



MENTOR'S DESK

MNSOTA Mentoring in Action

by Jane Linde Capistran

We are fortunate in Minnesota to have so many vibrant string programs—public schools, private schools, colleges, universities and private studios. This summer proved to be an excellent opportunity to hear and work with many of the students from these fine programs. I also observed the power of mentoring, and the impact that it leaves for both the mentor and mentee.

The Upper Midwest String and Chamber Music Conference held at the College of St. Benedict in July gave Augsburg College intern Mandy Isaacson “real world experiences, but in a safe environment, where faculty were there to assist if needed.” She termed it, “problem solving in real time,” as mentors were able to give suggestions that she could immediately implement. Mandy also enjoyed the “full circle” experience, where she could share the information she received as a younger chamber musician, and give it back to the students that she coached.

During the MN All-State week at Concordia College, I was hired as a mentor, but gained much as a mentee as well. Maestro Gary Lewis, Brenda Brenner, Faith

Farr and my colleague Foster Beyers had information that sparked my energy and direction as an educator and musician.

My former student Sadie Ellingson took me out for tea this afternoon, and I quizzed her about her first year of teaching elementary and middle school orchestra in Alexandria. Her district's mentoring program was very important to her success this past year. She had the great fortune to be paired with Brad Lambrecht, the high school orchestra teacher, in addition to the mentoring program coordinator. When asked what benefits did the mentoring program provide, she said, “Any and all!”

I connected with a former Upper Midwest intern at the MNSOTA conference in August. One of his first questions was a request for a mentor, as he begins his new position in the state. I really loved his philosophy, as he said the more mentors he had, the better it would be!

So mentoring is alive and well in Minnesota! But a reminder that mentors are still a need for our new teachers. The National Foundation for the Improvement of Education* did an overview of mentoring programs in 1999. As one would guess,

mentors are comfortable in their content, communication and interpersonal skills, and feel confident in their role as a leader. Several of our volunteer MNSOTA mentors have retired in the past few years, so if you are able to assist a new teacher—by phone, email, or in person—please let me know. Studies** show that new teachers often feel extreme isolation during their transition years into teaching (Krueger, 2003). Let's lend all our new teachers a hand in Minnesota and make that transition a positive experience!

*Wisconsin Music Education Association <http://www.com/mentoring/bestpractices.html>.

** Krueger, P. (1996) *Becoming a Music Teacher: Challenges of the First Year*. Dialogue in Instrumental Music. 20(2).

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