

Midwest **Motifs**

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A Full-Year Job

By Darcy A. Nendza

“You spend all year planning for ONE WEEK?” This incredulous question quickly follows the standard “What do you do?” introductory small talk. Trying to explain the scale of the Midwest Clinic to individuals outside the music education world proves difficult. Saying that we plan the world’s largest instrumental music education conference sometimes suffices, but even then, some wonder how such a specialized event can create an entire year of work.

January in the Midwest Clinic office brings a flurry of activity for Kelly Jocius, Executive Administrator, and myself. After two weeks of much needed rest following the end of the Midwest Clinic in December, the assumption would be that nothing needed to happen for a while. However, the closing down of one conference and the onset of another makes for a busy month. Thank yous, bills, questions, comments, reports and congratulations all must be seen to before the dust settles on the previous year. The kickoff of the next conference begins in earnest with exhibitor and advertiser packets mailed to over 700 companies, performer and clinician applications prepared for interested parties, and hotel room blocks reserved for our more than 13,000 attendees.

As soon as the exhibitor and advertiser packets are mailed in the final week of January, the exhibit contracts return quickly. Fifteen to twenty contracts arrive at the office daily for most of the month of February. The Midwest Clinic sells

out the exhibit halls every year. The processing of exhibit and advertising contracts takes most of my time throughout February, while Kelly is occupied by the creation of the February *Motifs*. We publish this newsletter three times a year. It brings all the latest news to our attendees—reflections on the previous year’s conference in February, the announcement of the performing groups in May, and a first look at the schedule of events in August. We mail more than 40,000 *Motifs* per issue.

One of the most exciting times of the year comes in March. We receive applications of performing ensembles and clinicians starting in January, but with the deadline on March 19 the applications come fast and furious now. Each application comes with a packet of information that must be checked and organized for the board of directors to examine. At the end of the month the members of the Board of Directors gather in

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Announcements

APPLY TO PERFORM IN 2004.

Performance and clinic applications are available through the Midwest Clinic website: www.midwestclinic.org



If you have attended the Midwest Clinic in the past five years, please complete the Midwest Clinic’s attendee survey at www.midwestclinic.org/surveys/2003.asp. The information you provide will help us plan future conferences.



CDs and DVDs from the 2001, 2002, and 2003 Midwest Clinic are now on sale at <http://www.midwestclinic.org/store/>

Illinois from all over the country. They will spend three days listening to every performance application and reading through the clinician applications selecting the content for the December conference.

After the board meeting in March, we send both the acceptance and rejection letters to our applicants. This is a very important process. Any group not accepted we want to feel welcome and encouraged to apply again. After the notifying letters are sent we follow up with the first of twelve directors' memos to our selected groups. These memos provide the conductors with everything they need to know for their performance at the Midwest. We also begin to gather all the information from the selected groups and clinicians. Photos must be received of every conductor, group and clinician. Many years the number of photos to collect for the program book totals over 300.

In a typical year, by the end of April the exhibit halls are sold out. Our five halls—Southeast, Southwest, Northeast, Northwest and the Continental Ballroom together contain 559 booths. Every facet of the music education industry is represented. We then send out a list of the performing groups to the music publishers that exhibit. One of the main missions of the Midwest Clinic is to bring new music to our audience. We encourage our exhibiting publishers to send scores of their new publications to the conductors toward selection of their concert programs. Fifty-percent of every band concert must be music published between September 15 of the previous year and September 15 of the current year. There are similar restrictions on jazz and orchestra performances.

The first weekend in June brings all the directors of the performing ensembles and the Board of Directors to

Chicago for a planning meeting. During that morning the directors are introduced to all the procedures and forms that it takes to put on a successful Midwest. It is a one-day opportunity for the directors to ask questions, tour the Hilton Chicago facilities, and meet their fellow performers. Following the directors meeting the Board of Directors meets to discuss any conference business. The office staff leaves that meeting with faces to go with the names we will deal with all year.

As for many in education, summer is the slowest time in the Midwest Clinic office. There is still plenty to do, however. Directors' memos go out, more exhibiting publisher information gets



sent, the everyday phone calls and emails are answered, and constant work on the schedule is done. The logistics of placing each event at the Midwest Clinic resembles a giant jigsaw puzzle. Each time slot is checked for conflicts, similarity of topics, and equipment availability. It is very important that it take shape now because the schedule is included in the August *Motifs*.

By the end of August the countdown to December begins in earnest. The final exhibitors' packets go out containing booth placement, instructions, and any other information our exhibitors need to plan for December. Letters are sent to our equipment providers to request the stage equipment, percussion instruments, pianos, and other supplies. Performing directors begin to finalize



Darcy A. Nendza is Executive Assistant of the Midwest Clinic.

their programs, which are due on September 15.

One of the busiest pre-December days at the office is September 15. Three large deadlines converge on that day. The performing ensembles must have their final program in the office, publishers must have sent all scores of newly published work, and advertisers must have their advertising copy submitted. The concert programs are then sent to the Board of Directors' Performance Coordinating Committee to be checked for compliance to the program guidelines. The Midwest Clinic brings diverse, relevant performances to our attendees. To assist the conductors in obtaining

this, there are guidelines that must be followed. They include disqualifying music that has been performed at the last three Midwest Clinics, limiting out-of-print pieces to one per concert, and requiring that for every grade 4, 5 or 6 piece that is performed a grade 1,2 or 3 piece must also be performed.

With the arrival of the final concert programs, work on the program book takes center stage. Throughout the months of September and October the program book takes shape over hours of drafts, edits, and proofs. This 260+ page book is the blueprint of the Midwest Clinic. Clinician biographies must be gathered and placed; concert programs formatted; advertisements sorted and placed; new publications pages created; and the cover designed.

From the beginning of October until

the conference, life in the office becomes days of details pushing into later and later nights. This is the time of year when the phone rings constantly with questions of all kinds. Performance equipment is verified and double-checked against the clinician and performer setup requests. Instructions are written to make sure the hotel knows the details of this specific year's Midwest Clinic. More directors' memos go out with final directions for the conference. Binders of information are gathered for the Board of Directors and the professional staff that assists during the week. These are just a few of the

thousands of tasks that the fall brings.

By December, most of the planning is complete. Now the task is nailing down all the final preparations with the staff, the hotel, the clinicians, and the performers. The daily countdown to the Midwest Clinic on the website gets to single digits. Thirteen thousand people prepare to descend on Chicago for the best week of the year as the office staff works frantically to see that all is ready.

The Sunday before the start of the Midwest, the Board of Directors, office staff and professional staff move into the Hilton Chicago for the duration of the week. When we arrive at the Hilton,

we know that the planning phase is over. Anything not done at this point will likely not get accomplished. The energy is running high, as is the anxiety. Each year the conference brings both good and bad surprises. Our goal is to make sure that none of these surprises adversely affect our attendees.

Kelly Jocius and myself devote our entire year to the creation of the Midwest Clinic. While difficult to explain to a non-music educator, it is a very rewarding job - one that we return to every January with new ideas, thoughts, and procedures to make the Midwest Clinic better than ever before. ■

“See you next year at Midwest”

By Debra F. Durham

In early December, my thoughts have already turned towards preparation for the Midwest Clinic. Christmas presents have been purchased, lesson plans prepared, and holiday concert rehearsals are well underway. In a few short weeks the final cutoff will be given at my high school's holiday concert and I will leave for the annual Midwest Clinic staff meeting on Sunday night prior to the start of the conference.

Traveling down in the elevator at the Hilton, the anticipation of seeing all the familiar faces on the staff brings a smile to my face. I'm joined in the elevator by a member of the Midwest Clinic Board of Directors—"white badges" as the staff and crew identify them. As we exchange season's greetings, I am reminded of the enormity of the task that is yet to come. The Midwest Clinic is of a magnitude few can imagine.

The fourth floor meeting room is filled with all the usual faces. There is the customary gift exchange from some of the staff members before we dig into the overview of what will surely be a week filled with great music, laughter,

tears, stress, and the sense of "family" that years of being on the Midwest staff has provided.

As we work our way through the thick blue notebooks filled with the vital information on concerts and clinics, I am reminded of how I was introduced to the Midwest Clinic. Some twenty-five years ago my first teaching job was in the small Illinois town of Round Lake, and I had the extreme good fortune to work with a remarkable woman named Barbara Buehlman. When I had completed my first five months of teaching, Barb insisted I attend Midwest and take in all it had to offer.

That first excursion ultimately became an invitation by my mentor to serve as a staff member, when she became the Executive Administrator. What an incredible honor to have a small part in something so important to the profession. Now as I look with all the other staff members at the task at hand, I remember fondly my time with Barb and my other dear friends on the Midwest Clinic conference staff.

Monday morning the student worker



Debra F. Durham is the Associate Music Director at Adlai E. Stevenson High

School in Lincolnshire, Illinois and Personnel Manager of the Northshore Concert Band. She has served on the Midwest Clinic conference staff since 1990.

“blue vests” arrive from VanderCook College of Music. Following the customary review of the guidelines for the week, the unpacking of percussion instruments, chairs and stands, and the building of stages begins. Nancy Plantinga and I begin making work schedules that orchestrate how the many moves will occur throughout the week. A minute by minute dance card of the role we will play in the upcoming week is prepared and double-checked to try and foresee any challenges in the

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very intricate schedule. Jim Barkow, Nancy, and I discuss our roles during the week. Jim will travel to the Congress to oversee the clinics there. Nancy and I will divide the work at the Hilton. Knowing that Nancy is an early riser and I am a night owl, it is easy to decide what our hours will be.

The week is off to a busy start with more rehearsals on Monday than I can ever remember. The Tuesday schedule is also packed with rehearsals and clinics. Each year is truly unlike those of the past. The opportunity to work with so many of the country's finest musicians, educators, and young performers is truly a thrill. Though we don't often have the opportunity to speak, it is in the listening that I am truly recharged.

Making sure they have what they need without being intrusive is the job at hand. To do this there are inevitably problems. It seems no Midwest is ever complete without a call to friends in the area for some type of assistance. One such friend, Frank Lestina, feels that Midwest is not the same without some type of phone call from me. Frank has assisted me with instruments, strings, and music over the years. Again this year, when called, his response was, "Debbie, how can I help?"

The week wears on and, as is my role at Midwest, I burn lots of midnight oil. I supervise the setups that happen in the early morning hours. The hotel is quiet then. The music has stopped except for the percussive sounds of chairs and stands being set up for the next day. The VanderCook students are weary but eager to complete the tasks for the evening. The formalities of the

beginning of the week diminish as we talk to each other to make the work go faster. Those late night hours spawn many conversations regarding their student teaching experiences, their hometowns, their high school teachers, and most importantly questions regarding my opinions and beliefs on issues on music and education. We move from ballroom to ballroom calculating the best way to move marimbas, chimes,



harp, and the like all the while sharing much more than the task at hand.

This year's Midwest found my colleague from school, Clark Chaffee, bringing his orchestra as a demonstration group for a clinic. Last year another school colleague, Jeff Slepak, was able to do the same. It is so gratifying to stop in and give dear friends that little extra bit of encouragement prior to a clinic or performance. I have performed here myself numerous times with the Northshore Band. The exhilaration of a Midwest Clinic performance is second to none. As I assist others in their preparation, it is always in the back of my mind how the performer, director, and listener will be forever changed by the experience. I often see students leave the stage of the International or Grand Ballroom with tears of joy streaming down their faces.

Friday night at ten has a special meaning for us all. We will take a short break from setups, concerts, and clinics and share time with each other over a few slices of pizza. Imagine the feeding frenzy of more than 70 hungry college students who have been diligent workers for one week following examinations.

The pizza party ends and work continues. Friday evening and Saturday morning are packing days. All the instruments, staging, chairs, and stands must leave for the year. It is a melancholy time. As we travel from one ballroom to the next, Harry Begian gives one of his bear hugs as he extends his best wishes for the holidays. I think of all the prestigious members of that Board

and how much they have given to the profession. The Midwest has provided for me such incredible experiences. This year I was able to stand backstage and observe many of you extending your thanks to Fred Fennell. I listened to your performances with great pride and respect for your talent and dedication. I heard glorious compositions that tore at the heart strings. What a wonderful gift to the profession is this clinic known as the Midwest.

As the last concert ends and the stage is disassembled, it is a time for reflection. How did the clinic go this year? We make lists of suggestions for Kelly Jocius and Darcy Nendza. We give each other hugs and leave for the holiday season. Students who have worked with us for four years come to say their good-byes but we never say good-bye. We always use the customary "See you next year at Midwest." ■

Midwest Clinic Concerts Seen Worldwide On Demand... How Do We Do It?

By James Warrick

One of the most exciting new developments that began with the 2002 Midwest Clinic is the archiving of concert videos on the clinic's website at www.midwestclinic.org/band_archive.asp. These files were available for a year and then replaced with selections from the concerts held at the 2003 Midwest Clinic last December. As of press time for this issue of the *Motifs*, the videos received 23,000 hits from 4,200 people in just a little over a month.

Within 12 hours of a concert's last note, these videos are available to anyone in the world with a computer and modem. The process of creating this video archive requires cooperation and effort from a diverse range of people.

First, the directors who wish to have their concert archived must get permission from the performers (and from the parents of students younger than 18) to have their likenesses broadcast on the internet. The directors then suggest four or five selections from their program that they would like to see archived. Next, the Midwest Clinic selects a cross-section of easy to difficult pieces spanning as many styles and publishers as possible and requests permission to post the videos from the copyright owners of the music.

Kevin Jocius of Headed North, Inc. (www.headednorth.com) is the designer and webmaster of the Midwest Clinic website. He creates a webpage template showing the title, composer, publisher, performance time, grade and price for each selection. He then creates links to the publishers' websites and waits for the next step: the concerts to begin.

Mark Custom Recording Service sends a truckload of video equipment

for use in the Hilton Chicago's International Ballroom, where two video directors are staffed from Sterling Productions (located in suburbs of Washington, D.C.). The video equipment and camera operators used in the Grand Ballroom are supplied by Soundtraks, a student video/audio production club at



New Trier High School (located in the Chicago suburb of Winnetka, IL).

When Mark Custom Recording tapes the concerts for purchase, an additional DVD is recorded that is picked up by one of the 75 blue-vested VanderCook College students who work at the Midwest Clinic. Each afternoon at 5:00, that courier drives the DVDs recorded the night before and during that day to Matt Siegfried, a New Trier High School senior, who is waiting at the school's video/audio recording studio. (In his second year encoding these concerts, Matt was assisted by a junior video production student who will take over the job next year.)

Using a Media 100 computer program—a state-of-the-art, non-linear video editing system—Matt follows the templates that Kevin has e-mailed him to extract two or three selections from each group's DVD. Matt adds a

prerecorded introduction and overlays the opening graphics and closing titles before each selection is encoded (or digitized) into a computer file for digital streaming. He then names and uploads each file onto a special Internet server at New Trier High School, used to host its own concert files on www.ntjazz.com.

As Matt describes it, "If I receive the DVDs by 6:00 p.m., I can be finished with that day's concerts by 3:00 the next morning—unless I fall asleep, of course."

Matt then sends an e-mail with the file names to Kevin, who, using his Internet-equipped computer in his Hilton hotel room, programs the final links required to make the archives ready for viewing by friends and parents back home to watch while (they think) their young musicians are sound asleep in Chicago.

All of this occurs at the request of the Midwest Clinic's board of directors, who support the video archives as a means not only to share a portion of its musical week with the families and friends of attendees but also to communicate its message of musical excellence and education to so many people who have not yet attended a Midwest Clinic. When you consider that one-third as many people have viewed the concerts online in the last month as had attended the conference, it is clear that this message is traveling far. And while Midwest band and orchestra directors can point their administrators and ensemble parents to the broadcast site as an internationally available sample of the quality of their program's work, directors wishing to educate their administrators and community so as to apply to perform at Midwest can use the

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New Trier High School senior Matt Siegfried encodes a file for viewing as streaming video.

same site—and The Midwest home page’s promotional video—as a means to demonstrate what The Midwest Clinic is all about. Eric Allen, director of the Sebastian River High School Wind Symphony (Sebastian, Florida) that performed on December 17, said, “Archiving these performances is a great way for our community to experience what our students have been working so hard to achieve. This will enable us to

reach more of our target audience and receive support for future endeavors.”

Archived files remain online for a year, when they are replaced by concerts from the next Midwest Clinic. Concerts are available 24 hours a day for anyone to watch who has the free RealOne Player software installed on their computer. (A link to download that free software is provided on The Midwest’s concert archives page.) The faster the modem’s connection speed, the better the sound and viewing; a broadband connection can deliver a look almost as clear as a television broadcast. For copyright purposes, files are encoded so they can’t be copied; but complete DVDs and CDs of the concerts can be ordered from Mark Custom Recording Services, Inc. through the Midwest Clinic website www.midwestclinic.org/store/ or by visiting www.markcustom.com.

Pass the word to your colleagues,



James Warrick is the Coordinator of Jazz Studies at New Trier High School and the Director of the

Symphonic Band at Wheaton College. He proposed, designed and oversees the Midwest Clinic’s concert Internet archiving service and has supervised the sound reinforcement system and audio crew used in the Grand Ballroom for jazz concerts for the past ten years. All New Trier concerts are webcast live and archived on ntjazz.com using student engineers and producers.

administrators, and students: to see the seventy-six selections archived from the 2003 Midwest concerts, visit www.midwestclinic.org/band_archive.asp. ■

A Wish Come True

By Ronnie Rios

When someone rubs a genie bottle and is granted three wishes, sometimes not all three come true. But not in this dream!

It was ten years ago. I didn’t really know what the Midwest Clinic was all about, but I was fortunate enough to attend with the Corpus Christi Wind Symphony. Wrapped up in all the excitement, I walked in on the Miami Sr. High School Jazz Ensemble and its director Michelle Fernandez. I was so blown away with the performance, I used it as the ‘model’ for my future. I talked to her and began asking many questions for weeks to come. It was then and there that the dream started.

One afternoon last spring, a co-worker and I were checking our teacher box (for the week--ssssshhh!). In my stack, I came across a ‘Fed-Ex’

envelope. By the time I reached my office, I stood alone and realized it was from the Midwest Clinic. I couldn’t believe my eyes--it had to be good, hadn’t it??? Fed-Ex does cost more than regular mail, after all. I quickly opened it and couldn’t believe my eyes. The Harlingen High School Jazz Ensemble was invited to perform at the Midwest Clinic. The dream is real! Incredible! I slowly made my way through the band hall (the after-school bell had just rung) to tell the other band directors the news. Then I called a spontaneous meeting in my office with the students of the jazz ensemble. Little did we know that our lives were about to change forever.

The fund-raising process and preparation began immediately. But before I go any further, I should tell

you a little about ourselves. Harlingen, Texas is a town of approximately 57,000 and is located in deep South Texas (about four hours south of San Antonio and fifteen minutes north of Mexico). Our school is over 95% Hispanic and is one of two high schools in town. The average family yearly income in Harlingen is less than \$30,000. (I knew we would have to work hard to raise the money—but not for even a second thought that we would not achieve it.)

Most of my students had never been on a plane before! (“No, that’s not concrete all over the city—it’s snow,” observed a student as we flew over Chicago.) So the trip had many levels of excitement. This was absolutely the most incredible journey of our lives. Then all of a sudden, there we were--in Chicago.



“The best things for me were all the big buildings and historical sites, like the Sears Tower,” said senior drummer Javier Alcala.

“The cool thing is that we just went up to play and have fun, and not worry about missing a note,” said Gregg Alvarez, senior, trumpet player. “The snowball fights with my friends were really cool.”

“It was exciting to see the students take it all in,” explained associate director Maria Coronado.

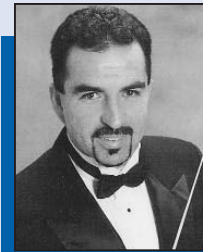
We arrived on a Wednesday morning and stayed through Sunday. I did contemplate performing at neighboring schools during our spare time but quickly changed my mind and decided to let these incredible students enjoy every possible moment at the conference and in the city. We were able to visit the Sears Tower, Magnificent Mile, Blue Man Group, Navy Pier, a Bulls game, Chicago Symphony, Hard Rock Cafe (for Juan’s birthday), Giordano’s Pizza, Wrigley Field, The Field Museum of Natural History, and I even treated the staff to a limo ride to the ESPN Zone.

Back at the Hilton, even the

rehearsals felt like performances. We always had an audience at them with photos being taken and lots of energy being dispersed. Not one nervous drop of blood in any of us—we were just proud to be here and honored to perform on Friday afternoon.

And just like that, we were on the Midwest Clinic stage in the Hilton’s Grand Ballroom. First the photo, then the sound check, and then the show of our lives! I must admit, I cried during Jancie’s piano ballad solo. I had so much going through my thoughts. But the most special thing was the faces I was looking at on stage. I was used to seeing them in a band hall in deep South Texas—now they were on the greatest student musician stage in the world. But I did snap out of it and get energized when Ruby sang her Salsa tune, and Matt Marantz, our guest artist, a 17 year old prodigy, soloed like the pro he is and household name he will become.

“The environment in the Grand Ballroom was awesome! Just seeing all the people there, and the room. It’s something that I’ve never experienced before,” commented Senior bari-sax



Ronnie Rios is Director of Bands at Harlingen High School.

player Jonathon Rosebaum.

“I never knew that with such a big crowd, I’d feel so confident and comfortable with my performance” said Ruby Davila, senior, vocalist.

“I was amazed at the level of respect and appreciation given to the students and directors. I recommend every music educator experience this conference at least once in their lifetime,” said Albert Robledo, associate director.

Why did it all have to end? Because just like Michelle’s group in ‘93 and ours in ‘03, it’s someone else’s turn now. It’s time for a new group of students, directors, parents, and their community to rub that genie bottle. Just remember, if you really, really want it, anything can happen. ■

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58th Annual Midwest Clinic—December 14-18, Hilton Chicago

Are you considering applying to perform at the Midwest Clinic this year? Here's some helpful advice about preparing your recording.

Top 5 Ways to Make a Better Midwest Clinic Recording

By Dr. Ross Walter

- 1. Choose an appropriate space.**
 - Use a large room or hall with a high ceiling.
 - Choose a room that has minimal background noise.
- 2. Use the proper equipment.**
 - Use condenser microphones if possible.
 - Record to CD if possible.
If not, record on Type II cassette with Dolby B on, and mark the tape "Dolby B."
Do not duplicate the tape at high speed.
If possible, send the original tape.
- 3. Place the microphones for a better blend.**
 - Use two microphones on a bar on one stand, or two stands about 4 feet apart.
 - Set the microphones about 15 feet high and 12-15 feet in front of the ensemble.
 - Plug the left microphone (when facing the ensemble) into the left plug of the recorder
- 4. Set the recording levels carefully.**
 - Check levels using the loudest passage of the piece.
Set the levels just under the loudest level on the meter.
If using a mixer, set input level first, then mix, then main, then recorder levels.
- 5. Don't adjust any levels during the recording.**

For more details on producing quality recordings, please visit
www.midwestclinic.org/recording101/default.asp

Ross Walter is Assistant Professor of Low Brass at Virginia Commonwealth University.

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