

MARY WEST

RECEIVES MARVIN J. RABIN COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD FROM ASTA WITH NSOA

ASTA WITH NSOA presents the Marvin J. Rabin Community Service Award to an individual or organization who makes significant contributions to the community through teaching and leadership. Mary West certainly fulfills those qualifications. After an active career as a performer, which included a performance at the White House for Franklin Roosevelt, Mary moved with her family to Minneapolis in 1951. Here, Mary started teaching, and now in her 90s, she is still teaching with no plans for retirement. Her warm smile and encouraging words have inspired, motivated and educated hundreds of violin students.



The genius of Mary's teaching is her supreme confidence that every student can play exceedingly well. She always gives positive, encouraging and nurturing comments, focusing first on what has improved. Then she gently reminds and prods students to fix the areas that need improvement. Even when students haven't done the amount of practice they should have for a week, they leave wanting to do better the following lesson. Now that's a great teacher.

Scales and etudes are the focal point of lessons with Mary. No student is exempt from Sevcik, Auer, Whistler, Trott, Kreisler

and Flesch. Solo repertoire is worked on after all scales and etudes. Students soon discover that if their technical material is not well prepared that it will take so long to get through the technique that there won't be any lesson time left for repertoire. Every student wants to get to their solo; Mary makes them earn the privilege.

Mary's knowledge of the repertoire and student personalities allows her to choose repertoire that challenges without overwhelming, and will bring the student to the next level. Once when a young student heard for the first time *Praeludium and Allegro* performed by an older student, the young student asked, "Do you think I could play that?" And Mary replied, "Yes, baby; someday you will." Another teacher might have said, "Only if you practice hard." But Mary said, "Yes. You will."

Mary has lots of strategies for helping students organize their time and actually get enough practicing in. Often students are asked to telephone her answering machine every day to tell her, "I've finished my practicing for today." So when students go for a lesson, Mary assumes that they have been doing focused and detailed practice. If there is a problem, she searches for the technical

reason causing the problem — something they are doing that is preventing them from playing better. Mary is masterful at zeroing in on that technical problem, helping students be aware of what they are doing inadvertently, and giving them practice strategies to overcome the difficulty.

In our local competitions, you will always have the pleasure of hearing Mary West's students in the finals — from concerto competitions for MacPhail, MYS or GTCYS, to solo competitions such as MNSOTA, Thursday Musical, Schubert Club, YPSCA or WAMMA. Mary's students have performed as winners with the SPCO and Minnesota Orchestra.

After high school, Mary's students have gone on to prestigious music schools including Curtis, Julliard, Cleveland Institute, New England Conservatory and Boston College, and major universities including Harvard, Yale, Indiana and Stanford. Many have attended our fine local universities including the University of Minnesota, St. Olaf and Carleton College. Mary's students now have performing and teaching careers, from local freelancers to orchestras as far away as Australia. The presentation of the ASTA WITH NSOA award was held at a concert of the Kansas City Symphony during the national convention in Kansas City. It should not be surprising to know that one of Mary's student's plays in that orchestra.

Mary says, "I feel so very, very fortunate, and appreciate the honor so much. All that I ask of my students is that they reach as high as they can and play the violin as best as they can. And I can honestly say, so far, they all have." †