



VIOLA

National Federation of Music Clubs

by Annette Caruthers

For three years now some of my students have been participating in the National Federation of Music Clubs Festival. The Festival is held at the end of February or early March each year. Students play pieces listed in the Festival Bulletin and are graded by a judge. After playing for several years, they should have earned enough points to win a gold cup. I have been very surprised to see how my students respond to this event. For some it is the highlight of their musical year!! They work very hard, hoping to earn a Superior or Excellent rating. To really do their best, most students need to perform something they have known for a while. First performances don't always show their highest abilities, but many times my students want to play something new, and they work hard to do the best they can. They really do improve their technique and musicality by having a goal of this type, with a deadline!

The Bulletin we have used for the past few years contained many pieces that were difficult to find: some foreign editions, some even out of print. This year I was asked to take on the job of evaluating the listings and making changes. It was a lot of work, but I learned of many new pieces, expanding my knowledge of available repertoire dramatically.

I started this project by having the NFMC coordinator send me an electronic version of their Bulletin as it existed. I also contacted James Przygocki, whom I had met at Indiana University a number of years ago, and who has arranged numerous pieces for viola that were previously not available. He sent me a listing that he uses for his studio. I contacted Barbara Barber, with whom I had played chamber music many years ago, because I know of her work on

the popular *Solos for Young Violists* series. She also generously sent me an exhaustive listing that she had used at an ASTA presentation on repertoire.

Then I started receiving packages in the mail from publishers who had items they wanted to have considered for the Bulletin. Some I already had, many I did not. Some are very recently composed works, some recent arrangements, and some pieces for small viola ensembles. It is a very interesting assortment of materials.

I also downloaded listings from the American Viola Society website, from the Royal Conservatory listing, and others. The Internet can be a great source of information. Then I had a very productive session with Stella Anderson, who owns a lot of repertoire I did not have. I wanted to actually see as many pieces as possible and be sure I knew what level they were on, how well they were marked, etc. Stella was able to make a number of recommendations when I was not sure of something.

Then I tried checking to see which pieces were still in print and available for purchase. The Shar catalogue was helpful for this, but mostly I found myself back on the Internet checking publishers to see what they are still offering for sale.

In the end, I did make numerous changes to the Bulletin. Probably the most obvious changes are in the Concerto division, where I found several frequently used, well-known concertos that were missing from the list. It was a good feeling to put them in the listing, and know that I can have students perform them in the coming years.

Probably the biggest benefit from this project was learning of repertoire I never knew existed. I had always thought my full

New-to-me Gems of Viola Repertoire

Craig Duncan, *Easy Solos for Beginning Viola*, Mel Bay

Craig Duncan, *The Student Violist: Bach*, Mel Bay

Craig Duncan, *The Student Violist: Handel*, Mel Bay

E. H. Jones, *The Really Easy Viola Book*, Faber

J. T. Rhoda, *The ABCs of Viola, Books 1 and 2*, Carl Fischer

Wilkinson and Bass, *Viva Viola!*, Faber
Joplin/Goddard, *Joplin Rags for Viola*, Spartan Press

R. Clarke, *Passacaglia on an Old English Tune*, Hal Leonard

E. Putz, *Blues for Benny*, Schott
Gershwin/Arnold, *Three Preludes*, Viola World Publications

file cabinet contained a pretty good collection of pieces for teaching and my own performing use. But it is amazing how many new books and pieces are being printed every year, and how many existing ones I did not know of. The viola is really getting some attention from composers, teachers, and publishers. Enjoy!

Annette Caruthers teaches viola and violin at her private studio in Minneapolis and St. Louis Park. She is a former member of the Minnesota Orchestra and currently serves as violist with many organizations including the Minnesota Opera Orchestra and VocalEssence. †