

Clinic: Learning Through Music

presented by Kenneth Freed
reported by Sarah Chelgren

Kenneth Freed began his presentation *Learning Through Music* at the MNSOTA Fall Clinic and Luncheon with a familiar viola solo from the Suzuki repertoire. He described the journey of music we all go through in life, and he reminded us that a lot of what we do as adults is what we do as good students. The habits we instill in our students will hopefully stay with them and help them become successful adults.

He stressed the importance of building connections between community organizations, schools, and the arts. One example he gave is the connection between the Kenwood Symphony and Ramsey Fine Arts School in Minneapolis. The Kenwood Symphony rehearses at the school and performs annually for the students.

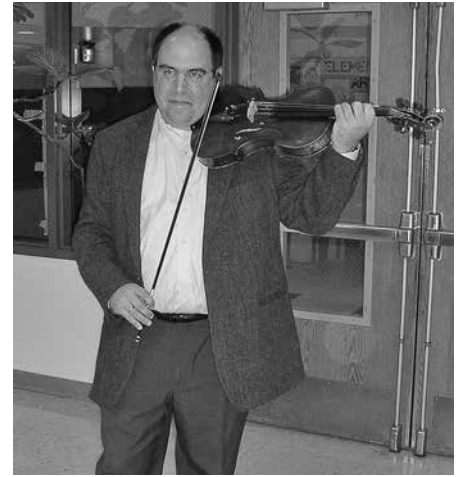
He also emphasized the importance of creating connections between music teachers and classroom teachers in a school. There are fundamental, shared concepts between music and other subjects, he said, and we need to bridge the divide between what we know and what others know. Freed suggested teaching all of the classroom teachers how to play *Twinkle* as a way to change negative attitudes towards music lesson pull-out programs. He doesn't shy away from bringing up research of how music can make you "smarter, happier, slimmer, etc."

Freed has also seen the value of connections between school children and the

Minnesota Orchestra first-hand. Providing lessons for low-income students, developing a "pen pal" program with a classroom, and helping to develop music-related curriculums, such as rhythmic fluency, opera, drum circles, and testing programs, are all beneficial ways to build community. When the Minnesota Orchestra was on tour in Europe, Freed would "get lost" in Europe and classrooms who were following the tour online would have to use map skills to find out where he was located. This is a way to connect music lessons with other subject areas and hopefully other teachers, too.

He insists that teachers are constant researchers, and it would be beneficial if teachers had more time to compare their notes. The problem, he said, is that every teacher is isolated in their own one-room school house. He likes the idea of interdisciplinary curriculums and he thinks teachers could work together to figure out what motivates a 5-year-old, a 12-year-old, an 18-year-old, etc.

Freed mentioned Harvard Project Zero throughout his presentation. According to the project's website, www.pz.harvard.edu, "Project Zero's mission is to understand and enhance learning, thinking, and creativity in the arts, as well as humanistic and scientific disciplines, at the individual and institutional levels." Teachers can find a wealth of information on this website related to the most recent research about arts education



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and interdisciplinary curriculums.

In his concluding remarks, Freed emphasized the importance of getting your building principal behind the music program. When music teachers leave their one-room school house, they have to put on a public face and take comfort in the relationships they have and the belief in the value of what they teach. Music is not entertainment, and we are doing more than creating "performing seals." By building connections within a school and a community, music teachers can create a climate where arts programs can thrive.

Sarah Chelgren directs orchestras at Robbinsdale Cooper HS and the District 281 Honors Orchestra. She also conducts the GTCYS Sinfonia orchestra. Sarah maintains a small studio of private cello students and freelances regularly in the Twin Cities. She serves the MNSOTA board as President-Elect. ♪