator, eNewsletter editor

On January 5, 2013, I attended a master class given by Jonathan Carney, concertmaster of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, at the home of Ronald Mutchnik. It was sponsored by the “Sundays at Three” series, and the master class was free! Four of Ronald’s students played. All of their pieces were works in progress, not necessarily polished trial runs before upcoming recitals. After the first student performed, and Jonathan began his comments, I regretted not bringing a notebook, so I took these notes on my iPhone. Jonathan made a few comments on fingering choices and vibrato, but most of his advice was for the right arm. He explained that 80% of violin playing (indeed, all bowed string instruments) is concerned with bow skills. There was only one other MD/DC Chapter member in the audience besides me. In the future, I would urge all teachers to drop everything and come to this sort of event! You won’t be sorry!

Aaron played the Wienawski *Romance*.

- Advice for whole bows, both down and up bows: For each bow stroke—save, use. Save, use. This will keep the sound from dying away.
- Point of contact: Always maintain POC to get the optimum sound. Don’t let the bow drift sideways. POC is different on each string, depending on the music. Generally, the E string POC is closer to the bridge than the G string POC. Use your ears!
- A rest in this piece is not a “stop” of the sound, more a “release” of the sound. It is like a breath in just the right place.
- Don’t stop vibrating when you shift. In this piece, the vibrato is always ON!
- Right hand fingers are always relaxed, never pinched. When you pinch, the sound will crack.
- Arm weight: the more relaxed your arm is, the heavier the arm weight. (Jonathan demonstrated this. He laid his forearm on Aaron’s hand, at the same time keeping his forearm from sinking completely into Aaron’s hand. Then he completely relaxed his forearm and let it sink into Aaron’s hand. He asked Aaron which time it felt heavier.) If you want more sound, use less pressure!
- Up and down bows on the last note at end of movement: Go “over” the instrument with the

right hand so the sound does not stop when you get to the frog for the bow change.

Luke played the first movement of the Bruch Violin Concerto.

- First note, open G, has a life of its own. Don’t stop the sound. Make it interesting!
- Wait until the piano (or orchestra) comes in before releasing the ending notes of motifs and phrases, so the end of the violin music and the beginning of the accompaniment will overlap. Otherwise, there will be gaps in the sound.
- In the slow movement where there are rapid notes, remember those notes are melodic, not technical, so don’t rush over them. Bring out each note clearly.

Jeffrey played the first part of Saint-Saens *Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso*.

- When two notes have a diminuendo, start a little louder than the previous note so the sound won’t die. Use whole bows on everything.
- When you stop the bow, the breathing stops. (Jonathan mentioned that he said the same thing to Aaron.) Be sure you don’t actually stop breathing yourself! Keep the phrase interesting all way to the end.
- Repeated identical notes and phrases should always be a little different from each other. Always tell a story with this music.
- In the up-bow staccato, keep the bow close to the bridge.

Emily played the first movement of the Brahms Concerto.

- Jonathan said it’s always better to play Brahms too slow rather than too fast. With Brahms we must always respect the rhythm and the structure of the music.
- In new phrases, don’t be too aggressive. Caress the sound. Start from the string. (*Save, use; save, use—same comments as in the Wienawski.*)
- Always control the bow when doing a re-take; don’t “throw” the bow.
- Ending notes: the release of the note is just as important as the beginning if the note.



2012 2013 The Lighter Side

Audience

Symphony No. 5

Mvt. 1

Ludwig van Beethoven

Allegro con brio

Hum with the orchestra

Stand up, thinking that it's over.

Sit down and feel stupid.

9 4 Cough. 2 Flip through the program.

19 6 Cough. Clear throat. 13 Sneeze. 8 Cell phone ringing.

52 Exhale in relief. 28 Drop all the change from your pocket. "Damn it!"

89 44 Applaud, unaware of the other 3 movements.

Mvt. 2: Tacet

Mvt. 3: Tacet

Mvt. 4: Tacet

(After the first movement, you were "escorted" out by the ushers.)