



MENTOR'S DESK

Upper Midwest Conference: Mentoring in Action!

by Jane Linde Capistran

Upper Midwest Intern Program

The past two summers, I have had the privilege of being a faculty member at the Upper Midwest String and Chamber Music Conference (UMSCMC), held on the campus of The College of St. Benedict. A unique feature of this camp is that it allows college string majors/players to follow a faculty “mentor” around for the week, observing and participating in the instruction and coaching of the campers. The “conference” portion of the week is also a unique element, as the college interns receive two daily sessions of presentations by the faculty. This year’s sessions included topics on the bass viol and modern string bass, an introduction to bluegrass playing, life after Kreutzer etudes, teaching from the podium and ten characteristics of string playing. In essence, they get to attend their own little mini-ASTA conference!

The UMSCMC had a long history at Mankato State University, founded by Norman Selness and directed by Harry Dunscombe for over twenty years. The camp has now celebrated three years at its new location with Dr. J. David Arnott as camp director. Open to students in grades 7–12, it offers both orchestral and chamber music opportunities for the students. College faculty, please encourage your music education and/or performance students to apply to be interns for the week. It is a perfect opportunity for them to gain teaching experience and hear important string topics.

Feedback from the Interns

I sat down with some of the college interns on the final days of camp to get their impressions of the mentoring process. Katie Murphy, a graduate of St. Ben’s and now a string teacher in the Minneapolis Public Schools is a veteran of UMSCMC. She attended as a camper, and was returning for her fifth year as a mentor/counselor/recreation leader (she has held many positions). What she discovered as a camper was that she knew she had to be in music for her vocation; the week of immersion in music

and the support of the staff and interns all contributed to the discovery of what she wanted to do in her life. As a mentor, she gained confidence and knowledge, and also pursued help from mentors after the camp session.

Joanna Cochenet received her B.M. from Coe College in Music Education/

Anastasia Verdoljak is a recent graduate of Macalaster College, earning a B.A. in Music and Biology. In her third summer, she has gained much knowledge with orchestral rehearsal techniques and also as an administrator, working closely with the chamber music program.

Another Macalaster graduate with a



Front row: Kim Schmitt, Michael Peiffer, Emily Nieves, Carlin Stiles, Kathleen Murphy, JoAnna Cochenet, Kari Peterson. Back row: Anastasia Verdoljak, Cara Weggler, Xin Piao, Rachel Osterhouse, Andrew Mueller, Ilan Klages-Mundt. Not pictured: Natalie Dimberg

Viola Performance Certificate and is currently working on her M.A. from the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee in conducting. She was excited to have the opportunity to work and observe many of the faculty and felt the Q & A sessions with the faculty were also helpful.

Rachel Osterhouse will be a senior at the University of Minnesota, pursuing a B.M. in Violin Performance. This was her second summer at UMSCMC. Her conversations about teaching with the faculty and observing classroom management techniques were helpful. Also, experiencing the audition process for a second year was very important, as she felt more prepared and truly enjoyed it this year.

B.A. in Music and Latin Studies, Andrew Mueller said watching experts was helpful in giving him ideas and a sense of security in trying the ideas out on his own.

Why We Love to Teach

The most unified response from the interns was the fact that *they* became mentors for the week! Their reactions to working with the 7th–12th graders were as follows:

- “I loved it! Seeing the progress that the students made, made me feel so proud of them.”
- “It’s so neat to share things that you feel passionate about.”
- “I learned to be flexible and

spontaneous, and to have a positive outlook.”

- “It’s important to use their names.”
- “You can show kids how to take a risk in their music—giving them confidence.”
- “It’s amazing to see the progress from year to year.”
- “I also learn from the other interns too.”
- “They really improved from the ideas I gave them. We had four goals, and we really got into it!”

MNSOTA Mentorship Opportunities

I was pleased to hear from most of the interns that they would seek out a mentor outside of this camp experience. One

response made me think a bit however, as one of the interns thought it might be a burden to ask someone for advice/help. I want to reassure all beginning or newer teachers that MNSOTA has a mentoring system in place, and mentors are waiting to assist you with your teaching questions. Questions big or little, string technique to string repertoire, class set-up to class discipline—a mentor can help when you just want to bounce an idea around.

Congratulations and thanks to all the interns of the 2009 Upper Midwest String and Chamber Music Conference.

- Interested interns for the 2010 session should contact Dr. J. David Arnott at darnott@csbsju.edu

- If you are interested in being a MNSOTA mentor, contact Jane Linde Capistran at capistra@cord.edu
- If you are in need of a mentor, contact Jane Linde Capistran at capistra@cord.edu

Jane Linde Capistran teaches studio violin and viola and conducts the Symphonia Chamber Orchestra at Concordia College in Moorhead. She is also the conductor of the Fargo-Moorhead Area Senior High Youth Symphony and is the Assistant Concertmaster and Associate Conductor of the FM Symphony. She was the 2005 recipient of the MNSOTA Master Studio Teacher Award and the North Dakota String Teacher of the Year in 2007. †