

MMEA Performance Highlights

by Bert Strassberg

Ramsey International Fine Arts Center Chamber Strings Orchestra

The Ramsey International Fine Arts Center Chamber Orchestra led by Patricia Kelly performed at the 2001 MMEA Midwinter Clinic. Ramsey is a K-8 south-side magnet school in Minneapolis. String instrument study is a requirement for every child in grades 1-6. The Chamber Strings Orchestra meets two or three times a week for 55 minutes and students receive one 25 minute sectional per week.

The program included: Rodgers, *Fanfare and Processional*; Boubllil/Schonberg, Selections from *Les Miserables*, arranged by Larry Moore; traditional spiritual, *Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen*, arranged by Carrie Grusell; Telemann *Sinfonia*, arranged by Robert Brown; and Del Borgo, *Russian Folk Song*. A special appearance was made by second grade fiddlers who performed *Hoedown* by Fletcher. The second piece performed by the orchestra, *Harvest Dance*, was written by Ramsey composer in residence, Chris Granias.

The Ramsey String Program received recognition in 1998 from the American String Teachers Association, and the Ramsey Symphony Orchestra performed for MMEA in 1991. The Chamber Strings Orchestra has received numerous excellent and superior ratings at state-wide festivals. The teachers include Patricia Kelly, Lorie Hippen, Stacy Aldrich, Patricia Hanrahan Wunder, and Daniel Mollick.

Duluth East High School Symphony Orchestra

The 2001 MMEA Midwinter Clinic featured a performance by the Duluth East High School Symphony Orchestra conducted by Jerry Jones on Friday February 16th. The orchestra program began at East High in 1941 with 26 eighth grade students and the first conductor was Palmer Grover. By 1949 the orchestra program had grown to three orchestras. Today the program at East boasts four orchestras including

the Greyhound Orchestra for ninth graders, the non-auditioned Concert Orchestra for students in grades 10-12, the auditioned Symphony Orchestra for students in grades 10-12 and the auditioned Sterling Strings for 11th and 12th graders. All four orchestras meet for 50 minutes each day. Members of the Sterling Strings are also required to be involved in the Symphony Orchestra. The Symphony Strings travel every other year and they have performed in New York, Boston, San Francisco, St. Louis, Toronto, and Chicago. This is the third performance of an East orchestra at MMEA in the past 8 years.

The program included: Haydn, *Symphony No. 104 "London,"* 4th movement; Bombardier, *Elegy for Two Harps and String Orchestra, Op. 115*; Bloch, *Concerto Grosso for Strings and Piano*, 1st movement — *Allegro energico e pesante*, 4th movement — *Allegro*; Daehn, *With Quiet Courage*; Sibelius, *Symphony No. 2, Op. 43*, 4th movement. *Elegy for Two Harps and String Orchestra* was commissioned by the East H.S. Symphony Orchestra for this MMEA performance. Composer Bradley A. Bombardier is a lifelong resident of Duluth and 1978 graduate of East High. He is an instructor at U.W. Superior, a member of the Duluth Superior Symphony and an elementary band teacher in Carlton, Minnesota.

Jerry Jones has been the director of the East Orchestras since 1986. Jones credits the growth of this program to the outstanding middle school programs that feed into East High School, as well as the superb string instruction available in the community.

The Moorhead Sixth Grade Orchestra

The Moorhead Sixth Grade Orchestra, under the direction of Brian Cole, was showcased at the 2001 MMEA Midwinter Clinic on Saturday, February 17th. This diverse performance included Lynne Warfel-Holt of MPR as Mistress of Ceremonies, Russell Peterson of Concordia College, Moorhead, as Saxophone Soloist/Composer and Diane

Wright of Marshall, Minnesota, as Guest Conductor.

Works performed included: Keuning, *Royal Processional*; Waldteufel, *Skater's Waltz*, arranged by Richard Meyer; Porter, *Hyde Park Dance* from *Dorchester Street Songs*; Handel, *La Rejouissance* from *Royal Fireworks Music*, arranged by Richard Meyer; Haydn, *St. Anthony Chorale*, arranged by Sandra Dackow; Puccini, *O Mio Babbino Caro* from *Gianni Schicchi*, arranged by Donald Heilmann; Peterson, *Concertino for Alto Saxophone*; Sherman, *It's a Small World*, arranged by Bruce Chase; Williams, *Theme from "Jurassic Park"*, arranged by John Higgins; Clark, *The Torch Burns Bright*; and Straub, *Simple Square Dance*.

Moorhead's Beginning Orchestra Program begins in the fall of the fifth grade year and continues through the sixth grade year. Currently there are 213 students in the beginning program. Fifth and sixth grade students receive one 25 minute group lesson a week. Students are pulled from their music or gym class in like instrument groups of 6 to 8. There are currently 11 sixth-grade string quartets/quintets that meet every other Friday morning for 25 minutes. These chamber groups come up with their own name, market themselves through the use of business cards, and often perform for their parents' businesses and social functions.

Last year's sixth grade orchestra performed at Orchestra Hall as part of MNSOTA's Tier 2 Middle Level Orchestra Festival. Moorhead's orchestra was one of six orchestras chosen from the more than 45 who competed at regional sites.

Bert Strassberg is in his second year at Eden Prairie High School and Eden Prairie Central Middle School. In April 1999, his 8th grade orchestra from Moorhead, MN, was honored by MNSOTA at the Tier 2 Middle Level Orchestra Festival Concert held at the Landmark Center in St. Paul. Bert has served on the MNSOTA board as secretary since August 2000. †