



VASTA Fingerboard



Spring '07

Volume 3, Issue 3

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Calendar:

- May 12** Northern VA CP Exams@GMU
- May 18-20** Spring String Thing & Teacher Workshop @JMU (ASTA Awards Presentation)
- June 2** Richmond CP Exams
- July 1** Summer Newsletter Submission Deadline

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President's Message

by Helen Fall

How long have you been a teacher? Six months? Six years? 26 years? More? One of the things I have been noticing lately is how much I continue to learn from my students and from my fabulous colleagues. My daughter will soon graduate from the University of Virginia. Students at UVA do not identify themselves as freshmen, sophomores, juniors or seniors. In the tradition of UVA's founder, Thomas Jefferson, they are identified as 1st-, 2nd-, 3rd- or 4th-year students. Why? Because Thomas Jefferson felt that attending a university was the beginning of one's years of learning; that we never stop learning, we just begin a new year of learning. I'm afraid to admit which year of learning I am in now! Let's just say it's a continuation....

The ASTA National Conference in Detroit was a real learning experience for me. My head was *exploding* from all I learned through attending sessions that presented new ideas, or those that reviewed old ideas from the master teachers of the past (Dounis, Fleisch, Auer et al.). In this issue you will find articles by the presidents of

the student chapters at GMU and ODU as well as one by the past-president of the JMU student chapter. In an effort to inspire our future teachers, VASTA paid the conference registration fees for these 3 students (your VASTA dues at work!); this was the first conference for them all. Also in this issue you will find an article written by Fairfax County Strings Teacher Amanda Sheetz about her experience at the conference. These articles will provide different perspectives about what one can learn by attending a national conference.

On the subject of learning back home in Virginia, it is striking to me that we have so many Outstanding Teachers in the Commonwealth. For example:

♪ **Seven** sessions at the National Conference were presented by VASTA members and Master Teachers! Bravi to **Elizabeth Blakeslee, Lynne Denig, Gary Frisch, Bob McCashin, Lucy Manning, Lisa Maynard and Marianne Perkins** for their successful presentations!

♪ On February 26, a week before the conference in Detroit, 3 of these sessions were presented in abbreviated version to "test the waters." The sessions were well attended and offered a chance for those who could not make it to Detroit to benefit from the presentations here in Virginia. The sessions were held at George Mason University, sponsored by the GMU Student ASTA chapter. Special thanks to GMU Student ASTA faculty advisor **Prof. Edwin Johonnott** and GMU Student Chapter president, **Adam Sheffield** for their invaluable support to make this a successful event.



National ASTA President, Mary Wagner with VASTA President, Helen Fall in Detroit.

(Continued on page 10)

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Violin Forum

Teaching Memorizing Skills

By Leslie Webster

The Violin Forum will return in the next edition of the Fingerboard. Marianne Perkins has been busy working to improve and expand the new, award-winning VASTA website at www.vastaweb.org. Please be sure to send any new information, photos, or sponsorship for the website to marianne.perkins@verizon.net

This is the season for memorizing: end-of-year student recitals are looming, as are Certificate Program examinations. When a student unexpectedly announces the need for some memorized solo pieces, it becomes apparent that the value of knowing how to memorize efficiently is critical. Older students, in particular, resist memorizing but there are ways to make it easier:

Start small

The most fearful older student can memorize the Twinkle theme with confidence. Increase the length of the memory assignment gradually. It may take as long as a year to be ready to memorize long movements.

Reinforce memorizing skills regularly

I ask my students to bring in a new memory assignment each week. We keep track of the successes on a sticker chart posted in the studio. Large movements can be broken into parts in consultation with the student.

Every aspect of a piece is a separate memory experience

Once students have notes and rhythms in good shape, they need to memorize the bowings, many of which they have probably missed, and after that the dynamics and interpretive aspects of the solo. Allow a week for each of these aspects of the music to be memorized. It often takes yet an additional week for them to learn to play by memory with the metronome, an important preparation to being able to play with accompaniment.

Employ cognition, emotions, and the senses

Most students memorize by repetition. In addition to taking unnecessary time, this method leads to a rigid aural and muscle memory. Diagnose this condition by asking the student to play the piece very slowly; they will break down when deprived of the

practiced-in momentum. Help such a student bring in the following aspects of the music as they memorize: analytical (what is the structure of this piece?), cognitive (can you name the notes in this run?), visual (can you visualize the up and down pattern of these sixteenth notes?), and emotional (does this music tell a story?).

Breakdowns are usually caused by one note

The first wrong note is the exit from the music high-way. Identify the note the student meant to play, and once he sees it clearly, he will never take that particular wrong exit again. Mark all subsequent wrong exits that pop up—there will not be very many—and the music will feel secure.

We all have to fail on the way to success

As cruel as it seems, all students need to experience a public memory breakdown in order to learn to handle it well. A graceful reentry, a quick recovery from a stumble, or a quiet consultation with the pianist

(Continued on page 12)

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From the Maker's Bench

Summertime maintenance

By Gary Frisch

Now that your instrument and bow are beginning to recover from the shock of February's cold and the dry air coming from your central heating, it's time to prepare for dealing with the challenges of summer time's humidity.

Bow Care

Winter and summer can cause "bad hair" days for your students' bows. Dry, central heated air makes hair shrink, while humid summers make the hair lengthen. During the winter, bow makers re-hair a bow with slightly longer hair, anticipating that the dry air in one's house will tend to shrink the hair to normal length. In summer, bow makers leave the hair slightly shorter to combat "stretchy hair" syndrome.

Overly long hair makes the bow feel top-heavy. And, since it requires more turns of the adjuster to bring the bow to proper tension, the frog moves far from the thumb grip, which can result in the bow becoming hard to control for less advanced players. This, combined with many students tending to forget to take the tension off the bow hair when they're done playing, can result in one very uncooperative bow. So remember to examine your students' bows periodically during the summer. If the hair looks overly stretched, recommend that the bow be re-haired.

Instrument Care

During the winter, instruments can sound, as my colleague David Chrapkiewicz characterizes it, "nasal and complaining." Alas, summer brings with it new challenges. Wood is "hygroscopic", which means it takes on or loses moisture in response to the amount of humidity in the air. Many contemporary maker try to take the hygroscopic nature of wood into account by sealing the interiors of their instruments to minimize the effects of moisture change.

Excessive Mid-Atlantic summer time humidity can make instruments water-logged. As a result, the belly often swells upward, lifting the strings higher above the fingerboard. This can make playing very uncomfortable. With their larger surface area, cellos and basses can really balloon upward, often requiring a

lower, summer bridge for cellos and a lower adjustment for bass bridges.

An overly elevated belly can also have a negative effect on sound because the soundpost is no longer sufficiently snug. Violin maker Dennis Stone, of Fort Washington, MD finds that too much humidity causes instruments to lose brilliance and clarity and sound more muffled. David Chrapkiewicz likens the sound to having a sock stuffed inside the instrument, resulting in a stuffy, strained voice. In addition, Mr. Stone notes that strings can respond so badly, that the sound cracks, or breaks up.

I should note that some instruments react more negatively to moisture changes than others. But if you notice that the sound of a student's instrument has begun to deteriorate, do recommend that an appointment be made with a trained violin maker. Your student's fingers and your ears will appreciate it. *♩*

Gary Frisch is a violinmaker and dealer. He owns and operates a shop located in Falls Church. Frisch trained in violin making under Deena Spear. Over the past year and a half, Gary has teamed up with Lynne Denig, to develop a diagnostic approach for assessing the appropriate chin-rest heights and contours for students. He has presented at the ASTA National Convention in 2006. As Chair of VASTA's Special Events Committee, he is developing ongoing programs statewide that will benefit all members and their students.

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From the Editor: Apologies to Mr. King for the poor appearance of his ad in the Winter edition. The formatting error has been corrected and this ad appears true to the original.



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Special Events and Announcements

Senior regional prep days in your area this fall

This fall, a highly beneficial clinic for your students who are preparing for their Regional Orchestra Auditions may be coming to your area. In addition to the Northern VA area, there is talk of such an event in the Prince William and Spotsylvania areas and possibly the Tidewater area. Contact any board member if you are interested in launching this event in your area. Check www.vasta.org often for updates.

SRO Prep in Northern Virginia

Saturday, September 8, 2007 at McLean High School

10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon for \$15 per student

Clinicians for each string instrument are drawn from professional players and string educators from around the area. Flyers and registration forms for this event will be in your mailbox soon. Last year's SRO Prep Day was a great success for all participants – this year's event will be even better! The Northern Virginia event will continue with a special clinic presented by **Burton Kaplan**, Prof. of Violin and Viola at the Manhattan School of Music and NYU.

His session is titled "Practicing for Artistic Success: A Seminar for Musicians' Self-Empowerment".

Certificate Program Exams

Saturday, May 12 at the No. VA Community College on Little River Turnpike. Contact Lynne Denig at violynne@cox.net

Saturday, June 2 at Godwin High School in Richmond. Contact Veronica Johnson at vmjackso@henrico.k12.va.us

Masterclass with Cellist Zuill Bailey

Saturday, June 2 10am-12pm, VASTA will present a cello master class in partnership with the Fairfax Symphony Orchestra and George Mason University. His tone is described by the Washington Post as "rich as melted chocolate". To learn more about Zuill Bailey visit his website www.zuillbailey.com.

National High School Honors Orchestra

The ASTA National High School Honors Orchestra Competition is a biennial event. Students from across the nation compete for membership in this elite ensemble, a full symphonic orchestra. Auditions are restricted to high

(Continued on page 14)

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VASTA Award Winners

It is with great pleasure the Board announces this year's VASTA awards. There were several wonderful nominations in each category from which to choose, making the decision a very difficult one. Please consider submitting a nomination again next year. There are many deserving teachers and businesses in the Commonwealth who deserve special recognition.

The winners will be contacted by one of the VASTA board members with a special invitation to attend the presentation ceremony at JMU in conjunction with the Spring String Thing and Teacher Workshop May 18-20, 2007.

Outstanding String Teacher Award

Lucy Manning, Old Dominion University

Outstanding New String/Orchestra Teacher Award

Timothy Gaffga, Walt Whitman MS

Orchestra Director of the Year Award

Gretta Sandberg, McLean HS

Distinguished Service Award

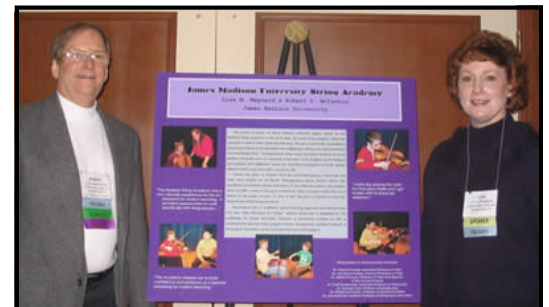
Mary Wagner, ASTA President

Distinguished Service Award (Business)

Bob Kurz, Prodigy Instruments



Snapshots from Detroit: Above—Members at the VA gathering: Dan and Katie Henderson, Betsy VanBenthuyzen, and Della Brown. Above right— after a session: Gary Frisch, Bob McCasbin, Laura Kobayshi and Marianne Perkins. Below center: Helen Fall accepted the award for “Best Website for 2007” from Jeffrey Solow, President-Elect of ASTA; Below right—Bob McCasbin and Lisa Maynard of James Madison University..



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String Music in the Motor City

Musical fun and inspiration

By Amanda Scheetz

I, along with many other teachers from Virginia, attended the ASTA Conference in Detroit, Michigan on March 7-11, 2007. From the time we took off from Reagan National Airport in a snowstorm to the time we landed back in sunny Virginia, we knew we were in for a musical treat.

There were so many different sessions it was hard to choose which one to attend. There were Showcase Sessions which previewed newly published strings method books. There were sessions on Scottish Fiddling, Alternative Styles, using a Harp in the School Ensemble, and teaching techniques for violin, viola, cello and bass. There were Master Classes for students to perform for Master Teachers from well-known conservatories all over the country. I attended one Master Class conducted by Jeffrey Irvine from Cleveland Institute of Music which was wonderful and insightful! He offered some solid, positive, and constructive comments to a young viola student who played for him, and he invited us all to his technique sessions later that day, which proved to be invaluable as a teacher. I know I will use many of his techniques with my own private and public school students.

There are so many sessions offered at ASTA that it is hard to choose which ones to attend, however, the teachers attend are so wonderful about sharing their experiences at other sessions, that you can learn even more talking to them as well! The VASTA group did get together after the Midori concert for some socializing and networking. It provided us all with a chance to meet people that we had heard great things about but never met. What was inspiring to me was the common goal shared by all the teachers there to be the best at what they do and to inspire their students.

I would be remiss in not mentioning the outstanding Evening Concerts that we were able to attend. The first concert on Thursday was given by Midori and the Detroit Youth Civic Orchestra. It was a moving performance given by a gracious lady who inspires people not only with her flawless performance, but her gentle and gracious nature. The second Evening Concert was given by Lynn Harrell and the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. He played the Shostakovich Cello Concerto and brought many of us to tears with his playing. We got an extra treat when he came out for an encore of the Prelude to the 3rd Cello Suite. He is amazing.

If we thought that was inspiring, we were still in for a treat on Saturday night with the Turtle Island String Quartet. This was truly a unique group of artists who speak to all ages of audience members with their awe-inspiring music! They were so gracious as to sign CD's after the concert as

well.

All in all, it was a professionally and personally inspiring conference for me and I am sure many other teachers. ASTA did a superb job of organizing and presenting this conference to and for us. Next year the conference is in Albuquerque --- I WILL SEE YOU THERE!

JMU student goes to conference

By Allison Devereux

Words cannot describe the impact the Detroit conference left on me. I met more members of ASTA from Virginia, as well as ASTA members from around the country. What a great experience for me to get as a college student!

Two sessions left great impacts on me. Emergency Repairs in the Classroom by the Johnson Violin Shop was excellent! As a cellist, I have seen the mechanical pegs on a cello only once, and was surprised to hear that the repairman from Johnson's did not recommend them at all. I did not know that a repairman would have to drill bigger holes in the peg box to install the mechanical pegs. Should the teacher choose to put the regular pegs back on, they would no longer fit. The repairman also said that he did not like dampits because once a player placed it in the instrument, the water that is supposed to dehumidify the inside could drip and do more harm than good. He recommended that a player take a damp sponge and place it in a small zip lock bag with holes and place it in the case, which would dehumidify the instrument and the whole case.

Mastering the Art of Middle School Teaching gave me insight into working with middle school students. This was one of the sessions that I was excited to see, as I have been thinking this could be the level I eventually want to teach at. Stephen Benham rehearsed a select group of 8th and 9th graders from the surrounding area, and talked about the techniques he employed during the rehearsal after he was done. The biggest rehearsal technique that I will use in my future classroom is getting the students involved in the music. Mr. Benham put a violist in charge of slowing down the orchestra, and showed the students how to listen to one another and establish eye contact with different sections. Mr. Benham said that middle school aged students should be treated like mature, developing musicians, and a teacher does not need to get them excited to play the music because they already are.

I am excited to take my knowledge I have gained from the conference and apply it next semester when I student teach in Prince William County.

-Allison Devereux is Past President of the student chapter of ASTA at James Madison University.

Golden nuggets from Detroit

By Adam Sheffield

A few golden nuggets that I gleaned from the ASTA conference:

A short neck and short arms

From one session entitled “What every string teacher needs to know about the body” comes the following eye opener: It is easier for people with short necks and short arms to become great at the violin because a more diminutive physique forces players to play the violin with proper form, otherwise they are not able to play at all—being unable to reach the reaches. Supporting this observation, at least tangentially, is the fact that the gypsies would choose the children with short necks to play the violin, whereas the other children with longer necks were assigned other instruments. In contrast, bigger people with long necks and long arms can play the violin in a multitude of ways, and consequently because they have such an amplitude of arm, wrist, hand and finger length there are so many choices available to them. Therefore, they must weigh the different options; and this process can stymie their progress if they do not have proper instruction.

My extrapolation

The long-armed, long-necked teachers can take heart, however: Galamian, after all, had very long arms and neck, and perhaps this was a contributing factor that helped him acquire technical insights that enhanced his pedagogical genius. At any rate, it is beneficial to remember when choosing a violin teacher, that a teacher’s particular physique may have an influence on his or her concept of violin technique. It may be helpful, especially when it comes to technical questions, to solicit the opinions of those who share similar bodily proportions to oneself.

Is the cello really more ergonomic than the violin?

Noted cellist soloist Thomas Landschoot, of Arizona State University, in one session, “Vibrato for all ages,” said that although the cello is more symmetrically played, in front of the body, cellists tend to have more performance-related injuries than violinists do. The reason being, according to Landschoot, that cellist’s feet must remain more statically grounded (violinists are allowed more body weight shifting), and cellist’s left arm extended outward is not the most ergonomic position to maintain.

The best sight readers are the best memorizers (and vice versa)

In his session, “Total Recall: Harnessing the power of the mind to enjoy playing by heart,” Professional guitarist Mathew Ardizzone quoted Ricardo Iznaola when he said that sight reading and memorization are two sides of the same coin. Ardizzone said it was all about being good with patterns—which is why we practice our scales and arpeggios.

No more hard shoulder rests?

In his master class, violin soloist and leading concertmaster Stephen Shipps said that he is convinced that hard shoulder pads are the cause of so many performance-related injuries today. He theorized that Paganni did not use a shoulder rest and this enhanced his technical facility. Shipps told about one of his graduate students who lectured him on advice found in a body building magazine—any muscle that is frozen into place tends to get damaged, and hard shoulder rests have a tendency to freeze the violin/viola into position, possibly cutting off or limiting blood circulation to the muscle patch underneath. It is best to not lift the violin up to the chin via a shoulder rest also because this causes the right arm to have to lift higher to access the strings. If one has a long neck, instead of using a hard shoulder rest, it is best to bring the chin rest up to the jaw by means of a tall chin or “jaw” rest. This helps prevent the left shoulder from shrugging up, thus producing tension, plus hampering the left arm’s swinging freedom (hat tip: Lynne Denig & Gary Frisch).

--Adam Sheffield is President of the Student Chapter of ASTA at George Mason University, and has worked for years as a college newspaper writer. He is a master student in violin pedagogy and performance at George Mason University, where he is a graduate teaching assistant.

Conference reflections

By Helen Fall

University Students Attend National Conference

VASTA is pleased to present the first recipients of National Conference Scholarships to GMU Student ASTA President, **Adam Sheffield**, ODU Student ASTA President **Jessica Metcalf** and JMU Student ASTA Past-President **Allison Devereaux**. Your VASTA dues paid the registration fees for each of these student ASTA leaders. They were, however, on their own for transportation, lodging, expenses and meals – no small amount for college students. Thanks to creative fundraising by the ODU Student ASTA Chapter, ODU Student Chapter treasurer, **Mary Dart** and ODU Student Chapter Membership Chair, **Ian Saunders**, were also able to make the trip. Let’s hear it for the students who traveled to Detroit!

VASTA Members Gather in Detroit

There were *forty* VASTA members in Detroit for the National Conference. Attendees from other states were commenting on how active the VASTA chapter must be – *and we are*. Twenty-seven VASTA members gathered at the Marriott RiverBar following the Midori concert on Thursday evening. It was a time to connect faces with names, share ideas, and advocate for what VASTA can do in their area for those who attended. Everyone had a great time. We were especially honored to host our 5 university students and the National ASTA President: our own **Mary Wagner!**

(Continued from page 1)

♪ On February 28, VASTA member **Rami Kanaan** presented a Defense of Dissertation on his Handbook for Teaching Shifting to the Intermediate-Level Violin Student. In his handbook Rami has composed a shifting method that is technically sound as well as enjoyable, employing his own original etudes and duets to make the technical work more pleasing. Rami and Prof. Johonnott played some of the duets for the committee and attendees. As soon as this handbook is available, I plan to put it into use in my own teaching studio!

♪ Many of you already know that VASTA member **Lisa Cridge** published a wonderful book in 2004 entitled Bow Games and Goals I: An Activity Workbook for Beginning Violinists and Violists. Her book is filled with great ideas for teaching correct bow position through games. I understand Book II is on the way!

♪ Virginia will soon be able to enjoy the great teaching of the **Audubon String Quartet**. It was just announced that the Audubon Quartet will be in residence at the Shenandoah Conservatory, as the Conservatory offers a new Graduate String Quartet Program to begin next fall.

♪ This year, James Madison University was fortunate to add **Dr. Lisa Maynard** to the School of Music faculty. Dr. Maynard works with Music Ed majors in string

teaching techniques. A former cello student of the great Phyllis Young, and former teacher at the University of Texas String Project, Dr. Maynard has a wealth of teaching ideas to share. String teachers can learn from her as well as Phyllis Young and Soon Hee Newbold at the **Spring String Teachers Workshop** at JMU in May.

♪ In this issue you will find the names of the **winners of the VASTA Awards** for Teaching and Service. The winners of these awards are mentors to us all. We can learn so much from these outstanding educators and business leader.

I am overwhelmed by the great teachers, the great teaching and the boundless energy that exudes from string teaching in Virginia! I hope you all will take advantage of what your fellow Virginians have to offer, whatever year of learning you are in! *J*

Warmest Regards,
Helen Fall
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Summer Music Study

Spring String Teachers Workshop: May 18-20

Hosted by the **School of Music** at **James Madison University** in May of 2007.; Featured clinicians will be internationally acclaimed string pedagogue and author **Phyllis Young**, and JMU Alum and string orchestra composer **Soon Hee Newbold**. An additional highlight of the workshop will be a performance by James Madison University's **Rittenhouse String Trio**.

The workshop will be held in conjunction with JMU's popular **Spring String Thing**, offered each year by JMU Orchestra Conductor **Robert McCashin** and his wife, **Clarine**. Portions of the workshop schedule will allow time for observation of *Spring String Thing* rehearsals and attendance of the final *Spring String Thing* concert.

Workshop activities will commence on Friday evening, May 18, with registration, a reception and concert to welcome attendees. Workshop sessions will take place during the day on Saturday, May 19, and be followed by a concert performance on Saturday evening. The workshop will conclude mid-afternoon on Sunday, May 20. The cost of the workshop is \$115.00 (including registration, 2 nights on campus housing, meals and t-shirt) **OR** \$60.00 (for registration and a t-shirt) for those attendees preferring to stay off campus. A deposit of \$30.00 is required for those planning to attend.

For more information and to obtain registration forms please contact: **Lisa Maynard**, Coordinator of the Spring String Teachers Workshop at the following e-mail address: maynarlm@jmu.edu or call (540) 568-5125.

Potomac Music Academy Chamber Music Connection: June 24-29

At George Mason University, sharpen your skills as a musician and ensemble player. For the elementary, middle and high school string player. For further detailed information, please see our web site: www.gmu.edu/departments/music/potomac

Performing Arts Camp of Shenandoah Conservatory: July 8-22

Applications and further information can be attained on our website at <http://www.su.edu/shenandoahperforms/camp> or by calling 540-545-7210.

Vienna Summer Strings: June 25-July 22

8:30 am - 12:30 pm for ages 9-16 at Oakton High School in Vienna, VA. For more information or to obtain an application, please call 703-925-3721 or email viennasummerstrings@att.net

Levine School of Music: 2801 Upton, NW, Washington, DC 20008

Registration deadline is June 18, for more information, contact June Huang 703-323-7288 or huangiy@earthlink.net

String Camp- \$385: August 6-10, 10:00 am - 4:00 pm: violin, viola and cello

Strings Plus - \$415: August 13-17, 10:00 am - 4:00 pm: Chamber music workshop for violin, viola, cello, bass, piano, and guitar

Seventh Annual Cello Camp for Adults: July 22-27

For further detailed information, please see our web site: www.cellospeak.com, or contact Dorothy Amarandos at: dpacello@comcast.net.

(Continued from page 3)

will get the ball rolling with the audience's pleasure uninterrupted, once the student learns how to handle a breakdown. They may need to be reminded that the audience will remember the beauty of the music, not the fumble, if the fumble is handled smoothly.

Enjoy the successes

Successful, low-anxiety memorization takes little time during lessons. The memory piece needs to be heard—the students often come in clamoring to play in order to get their stickers—and the assignment given for the next step in the memorizing project. Meanwhile all can enjoy the students' increasing confidence in playing without music, and the fear of having to memorize for an event will be largely vanquished. *♩*

Performance Anxiety

By Katya Rucker

Playing sports and playing music: Two completely different arts, right? One might think so, but from personal experiences, I have found the two to be startlingly similar. For example, hours of practice highly outweigh hours of performance in both cases. Both focus on the development of physical and mental skills; both require patience and a hint of perfectionism, and interestingly enough, both provide the same excitement and rush of adrenaline before competing or performing. This latter similarity comes with its own pros and cons, of course. Anticipation is necessary before any type of competition or recital because it represents an intense motivation to succeed, but it is equally important to be able to control one's anticipation to the point that it will not hinder one's performance. This competition apprehension has become one of the hardest obstacles I've had to face in performing both athletic and music.

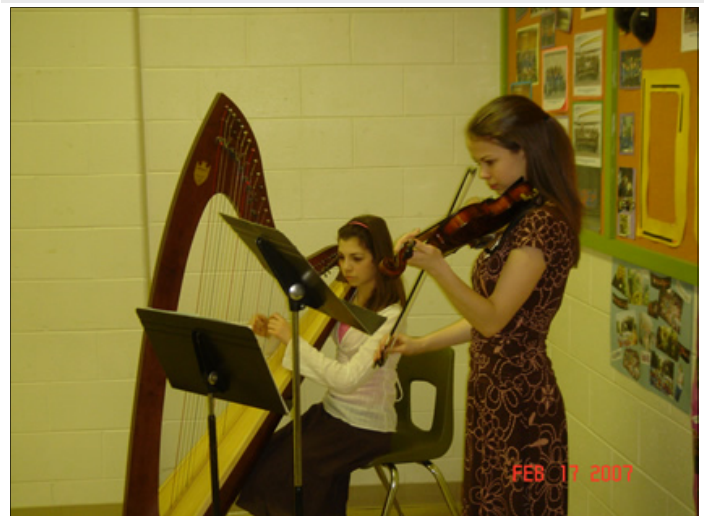
Games days-concert days-swim meet nights-come far less often than the days and hours spent practicing each. Field hockey game days were always greatly anticipated by my team. We were passionately competitive and shared the goal of making it as far as possible in our season. However, sometimes the rush of adrenaline we would experience when the first whistle blew could be the cause of clumsy errors; a stumble while sprinting, or the loss of the ball followed a set routine, which consisted of intense warm up drills, blaring pump-up music, and motivational speeches from the coach. In the last few minutes before the game started, my team would sit in a stretching circle in complete silence, allowing time to reflect and mentally prepare. This time was meant to allow our excitement to become subdued to a manageable but concentrated level, and for us to envision the course of the game and what we must do to achieve a successful victory. Over time, I found that the few minutes we spent in silence before the game would allow me time to gather my energy and control my adrenaline rush so that it would only help me run faster, hit harder, and never stop trying.

I can relate swimming even more to music because it is considered an individual sport. It is harder in this sense for the reason that motivation and control of anticipation must come from within oneself rather than from the energy of a team. Granted you are on a team that screams and cheers and encourages you to do your best, but the race? It's in your hands. I found that towards the beginning of my swimming career, I would anticipate races so much that I wouldn't settle in when I actually got down to racing; I would worry about getting tired or wonder how

fast the girl next to me was swimming. This type of anxiety was always detrimental to my performance and resulted in a time not reflective of the hours I put into practice. With swimming, time and experience was the answer to my problems. I would learn to visualize my race from start to finish, and in the minutes before getting up on the block and taking my mark, I would take deep breaths and detach myself from the outside world: it was only me, the water, and seven other swimmers.

Performing anxiety regarding music has been by far the hardest to overcome, and I don't believe I'm even there yet. In the case of the harp, control of one's fingers is so important that even the slightest shaking can cause countless errors while playing. One must also be able to focus on one thing only: the song to be played and how to play it. Coincidentally, one of the main symptoms of nervous anticipation is shaky hands and the inability to concentrate one's attention on the task at hand. It's true that some amount of adrenaline is important to contribute to the motivation I feel in performing a song to perfection, but it must be controlled to an even greater extent than in performing any sport. How to do this? I can only think to myself, *this is my chance to allow over 100 hours of practice to culminate into three minutes of perfection. Three minutes that I have already played to perfection in all of those hours. It isn't a race or a game or anything with twists or surprises. It's something I know by heart.* With a deep breath, and with the calm acknowledgement of the lights, the eyes, the thoughts, that for a few seconds in all of time are centered on what I have achieved, I begin to play. *♫*

Katya Rucker is a junior at Oakton High School in Vienna, VA. She plays harp with the American Youth Philharmonic Orchestra and studies with Elizabeth Blakeslee.



(Continued from page 6)

school juniors and seniors. The 2008 NHSO event will be held at the ASTA National Conference in Albuquerque, NM February 27-March 1, 2008 and will be conducted by San Diego Chamber Orchestra Conductor Jung-Ho Pak. Students wishing to audition must submit audition recordings to their state NHSO coordinator *early in fall 2007* for the first audition round. Selected recordings from each state are then advanced to the final audition round at the national level. Rules and applications for the NHSO will be available in the spring 2007 edition of the AST journal and on the ASTA website (www.astaweb.com).

VASTA Meetings Where the Members Are

The current VASTA board remains committed to meeting members where they live. The February 17, 2007 board meeting was held in Midlothian and was preceded by a gathering of local members and VASTA board members. VASTA member, **Joe Wargo**, hosted the gathering and meeting at Swift Creek MS, where he is the orchestra director. His wife, **Madeleine**, provided delicious treats, coffee and tea. Students provided lovely violin and harp background music. It was an elegant and relaxed setting, followed by a lively board meeting. Non-board members in attendance were: Joe Wargo, Madeleine Wargo, **Lucretia Davis**, **Arthur Horvath**, **Kevin Bartram**, **Jane Kapeller**, **Debbie Tripp**, **Veronica Jackson**, **Doug Kellner**, **Randy Allen**, **Pat Bray**, **John Larrimore** and **Jan Hampton**.

Saturday, April 14th at Christopher Newport University the VASTA board met in Newport News immediately preceding the 1:30PM All-Virginia Band and Orchestra performance. A great sense of community was present as string educators from all over the state met to discuss the exciting movement among our state membership. Many ideas were shared at this well-attended meeting. There were close to thirty members tucked into the cozy conference room. Thank you for your attendance and your

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ideas. Let's continue to make great things happen in Virginia for all string teachers and their students.

The All-State Orchestra performance that followed, under the direction of **Bob McCashin of James Madison University** was outstanding. We were exceedingly proud of our students as they took the stage at the exquisite new concert hall at CNU. The ambitious program opened with Barber's Overture to the School for Scandal, Op. 5. This fine orchestra continued with Mysterious Mountain, Symphony No. 2, Op. 132 by Hovhaness and concluded with the amazing Hindemith Symphonic Metamorphosis. What a tribute to the 20th century!

Upcoming VASTA Board Meetings: Dates and times are subject to change – please contact Helen Fall to confirm dates prior to attending.

* Friday, May 18, James Madison University

* Sun, June 23, 12:00 at Helen Fall's home in Falls Church



SOS: ADVOCACY TOOL AVAILABLE FROM ASTA

Is No Child Left Behind putting a cloud on the morale of your school? Then you need SOS! SOS: Support Our Strings is the newest advocacy tool available from ASTA's Advocacy Resource Center (AARC). The highlight of AARC is a customizable PowerPoint presentation titled SOS: SUPPORT OUR STRINGS. This presentation contains many facts, statistics, graphs, and research that shows just how important music, particularly strings, education is in schools today. If you are not familiar with PowerPoint, complete instructions on how to use this resource to its fullest potential are available for download. AARC also contains a set of ASTA approved talking points that will add clout to any presentation. Other available documents guide advocates on issues such as giving a powerful speech and writing effective letters-to-the-editor. These new tools will prove invaluable to music advocates everywhere. Go to the ASTA

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1. All **TEXT DOCUMENTS** must be **Word** documents only-single spaced, each paragraph NOT indented but separated with a space. Include a sentence or two about the author.

2. **PHOTOS** for placement in the newsletter should follow these guidelines:

PC format- (300dpi) JPEG or PDF files. Grayscale files only. If sent in other modes they will be converted to grayscale.

3. ADS

Any ads sent should be as follows: (built to the ad size purchased)

Our preference is an electronic file sent via email, following the guidelines above. However, there is a problem with sending large files via email. Size of ad/photo sent by email should not exceed 2.5 meg. or should be sent by postal mail. If by postal mail, follow the guidelines above-acceptable formats are **PC formatted CD's, 250/100 ZIP Disk and floppy.**

4. **Ad sizes and prices are as follows:**

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*1/4 page horizontal-2.5(h) x 8(w)
\$40 per issue

*1/2 page-5(h) x 8(w)
\$80 per issue

*Full page-10.5(h) x 8(w)
\$160 per issue

Deadline for articles, ads and payment:
Summer 2007 Issue: July 1, 2007.
Payment is due in advance **with ad.**
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Mary Dart, ODU Student Chapter treasurer, Adam Sheffield, GMU Student Chapter president, Jessica Metcalf, ODU Student Chapter president, Ian Saunders, ODU Student Chapter membership chair, and Allison Devereaux, JMU Student Chapter past-president met for our VASTA Gathering at the Detroit conference. Read about their conference experiences on page 8 and 9.