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*The 1999 MMEA convention in Minneapolis offered an interesting array of presentations by local and regional specialists. Here are summaries of some of the events.*

## The Silent Virtuoso Reported by Bryanna Christianson

Janis Weller made a presentation, "The Silent Virtuoso," about how to practice without your instrument. She explained six different areas for silent practice: cognitive, aural, kinesthetic, academic, psychological, and aesthetic. The cognitive way to practice is to actually study the music with a pencil. Aurally, you can listen to concerts and recordings of the particular piece or other similar music. For kinesthetic practice, you can do exercises to loosen up the muscles and prepare the body for playing. Academic and psychological processes go hand in hand. Academic practice in music is mainly studying and applying music theory, and psychological practice is learning which strategies work best for you to learn a certain passage. The sixth type of practice is aesthetic. This refers to a person's artistic, cultural, and personal development.

Janis Weller also discussed different ways for students to break down rhythms to make it easier to practice. She told about Bill Douglas, who developed a system using scat syllables to make learning rhythms more entertaining.

The most interesting thing I learned from this presentation was a demonstration on juggling. Weller said that students who have trouble reading notes but are good at memorization should practice juggling. This helps to improve their hand-eye coordination. If juggling is too difficult, they can just throw a tennis ball in the air and catch it.

I learned some new techniques to try with my students and my own practice from this informative presentation.

*Bryanna Christianson is a freshmen Music Education major at St. Cloud State University. †*



## St. Cloud Discovery Orchestra Reported by Bert Strassburg

On Saturday February 13th, the St. Cloud Discovery 6th Grade Orchestra, under the direction of Thea Stockinger, gave a brilliant and inspirational performance at the 1999 MMEA Mid-Winter Convention. The concert program included ten selections including *Minuet from Water Music*, *Themes from Jurassic Park*, and *Happy Blues* featuring the orchestra's bass section. The program also featured two very talented young soloists, Andrea Jakubowski on cello and David Kurtz on violin. It was obvious throughout the performance that the Discovery

Orchestra students are able to achieve a level of expertise way beyond that of most beginning orchestra programs. The students consistently embodied professionalism, tremendous drive, and outstanding music skills. Having student-taught with Mrs. Stockinger, I know that her caring personality, strength of character, and high set of standards have enabled these students to achieve a high level of musical greatness.

*Bert Strassburg teaches orchestra at Moorhead Junior High School. †*

## Can Music Be the Basis of the 21st Century Curriculum? Reported by Linda Bell

Paul Zdunek and Richard Zellner teamed up to present a session entitled "Can Music Be the Basis of the 21st Century?" on Friday, February 12, 1999. During the session Zdunek and Zellner presented their insights regarding music and research.

Zdunek opened with the statement, "Music is fundamental to our lives." He followed with the idea that the first thing we hear in life is music or sound, i.e., vibrations in the womb. He suggested that music means different things to each person, and that as individuals mature they gain a greater palette of musical understanding. Various musical examples were played and participants were asked, "How does the music make you feel?" Numerous participants were given the opportunity to describe their response to the music.

Zellner brought a large, horizontally mounted transducer and invited attendees to sit on or touch it in order to feel the vibrations created by music played via compact disc. Through this example, Zellner suggested that all sound begins with vibration, which leads to frequency, which leads to sound, which leads to music.

Music's effect on individuals' lives and its importance in the classroom were also discussed. A short video was shown demonstrating the positive effects of music through music therapy in a nursing home environment. The presenters suggested that music can be integrated with other subjects and taught along with science, math, history, art, social studies, literature and physical education.

Zellner challenged participants with "Change the way you think—read research!" He encouraged the attendees to help their school faculty understand more about music and to educate their colleagues while becoming a resource on music research.

Regarding the importance of the Arts, Zellner made the point that the original Greek Olympiad included not only the sports aspect, but also the Arts. The Olympic ideal encompassed the body and the intellectual/spiritual. In the Olympics from 1883 to 1902, Literature and the Arts received three awards. However, after World War II the awarding of art and literature became much more difficult, as non-western European cultures were for the first time officially recognized. Great difficulties emerged in determining the best art among so many diverse cultures so the Olympic Arts recognition was dropped.

In concluding this interesting and insightful session, Zellner recommended the attendees investigate the following

resources: Alfred Tomatis, *The Ear and Language*; Ernst Berendt, *The World is Sound*; Nada Brahma, *Music and the Landscape of Consciousness*.

Zdunek encouraged the public school attendees to continue to support GTCYS, suggesting that students involved benefit not only themselves, but their school programs as well. He concluded by graciously offering to help school programs that are on the verge of being cut due to lack of funding.

*Linda Bell teaches middle school at Technology and Language Campus in Robbinsdale and serves as Secretary/Membership Coordinator for MNSOTA. †*

## Let's Connect: Inspiring String Students by Connecting Classical and Contemporary Music

Reported by Brian Hill

The session entitled "Let's Connect: Inspiring String Students by Connecting Classical and Contemporary Music" had many good aspects. Daryl Silberman, showed some of her techniques in teaching a stringed instrument. She had an electric violin that had special effects and she also had some good sounding songs and medleys for entertaining students. A shortcoming of this session was that she didn't describe a plan for how to get from playing no contemporary

music or jazz to using this music in a lesson. I would have liked to hear more about how to get students (and myself) started with improvisation.

The concept the presenter shared came across very strongly: I am convinced that string students need to be able to improvise and play jazz. These things aren't just for winds and percussion. String players can make many wonderful sounds that winds simply can't make. †

## Large Group Instrumental Performance Packages

Reported by Brian Hill

The session, "Large Group Instrumental Performance Packages," was geared towards meeting the Graduation Standards, but many great teaching ideas came through as well. The presenter, MNSOTA award winner Jerry Jones from Duluth, said it best: "These are ideas that you've always thought about but never used." One of the main ideas was to help your band, orchestra or choir learn how to understand the music as a whole. Many times students only come away having "learned a bunch of Second Violin parts." They don't know how to listen to the piece from the audience's perspective (which was the composer's original intention). An idea presented for helping students to better understand the score was to have them turn in a sheet of paper that shows the dynamics as they happen throughout the piece, showing building and tension, as well as many other aspects of the music (harmony, form, etc.). This may not help the ensemble perform better, but it will give the student something that they normally wouldn't get from just learning the Second Violin part.

*Brian Hill is a string education major at St. Cloud State University. †*