

# MMEA String Events 2002

## School Orchestra Performances reported by Mark Gitch

### Owatonna Junior High

The Minneapolis convention center echoed with music as close to 200 music educators and parents attended a performance by the Owatonna Junior High School Orchestra, directed by MNSOTA member Jennifer Arco, at the Minnesota Music Educators' Midwinter Clinic on February 15th. The orchestra and their director were pleased to be introduced at the concert by their school's principal, Tom Sager.

The orchestra consists of 36 eighth grade students who meet for rehearsal daily for 54 minutes and also have small group lessons once a week for 25 minutes. At least 1/3 of these students take private lessons, are involved with orchestras in Rochester, Northfield, or the Twin Cities, perform in the community in quartets for various functions, and have been selected to be in various Honors Orchestras.

The selections were: *Festivity* by Sien-nicki; *Themes from the Moldau* by Smetanal Frost; *Mother Ginger* by Tchaikowsky/Dackow; *Concerto Grosso Opus 6, No 1* by Handel/Dackow; *Ashokan Farewell* by Ungar/Custer; *Variations on a Well-Known Sea Chantey* by Stephan; *Fantasia on an Original Theme* by Phillips; *Russian Sailor's Dance* by Gliere/ Allen.

The orchestra played with their customary precision, with Ms. Arco directing their attention equally to the musical and technical considerations in their challenging program. Dynamics were excellent. Two students were featured as soloists in *Ashokan Farewell* by Jay Ungar.

The students were very excited to represent their school and community at the conference, and the performance was enthusiastically received. Performances at the MMEA conference provide an important opportunity for growth and reflection for both for the performing group and for the educators who hear the performances.

### Mounds View High School

John Madura and the Mounds View High School Symphony Orchestra and Chamber Orchestra presented a challenging program at the Midwinter MMEA Clinic. In addition to performances of Brahms' *Third Symphony (1st Movement)*,

Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* with a fine student pianist, Britten's *Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge* and a string symphony movement by George Chadwick, the students demonstrated the work they complete as part of Madura's O.P.U.S. curriculum. A student conductor led the audience and orchestra in a solfege version of *Old MacDonald* that demonstrated a number of conducting gestures, the entire junior class demonstrated the basic conducting beat patterns and divisions in quick succession, and the string section demonstrated 44

bowings from *detache* to *volante*. Mounds View High School clearly has some of Minnesota's finest students. Congratulations to the Mounds View orchestra staff and students.

*Mark Gitch is in his eleventh year as Director of Orchestras at Owatonna High School, his third as director of the Owatonna Community Orchestra, and he is active as a free-lance violinist and violist. Mark has also served on the MNSOTA board as the out-state representative.* †

## Chamber Music

presented by Jorja Fleezanis  
reported by Cassandra Herold

Jorja Fleezanis did a presentation about chamber music, with a student string quartet composed of GTCYS students to help her. She first discussed the importance of coming to rehearsal prepared: all members should have a score to refer to and pencils; the group should have a metronome loud enough for them all to hear.

One main focus of the group should be to establish a tempo. If there is no metronome mark given by the composer, the appropriate tempo should be selected using clues given by the composer. Some examples are: character indications such as *Allegro*, *Vivace* or *Adagio*; meter; dynamics; nuances such as *espressivo*, *dolce* or *appassionato*; articulations such as dots, wedges, slurs, different types of accents; and rhythmic languages used by the composer.

Once a tempo has been established, the group should play the piece. They should use the metronome to keep the integrity of

the tempo so that they are aware of tendencies to slow down or speed up.

Defining the period or style of the piece is also important, as this will help define how the piece is to be performed. Jorja mentioned Classical, Romantic, Neo-classic, Post-romantic, Viennese School and French School as examples of styles. Jorja commented that "there are many languages in music based on this list, and it is our job to define them and find the right sound world and speech patterns to help define them." She also said that we must learn to *listen* and *play*, not just play.

*Cassandra Herold is the elementary orchestra instructor in the Willmar Public Schools. She serves on the MNSOTA board as Membership Coordinator. Cassandra graduated from Augsburg College where she was a student of Mary Horozaniecki.* †

## MMEA Orchestra Open Forum 2002

by Bert Strassburg

The 2002 MMEA Orchestra Open Forum took place on Friday, February 15th at 7:45 A.M. and was hosted by MMEA Vice President of Orchestra, Stephen Dunn. Members in attendance included teachers

from both suburban and out-state schools. Topics of discussion included All-State and MNSOTA events.

**Selection of All-State Scales**

Members wondered who chooses the scales for strings and why. The answer was that the orchestra Vice President is responsible for making the decision. This year the scales were the same as last year. Rotating what scales are played what year and the possibility of eliminating some scales all together were also discussed.

**Communication from MMEA regarding All-State**

Some Junior High teachers expressed concern that once again they were not receiving information regarding All-State. It was asked if information regarding scales could be posted on the MMEA website. [Scale sheets for all strings were available for downloading from the MMEA site this

past January. ed]

**MNSOTA events**

I presented information on MNSOTA sponsored events for the upcoming year.

*Bert Strassburg teaches in the Eden Prairie School District. He serves on the MNSOTA board as secretary. †*