



# American String Teachers Association Student Chapter Newsletter Fall 2010

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Hello, Future String Teachers!

I am delighted to have the opportunity to serve as the Student Chapter Committee Chair of our national ASTA organization for the next two years. My name is Joanne May and I am the orchestra conductor and chair of the string department at Elmhurst College in Elmhurst, Illinois. If you'd like to read more about our string program or me, please go to <https://sites.google/a/net.elmhurst.edu/strings-at-elmhurst/>.

ASTA student members are the future of this organization. It is my plan, while serving in this capacity, to try to bring to you everything you're seeking in a professional organization as you study, plan, and dream of your future teaching strings. I will be asking for responses from you from time-to-time as issues in the organization arise, but will always welcome your thoughts and ideas at any time. I hope you will consider me a resource on any topic you wish to discuss in string teaching.

**NEWS FLASH!** A new development on our website is the addition of a blog for student members. You may find it here: <http://astascblog.blogspot.com/>. Please go there often to ask questions or post comments! I will be checking it frequently to read your comments. With 34 years of experience teaching strings, I hope that I can share some of my thoughts with you as you start out in the profession, and also put you together with others who can offer you tips, wisdom, advice, and JOBS!

## 2011 National Conference in Kansas City

I hope you will consider attending the ASTA National Conference in Kansas City next March. This is a forum where you will have the opportunity to meet string teachers from all across the country, network for jobs and performing opportunities, learn from the masters in our profession, and enjoy *amazing* performances. I have thoroughly enjoyed all of the

conferences that I have attended, and with each one I've come back home fired up to try a new technique, a new piece of music, or coordinate some type of performance or tour with someone I met at the conference.

With so many great sessions, and with up to ten sessions going on at a time, the only problem will be choosing which **one** session to go to at any given time! Each year the lineup has been fabulous, and this year is no exception. Registration for student members is greatly reduced, and it's even less if you register by the early bird deadline of December 1. To You may want to consider making it a project in your chapter to do fundraising to help defer part of the cost of the conference. Many colleges and universities also have grant programs to support undergraduate projects and research thst can help support your attendance at conferences.

Please visit [astaweb.com](http://astaweb.com) to see a complete listing of all the sessions - there will be something for everyone. I hope to see you in Kansas City!

## **Awards for Student Chapters**

For many years ASTA has presented an award for the most **Outstanding Student Chapter** in the nation based on their activities, their ability to touch peoples' lives in meaningful ways and to communicate how effective these activities have been. This year we will additionally be offering an award for the **Most Improved Student Chapter**. But you can't just sit back and wait for someone to nominate you! If you are interested in applying for one of these two awards, go to the Student Chapter section of [astaweb.com](http://astaweb.com) and find the form, fill it out, and send it in to the national office by Monday, November 1, 2010. Award winners will be presented with a plaque at the national conference in Kansas City in March, 2011. Maybe it will be you!

## **2011 National Solo Competition**

The ASTA National Solo Competition will take place at the 2011 National Conference in Kansas City. Participants must first apply at the state level, and some state deadlines may have already passed. Please check the ASTA website for state contact information and for more details about the competition.

## **2012 Alternative Styles Competition**

The next Alternative Styles Awards will take place at the 2012 National Conference in Atlanta, GA. Please check the ASTA website for details about the Alternative Styles Awards application process.

Thanks for taking the time to catch up with ASTA's Student Chapters. I look forward to our future together in this noble profession.

Sincerely,

Joanne May

[mayj@net.elmhurst.edu](mailto:mayj@net.elmhurst.edu)

Asst. Professor, Elmhurst College, Elmhurst, IL



### ***A Note from Alex Meza, National Student Chapter Committee Representative***

My name is Alex Meza. I am a senior music education major/jazz studies minor at Elmhurst College and the ASTA student chapter president. I am also pleased to be a member of the Student Chapter Committee as a student representative. As a recent newcomer to the orchestra field, I have spent much time learning methods of teaching strings at an accelerated rate in order to prepare for student teaching and, hopefully, a successful start to a life-long career. A number of bass players experience the following scenario: he or she start playing electric bass at 12 years old because his or her best friends start a band and eventually finds a passion in music. This was exactly my experience. As a college student I found my place in orchestra. Being an educator, it is my belief that students deserve to receive all the tools they need for success, whatever field they may choose. Neither my grade school nor high school had an orchestra program and this is why I want to be an orchestra director: to give students every opportunity they deserve.

It is my hope as student representative to the Student Chapter Committee to make sure students, rather, future string teachers have all the tools they need for success in the world of string teaching. If there are any

concerns, questions or comments students need the committee to be aware of, please do not hesitate to contact me. I will make sure the committee receives every message from students.

Alex Meza

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## ***Announcing a New Blog and Forum for ASTA Student Chapters***

Dr. Kelley M. Johnson

A new blog and forum specifically for the use of the Student Chapter members of the American String Teachers Association is being constructed and will be available on the main Student Chapter page on the ASTA website ([www.astaweb.com](http://www.astaweb.com)). To find it, go to the ASTA website, hover over the Membership tab at the top and scroll down the popup menu to the Student Chapters link.

The Meeting Place for ASTA Student Chapters is a blog page for disseminating current news such as events, workshops, and deadlines, as well as a place to post pictures and video. The blog is a place to share current thoughts and post reactions through commentary. From an interview with Mark Samples and Zach Wallmark, authors of the blog "The Taruskin Challenge" found in the August 2010 American Musicological Society Newsletter, "The blog format can be a valuable tool in facilitating communication among music scholars, students, and anyone who is curious. Blogging is fundamentally quick, improvisatory, flexible, and multi-media in nature."

To post an entry to the blog send your text and accompanying pictures or video link to: [kmjviolin@gmail.com](mailto:kmjviolin@gmail.com), please include 'ASTA blog post' in the subject line.

Guidelines:

- 1) Relates to ASTA student organizations,
- 2) Avoids critical or demeaning material,
- 3) Is informative or educational in nature,
- 4) Can be any length from one statement to a small article,
- 5) Videos should be posted to YouTube or other public viewing area and a link enclosed,
- 6) Pictures should be in the small or medium format.

In addition to the blog, the ASTA Student Chapter forum can be accessed from the link at the bottom of the Meeting Place for ASTA Student Chapters blog. This forum provides added depth to the communication system by providing a place to post questions and topics of research or thought without the formality of sending the information through a third party. The forum is open to the public but to post a subject topic or question to the forum, membership is required. This membership is free and simply requires an e-mail and a password. Postings will be monitored, but censure will be minimal to encourage an open sharing environment.

A blog is a medium that follows a stream of consciousness, and though highly improvisational, is meant for current discussion and news but not for reference. The forum, on the other hand, is organized by topic and may be searched and explored by subject. The ASTA Student Chapter Forum is a means to collect wisdom and knowledge of individual chapters and make that available to all organizations and individuals.

The Meeting Place for ASTA Student Chapters blog and ASTA Student Chapter forum are meant to bridge the gap in communication and knowledge for these important organizations that nurture the string educators and performers of the future. Please bookmark the link in your 'Favorites' list and visit at least once a week. We look forward to your posts, comments, questions, and lively discussions.



## **Teaching Young Children to Practice**

**Heather Lofdahl**

As a first-year teacher in a K-12 strings program, I am learning so much every day. As I have gotten to know my students, whose ages range from four to eighteen, I have noticed a few trends. I suspect that many teachers face the task of overcoming one of these trends - the lack of student practice outside the classroom. This lack of practice could exist for a number of reasons. I have heard many of them over the past few weeks. The most evident problem, though, is that students have not been taught to practice.

As string teachers, it is our responsibility to teach effective practicing from the day a student walks into our classroom or studio. It is also our job to make practicing a fun and creative task, rather than a boring and monotonous one. Let's face it - a beginning musician is a lot less likely to continue if his parent locks him in a room to practice than if he is able to practice in creative ways. For this reason, a teacher should offer practice tips at every lesson. Below are some ideas for practice games that young students enjoy. Try some of them in the classroom or studio and adapt them so that they work for your students.

**The Doorway to Success:** This game is vaguely reminiscent of childhood games like Red Light, Green Light. It works best for violinists and violists. To begin, the student stands against the wall while facing the doorway. Each time she plays a passage correctly or demonstrates a particular technique, she is allowed one step toward the door. She must take one step away from the door if she plays the passage incorrectly. Once the child is out the door, she may move on the next passage, technique, or goal. When a student continues out the door, down the hallway, and into the next room, it is evident that she feels especially successful.

**Pair-a-dice:** Begin with at least two dice. Before leaving the class or lesson, the children roll the first die to determine the number of rooms in which they will practice their assignment each day; they roll the second die to determine how many times they will practice their assignment in each room. If the children have dice at home, they could also roll the dice at the beginning of each day to add variety to their practice sessions.

**Student as Teacher:** If a child has a parent or guardian who is willing to practice with the child or help the child practice, the child can learn a lot from teaching this parent or guardian how to play a difficult passage or demonstrate a difficult technique. In order to do this, the child must have a clear understanding of the music or the task at hand. He can also have the opportunity to feel like an expert who knows how to do something that the parent does not necessarily know how to do.

**Five Times Rule Revised:** Asking older students to correctly play a passage five times before moving on is not unreasonable. For younger children, try using M&M's or stickers to help them to visualize their success. Each time the child plays a passage correctly, she can move a piece of candy into a bowl or put a sticker at the top of her music. Once she has five stickers on the page or five pieces of candy in the bowl, she can move on. If she uses candy, she can also eat those five pieces. Yum!

**Do It/Done It:** Have the students create two practice jars, which they can decorate at home. Then have them use separate slips of paper to record the pieces, passages, or techniques that they need to practice at home. All of these slips of paper go into the first practice jar. During each practice session, a child can remove a specified number of papers from the first jar. After the child successfully completes the task that is written on each sheet of paper, he can put that sheet of paper into the second practice jar. This is a great visual that can help children see each small step as a success.

**Composition:** Create note cards with rhythms or notes that are new or difficult for the students. Each day, they can combine these note cards into a different combination of pitches or rhythms to create their own compositions. Then they can write their compositions on a sheet of paper and play them for their teacher or their peers during the next class.

After only a few weeks of teaching, I have found that these practice games can work well for many students. If the teacher walks the students through these games during class or even uses them as part of the lesson, they can begin to disguise the often-dreaded task of practicing. When taught effectively, these games can yield surprising results. Try them, and create even more games to engage your students. Happy practicing!

Heather Lofdahl  
Orchestra Director at Pekin Community High School and Suzuki Strings  
Teacher in Pekin Public Schools, Pekin, IL



### ***How ASTA has Changed my Life*** **Michele Tate**

When I first arrived at Converse College in Spartanburg, South Carolina in 2006, I met an energetic group of undergraduate string players. These string players weren't just any 'ole group; they were passionate and fired-up about strings. Upon my arrival to Converse I brought with me a piece of ASTA; my senior year at the South Carolina Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities the Concertato String Orchestra won the Grand Title at the ASTA National Orchestra Festival in Kansas City. Having attended the Conference and participated in the festival, I realized how important it is to have college students involved in ASTA. Since my fellow undergraduates were so enthusiastic about strings I decided that an ASTA chapter would provide an outlet for their passion and a great resource to them. At the end of my first year, I started a Student Chapter on campus with full support from the faculty and students. Since the Chapter was started, we have held many events, fundraisers and attended 3 conferences. Looking back it has been very rewarding to see individuals have the opportunity to attend the ASTA Conference. Whether they were Performance, Education, History or Therapy majors, everyone that attended the conference benefitted from it in many ways. The Chapter has been actively involved in working with the Boys and Girls Club of Spartanburg, providing the Discovering Strings and Orchestra Program to elementary students. In addition to the DSO program, ASTA members are involved in the community through Hospice.

ASTA has changed my life; since I started the ASTA Chapter at Converse College. I have also joined the South Carolina Board of ASTA as a Chair for

the Violin and Viola Choir, Summer Jazz and Fiddle Camp Chair, SC State Basket Chair, and Student Chapter Chair. ASTA has provided me an outlet for sharing my passion for string instruments. My future plans include continuing my involvement with ASTA, playing violin, teaching and sharing my passion for strings. On October 23<sup>rd</sup>, I will be presenting a session called "All You Need to Know About ASTA Student Chapters" at the SCASTA State Conference. I hope this session will increase awareness of how valuable ASTA Student Chapters can be to the community and to the future of ASTA. If you are interested in obtaining materials from my session, please email me at [Jennifer.tate@converse.edu](mailto:Jennifer.tate@converse.edu). In addition, if you have any questions, or need ideas for your student chapter, feel free to e-mail me! I am glad to share my past experiences with fundraising, recruiting and events to help out a fellow Student Chapter.

Michele Tate  
President, Converse College ASTA Student Chapter  
Spartanburg, South Carolina



### ***A Student Chapter is Like a House***

Roxanne Kieme

Going into the new academic year, it is important to think of the chapter like a house being opened up after a long winter. The structure is still there, but inside, everything may be disorganized and covered in white sheets. Who knows what you'll find; maybe an extra violin? One can only hope.

The ASTA student chapter is also like a house in the sense that the people living there (in this case chapter members) have ownership over the place in which they live. Coming into a new year, it is important that the chapter as a whole listens and respects each individual, and that each individual takes the responsibility of being creative to better the whole. Although the chapter may rely on leaders to keep things organized, the drive and productivity comes from everyone. Utilize the living space while you have it! Go to meetings, bring ideas, and spread advocacy for music through your place of education!

Roxanne Kieme  
Michigan State University

