

# NORTH DAKOTA MUSIC TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Newsletter, November 2009

Arlene Gray, President

## *A Message from your President:*

This turn of the calendar to November and the holiday season is both welcome and dreaded. Our busy calendars become filled with many deadlines that cause routines to become upset. The long nights and short hours of daylight trigger my depression, which almost renders me useless. Thanks to medication and therapy I maintain my work schedule. Nonetheless, the darkness never quite lifts, until spring, when sunlight returns and new shoots of growth appear.

Fortunately, every day brings a touch of joy to lift my spirits. Sometimes it may be in nature; a beautiful sky, flocks of geese flying south, sunshine after a storm, an unexpected smile from a stranger or better yet, a beloved friendly face. Music is also a great comfort and stimulator. This holiday season is filled with music. We have a unique position of being both initiator of and participant in music.

Last newsletter, I mentioned board members who left board positions after years of dedicated service to the state. There remain positions in the state board which need to be filled. In October, Sharon Wesbrook, now of Detroit Lakes MN, chaired her ninth year of NODAK competitions. Sharon needs to retire from the position. This program of NODAK competitions has been strong for nineteen years, ten years under leadership of Joyce Alme, nine years under Sharon. Now we need another member, to step up to the plate, willing to take on the NODAK Competitions Chair. Many thanks, to Joyce and Sharon, for keeping this NODAK Competition program alive and vital for our ND students.

Because of economic concerns, there was no board meeting in October. There will be an IVN board meeting in January, Saturday 23, 2010 in each site across the state. The board is having correspondence through email in November. The new Handbook/Directory will soon be off the presses and into the mail. This digital age makes use of paper a "green" issue! Do you suppose there will come a time when paper is outlawed? Computers have certainly invaded our world in every dimension. Music remains a moving, important source of meaning in our lives. We impart that to our students and their enthusiasm for learning gives us joy. Although my bank account is not ample, nor sufficient, I am deeply grateful for the gift of music and the richness it allows in my life. It is a rare privilege to be the president of this organization. We have a strong vice president, who will be assuming the leadership in October 2010. We have board members, whom I count as friends, who give their best to this organization. We love music, we love our students, and we love this state of North Dakota. I know I am proud to be a North Dakotan in this unstable time. North Dakota is a bright beam of resilience, wisdom, leadership and responsibility in this time of turmoil in our nation. Blessings of the holidays be with each of you, your families, loved ones and your students. May you have joy in your lives. May the music you create be filled with that certain magic that thrills the souls of those blessed to hear. May your students experience the joy of creating lovely, soul stirring music this special time of the year. May one of you be stirred to assume state board positions that need filling☺!



## **MTNA NORTH DAKOTA STATE COMPETITIONS 2009**

### **Report from the MTNA ND Competitions Chair**

The competitions were held on Saturday, October 24, 2009, at Valley City State University. Our site coordinator was Beth Klingenstein, who ensured we had use of two good concert halls: Froemke Auditorium for the Piano Competition, and the Choir Room in Foss for the Instrumental. VCSU also provided us with two efficient and charming door monitors. The weather was kind to us, and everything ran well to time. The piano Judge was Susan Tang from UND in Grand Forks. The String Judge was Scott Neumann from Bismarck.

### **JUNIOR PERFORMANCE**

There were no entries for MTNA competition at this level.

### **SENIOR PERFORMANCE: PIANO**

**Leo Thorp**, Grand Forks (Teacher: Gloria Bethke, Grand Forks) was the only entrant, and automatically goes through to the Division round as the ND State Representative. He elected not to play at VCSU.

### **SENIOR PERFORMANCE: STRINGS**

There were two entrants in this category, so both were scheduled to play and compete at the State level. On the day, one was a “no-show” so **Melanie Due, viola**, Grand Forks (Teacher: Dan Scholz, University of Winnipeg, Manitoba) became the State Representative at this level.

### **YOUNG ARTIST PERFORMANCE: PIANO**

**David Holler**, Drake (Teacher: Penelope Simons, Minot State University) was the only entrant, and automatically goes through to the Division round as the ND State Representative. He chose to play for the judge, to receive comments and recommendations.



**David Holler and the piano judge, Susan Tang, from the Young Artist Piano competition**

### **YOUNG ARTIST PERFORMANCE: STRINGS**

**Caitlin Benson, cellist**, Fargo (Teacher: Erik Anderson, Minot State University) was the only entrant, and automatically goes on to Division. She elected to play on Saturday for comments from the judge.

### **YOUNG ARTIST PERFORMANCE: WOODWIND**

**Hannah Porter, flute**, Bismarck (Teacher: Mary Posses, University of Missouri, Kansas City, MO) was the only entrant, and automatically goes through to the Division round as the ND State Representative. She elected not to play at VCSU.

### **CHAMBER ENSEMBLE**

**The Gold Star Quartet, Saxophone Quartet**, North Dakota State University (Teacher: Matthew Patnode) was the only entrant, and automatically goes through to Division. The members of the group are: Jonathan Ellwein, Hazen; Michael Bartunek, Grafton; Jessica Blair, Fargo; Zechariah Sherman, Mandan. They elected not to play at VCSU.

### **COMPOSITION: JUNIOR**

**Kayla Ann Olson**, West Fargo (Teacher: Marilyn Moe) was the only entrant, and goes through to the Division competition round.



Participants and teachers at the NODAK Competition



Participants and teachers at the NODAK Competition



Participants and teachers at the NODAK Competition

**Foundation Chair Report**  
**Submitted by: Corinne Nustad**

NDMTA has been continuing to collect donations for our 2010 Foundation Fellow, Ruth Stenson. At our annual conference in June, \$380 was collected. Another \$252 has been donated, bringing the total to \$632. We are still seeking \$368 to complete our goal of \$1000 so that her family could be honored at the National MTNA Conference 2010. I would encourage anyone who has not yet donated to do so, either by sending a check to MTNA made out to "MTNA Foundation" with Ruth Stenson's name on the memo line, or send the check to me and I will send it in. Ruth was a dedicated musician who spent many years of her short life to further and generate interest in music through all venues. NDMTA would be honored to be able to achieve this goal for this great lady.

The Minnesota Music Teachers Association (MMTA) is preparing for its twelfth biennial International Music Study Tour. Our upcoming tour (July, 2010) includes fourteen days in Turkey, with an optional extension of a five-day Greek Isles Cruise. It promises to be a marvelous adventure. College credits and Continuing Education Units (CEU's) are available to those who request them.

A few spots remain open and we cordially extend the invitation to MTNA members and guests from our neighboring states.

Information can be found on our website: [www.mnmusicteachers.com](http://www.mnmusicteachers.com). Click on Programs, International Study Tour, and 2010 Study Tour Brochure.

**Rally Newsletter Article November 2009**

Durum Triangle MTA begins the NDMTA Rally schedule with their Rally which is scheduled for November 14. Northwest MTA follows close behind with their Rally scheduled for December 5. The Fargo-Moorhead MTA and the Upper Valley MTA Rallies will be held next spring. Piano Rallies are very worthwhile and are something that your local should consider doing! Rallies provide wonderful reasons for teachers and students to spend time on theory and technique, as well as providing another opportunity for student performance and adjudication. If you have questions about Rallies, feel free to contact me. I will be glad to be of assistance.

Sheryl Kjelland  
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## How to find the right piano teacher

By Alison Young, Minnesota Public Radio, November 4, 2009

St. Paul, Minn. — Choosing a piano teacher can be a bit like finding the right lawyer, plumber or hairdresser -- professional experience is important, as well as a good fit.

Sharon Westbrook, a recipient of North Dakota's Piano Teacher of the Year award, shares her thoughts on finding that best fit.

Westbrook has been teaching private piano lessons for 35 years. A nationally certified teacher, her credentials include two Bachelor's Degrees in education and a Master's in Piano Pedagogy.

Her students have won numerous competitions at the district and state level in North Dakota.

But it's most likely not just the success of her students, but her philosophy "to have students like music even after they've stopped playing, which garnered her North Dakota Piano Teacher of the Year in 1994.

Westbrook now lives in Detroit Lakes, Minn., and is semi-retired, though she still has more than 20 students and teaches in the local schools as well.

I spoke with Sharon after receiving an interesting study from a national piano teacher database that gave tips on how to select the right piano teacher for one's child.

Her answers to my questions are thoughtful, revealing, and sometimes quite funny.

Westbrook pointed out that a private music teacher must not only be able to teach discipline with the lessons, but encourage freedom in the student to explore and make different musical sounds.

Here is a list of what Westbrook feels a parent should consider when searching for the right piano teacher:

1. Does the child want to take lessons?
2. The teacher you choose should be personable and must like people and children. This may seem an understatement, but can prove disastrous if the teacher is not personable!

3. Don't think "anyone can teach beginners." The first teacher most often determines the child's success as a musician in the future. They are the ones who set the foundation of how to practice, teach the fundamentals of reading and technique, and instill a love of music in their students.

4. The teacher should have the same goals as the parents and student. Are they teaching just how to play the piano, or are they teaching musicianship? Is the goal to become a concert pianist or to have a knowledge and love of music? Discuss what performance opportunities are available to the student and which ones are required by the instructor.

5. The teacher must want what is best for the student and not push for contests, gold cups or unrealistic goals, while at the same time still encouraging and motivating the student.

6. The teacher must have open communication with the parents of young children. The parents should supervise practice, or at least be in the room reading a book, sewing, etc.

7. The teacher may have a parent come to lessons or at least be open for them to come for some lessons.



**NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY**

NDSU Music's  
*Robert and Sheila Challey*  
Scholarship Fund

Robert and Sheila Challey established their scholarship fund with a multi-million dollar endowment in 2006 to attract and nurture the finest music students in the region. Awards include:

**THE MYRTLE EUREN CHALLEY SCHOLARSHIPS AND PATRICIA YVONNE BIZICKI SCHOLARSHIPS**  
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Euren Fellowship recipients (l to r):  
Jace Beehler, voice, *Grand Forks*  
Kayla Johnson, flute, *Casselton*  
Emily Custer, piano, *E. Grand Forks, Minn.*  
Andrew Budke, saxophone, *Fargo*

LAST YEAR NDSU MUSIC OFFERED 109 SCHOLARSHIPS TO OUTSTANDING STUDENTS BASED ON ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND MUSICAL ABILITY.

For more information about NDSU Music Scholarships, contact: 701-231-7932 or visit [www.ndsu.edu/finearts/music](http://www.ndsu.edu/finearts/music)

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8. The teacher must teach to the individual student -- this is why they are taking private lessons. Teachers have a vast resource of piano methods and they need to use them or be willing to change if the material does not fit the student.

9. Ask the teacher the ages of her students and what she likes to teach. It's important that the student and teacher have a good rapport and working relationship. Request an interview with prospective teachers to get a feel for their personality, teaching methods, goals and studio setup.

10. Ask for the teacher's credentials not just concerning music, e.g. are they active in the community?

11. Ask for the teacher's goals for students. Some good goals are for the student to enjoy music in general, learn the notes and be able to sight-read. Practicing is usually difficult until a routine is established. The teacher and parents need to provide positive reinforcements plus a lot of guidance in the first year.

12. Attend a student recital of the teacher you are contemplating.

### **Call for new board members:**

Board members are needed to fill two important positions: Membership and NODAK. Membership person keeps track of membership records that come from MTNA and forwards those membership dues to the state treasurer, Kathy Bresee. The job takes an hour or two once a month.

NODAK chair assembles the competition information in September, works with the vice president, arranges rehearsal and competition times, greets the students the weekend of the competitions, assembles the program information, introduces the competitions, introduces the winners and awards the certificates and award checks. It is a fall job taking up only September and October. Sharon Wesbrook has all the forms on her computer and will send the files to the new chair.

Please, thoughtfully consider assuming one of these responsibilities for the state. Board meetings are three times a year. The next board meeting is a Saturday morning IVN Conference meeting, January 23, 2010, from 10 am to 1 pm Central Time. Technology allows us to meet face to face without the driving across the state.

State board meetings are held in January, June and October. One of the meetings takes place before the Conference, the others via IVN Conference. The state board is a congenial group of serious musicians/teachers. We need these positions filled. Please give president, Arlene Gray, the confirmation of your possible interest in one of these board positions. YOU are needed on the board.



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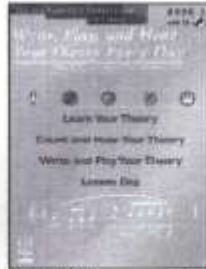


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