

# Midwest **Motifs**

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## *The Midwest Clinic: A Treasured Performance*

*by Diane Gorzycki, Bailey Middle School*

**With** applications to perform at the 59th annual Midwest Clinic due March 18, submitting an entry could become the most fulfilling decision you will ever make for yourself and your ensemble. Every aspect of the Midwest experience is memorable, from making the application to receiving the letter of invitation, selecting the music, rehearsing and rehearsing, planning the trip, arriving in and touring around Chicago and of course, performing on stage in the International Ballroom in front of a packed house filled with music educators from around the world. Having taught twelve and thirteen year olds for nearly thirty years, I knew that even though they were dedicated and had high performance standards, my students needed to have fun learning the music and enjoy the entire process. I also knew the actual performance, as memorable as it would be, would fly by in a blur, so collecting incredible memories along the way became my priority for us all.

While I was judging a band competition in a town near San Antonio last April, the contest chair brought me a fax he had just received from my school. With an Illinois return address on a FedEx package, my colleagues at Bailey Middle School knew good news must be



inside and immediately opened and faxed me the exciting contents. "Exciting" was an understatement, and concentrating while critiquing the remaining bands in the contest was the first of many tests for me over the months to follow. By the time I drove back to Austin, I had prepared a twopage to-do list, called for advice from colleagues who had previously performed at the Midwest, and asked two travel companies for bids.

Within a week, the first of numerous large boxes filled with scores and demo CDs from the publishers that exhibit at the Midwest arrived at the school. Nightly listening and score study became a habit during the spring, and writing brief descriptions of each piece proved to be invaluable. Making the trip more affordable became an issue when we found out that the high school we feed into, Bowie, received the honor of participating in the Fiesta Bowl

Parade. Many families had students in both Bowie HS and Bailey MS bands, so I decided to make all the travel arrangements myself, with the help of one of our band moms. This saved over \$200 per student and helped us make the trip more personalized. The students got to have more input on meal choices, museums to visit,

and the hotel in which we stayed. Using the Internet, we quickly found contact information for making all our reservations. From buying airline and Chicago Symphony Orchestra tickets to arranging a catered meal on the 99th floor of the Sears Tower, we easily got it done.

When school started, work on the music began in our 50-minute daily band class. Since our weekly sectional rehearsals were used to help them in their All-Region audition material, we scheduled three Saturday morning rehearsals and two morning rehearsals on staff development days throughout the fall to work on our Midwest music. Of course each of those extra rehearsals ended with the mandatory all-you-can-eat pizza party for the students! To keep progress on track, a calendar of each day's rehearsal plan for the next three months was posted

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*Bailey Middle School, Austin, Texas*

on the band office door. Until late November, the ensemble seldom rehearsed together, having the class broken into small groups with my two associates, Bill Haehnel and Scott Solkofske, teaching with me. Like weaving a tapestry, we made slow, methodical progress, with the music gradually unfolding and developing. By Thanksgiving break, we had taught all nine pieces and started to meet daily as an ensemble to achieve more refined balancing and to work for continuity and endurance, both mental and physical.

There was not one piece in our repertoire that the students didn't love rehearsing. The selections became most memorable, however, as they met the composers and rehearsed with guest clinicians. We commissioned Randol Bass to write a piece based on Austin cyclist Lance Armstrong who had just won his sixth Tour de France. Mr. Bass composes primarily for professional orchestras, including the Chicago and Dallas Symphonies, so writing for a middle school band was a new experience. Guest clinicians included Eddie Green, retired Wind Ensemble director from the University of Houston, Paula Crider, University of Texas Professor Emerita, and John Benzer from the University of Houston.

Their expertise helped strengthen the students' ability to pull the music off the page.

*“Being invited to The Midwest Clinic was amazing and working hard to get there is something I will be proud of and remember for the rest of my life.”*

*—Marissa C., Student*

A counselor at our school who performed with her high school band at The Midwest Clinic told our students that they will never forget performing in Chicago. To help them keep their memories, all of their photos are being compiled on a CD that will be duplicated for everyone, and copies of congratulatory letters are being distributed for them to add to their portfolios. In reflecting about the experience, Marissa C., wrote “Being invited to The Midwest Clinic was amazing and working hard to get there is something I will be proud of and remember for the rest of my life.” She also stated that “the anticipation and excitement I felt in the last few

minutes before the performance was something I have never experienced before, much less the feelings of accomplishment I had while performing on stage.” Megan R. wrote, “At first the stage was a very scary place, but on it, we got to enjoy expressing our talent and love of music. The trip itself was amazing, but the confidence and thrill during the concert was the best feeling.” Collin S. wrote, “I will never forget the applause of the audience at the end of the performance. In looking around the room between pieces, I could not believe that all those people came to hear us.”

Seeing those students' beaming faces during the applause following each selection affirmed that they understood the reason we worked so hard during the fall. The performance was over so quickly, but the memories of the entire experience will be a treasure we will all keep for a lifetime. ■



*Diane Gorzycki  
is Director of  
Bands at  
Bailey Middle  
School*

# Victor W. Zajec 1923-2005



**The** Midwest Clinic is saddened to announce the passing of Victor W. Zajec on January 26, 2005. Victor Zajec was a member of the Board of Directors since 1983, serving as Secretary since 1992 and as Chairman of the Archives and History Committee since 1990. He was intimately associated with the Midwest Clinic from its very start in 1946, when he was the first chair clarinetist in the reading band that performed that day. In the following two years he retained his solo chair in the VanderCook Band for their clinic performances. In 1958, Zajec brought his high school band from Philadelphia, Mississippi, to perform at the clinic. He also directed the VanderCook Band on their Midwest concert each year from 1963 through 1987, first as an associate director, and then as the conductor. All told, he appeared in more than fifty Midwest Clinic concerts during his long association with the organization.

Victor Zajec retired in 1988 as Professor of Music at VanderCook College of Music in Chicago, having been on the faculty since 1963. In addition to serving as Director of the Symphonic Band and Dean of the Graduate School, he taught woodwind and brass instruments, music theory, instrument repair, marching band, and physics of sound.

Prior to joining the VanderCook faculty, Zajec directed high school bands in Charleston and Philadelphia, Mississippi, for fifteen years. He held BMed and MMed degrees, and an honorary Doctor of Music degree from VanderCook College. Other education includes graduate studies at the University of Michigan, University of Houston, University of Southern

Mississippi, American University in Fountainbleau, France, and Roosevelt University in Chicago.

Victor Zajec was a member of the Board of Trustees of VanderCook College and a member of the Board of Directors of the American Bandmasters Association, including a role as the treasurer of the ABA Foundation for many years. He was a member of Kappa Kappa Psi, Phi Beta Mu, and College Band Directors National Association. He also served the board of the Sousa Foundation as both vice president and treasurer and was active in the American School Band Directors Association.



*Victor Zajec receives the Midwest Clinic medal of Honor from John Paynter in 1990.*

Zajec received many honors during his teaching career, including “Teacher of the Year” from the Charleston Education Association, and a similar honor from the Philadelphia Education Association. He was also honored with lifetime membership in the Mississippi Music Educators Association. Kappa Kappa Psi also honored him with the “A. Frank Martin” award for outstanding bandmasters.

The Midwest Clinic awarded him the Medal of Honor in 1990. In 1992 the Mississippi Bandmasters Association inducted him into the Phi Beta Mu “Hall of Fame.” The Xi Kappa Chapter of Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia presented him with the “Orpheus Award” in 1993, the Chicagoland Music Educators presented him with the “John P. Paynter Lifetime Achievement Award,” in 1997, and in 1999 the John Philip Sousa Foundation awarded him its highest honor, the Sudler “Medal of Honor.” In 2001 he was appointed Historian of the ABA and at the 2002 convention, Zajec was honored with their highest award—“ABA Honorary Lifetime Member.” Zajec’s most recent honor came in December 2004, when he received the National Band Association’s prestigious Academy of Wind and Percussion Arts Award.

Among the four books he authored was *The First Fifty Years: A History of the Mid-West International Band and Orchestra Clinic*. Since the publication of this history book in 1996, he was no less diligent in preserving and archiving the most recent history of the Midwest Clinic. At the same time, he was a powerful advocate for music education, speaking up to ensure that the Midwest Clinic continues to meet the needs of teachers everywhere. His talents and good works live on in the lives of the thousands of students who benefited from his teaching. ■

# “Poise Under Pressure...and the Rest of the Story”

by Dennis Montgomery

**On** Tuesday, December 14, the first day of the 2004 Midwest Clinic, a chamber orchestra from Louisville, Kentucky performed in the Grand Ballroom of the Hilton Chicago. Taken at face value, it was a memorable and moving performance—very musical, sensitive, and beautifully played. But there is much more to this story: these students performed without a director, and until 1:00 p.m. the previous day, they did not know that this was to be their fate.

## Bad News

Six days before the Midwest Clinic, Lyndon Lawless, conductor of the Youth Performing Arts School Chamber Orchestra of Louisville, experienced serious dizzy spells, which caused him to call his physician. To determine the nature of his condition, it was arranged for him to wear a heart monitor for the weekend. On Monday, the news was not good. At 10:00 a.m., Lyndon was told that his condition required him to consult a cardiologist immediately. Under no circumstances was he to travel to Chicago that afternoon!

## Five Hours to Create an Alternate Plan

Lawless now had five hours, which included a rehearsal, before his chamber orchestra was to leave for Chicago. First, he approached the

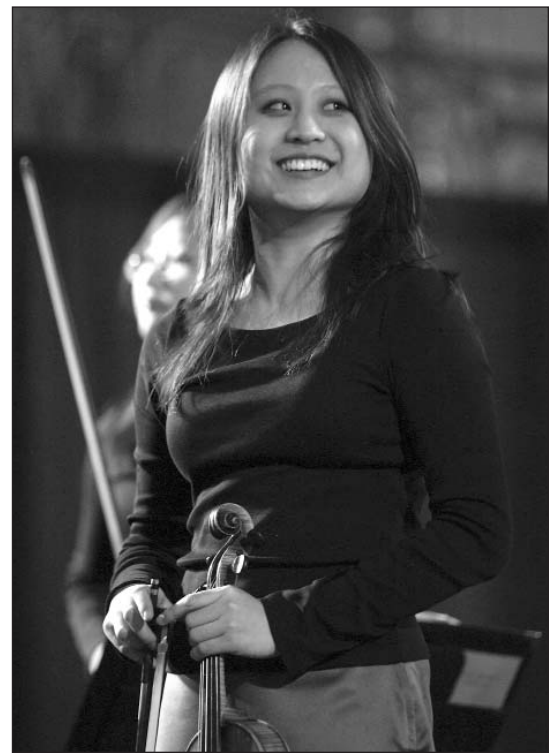


school administration to see if they would allow the group to go to Chicago without him. They said yes. He then called the Midwest Clinic office to see if his students could be allowed to perform without a conductor. Lyndon says that Executive Administrator Kelly Jocius was extremely gracious about the unique circumstances. The Orchestra would be allowed to perform without a conductor so that the students would not miss the opportunity for which they had so long been preparing. With a plan for success forming, Lawless' wife had to be called next so that she could be apprised of the situation. She had already driven halfway to Chicago and would have to turn around and come home. The last call was to enlist the aid of Mrs. Thompson, a parent chaperone, who now would be the recipient of all of the information regarding the arrangements for the trip—information still in Lawless' head.

## Telling the Students

At 1:00 p.m.—four hours before departure—at the final pre-clinic rehearsal, Lawless told the orchestra that he could not go to Chicago. One student's reaction was, “You're kidding!” It was very quiet in the room. “You can still go,” he told them. He explained that they needed to choose a

leader and that they must listen to this person and let him/her handle on-stage activities and make the tough musical decisions needed on the trip. Lawless encouraged them: “I think you can do it. What do you think?” Immediately some students said no. Others said yes. After much discussion, all of the



discussion, all of the students felt confident that they COULD do this! With many details still to manage, Lawless left the students to finish the final rehearsal by themselves. Periodically he checked on their progress. At one point when he walked in, they were not playing but instead were discussing how to meet this challenge. Two students emerged as the group's choice for co-leaders, Luke Davidson and Alice Culin-Ellison. Mr. Lawless' final words of encouragement were, "This will be a wonderful challenge."

### On Stage at Midwest

In the past, Midwest Clinic staff members have seen even the most experienced organizations feel the pressure and anxiety of performing for such a large and knowledgeable audience. Early Tuesday morning, the conference staff was told that the conductor of the Youth Performing Arts School Chamber Orchestra was still in Kentucky. Could these students handle not only the customary tension of a Midwest performance but also a performance without their conductor?

The ensemble moved into the performance area seemingly unruffled. Back stage I shared a glance with Dorothy Straub, the Midwest Clinic board member who was hosting this concert. Even if the students weren't nervous, we were! It was soon evident that the students themselves were totally in charge of this group, musically. There was no chaos, no arguments about who would do what. Starting, ending, tuning and tempo adjustments during the performance were handled by the two chosen student leaders. Ms. Straub remembers, "The two young people who took the initiative to lead the group did so quite subtly but very effectively."



*Dorothy Straub greets members of the Youth Performing School Chamber Orchestra.*

Just prior to the performance, all of the students, in a very serious manner, approached Ms. Straub and asked if she would announce to the audience, on their behalf, that they wanted to dedicate this performance to their director, Lyndon Lawless. Straub notes, "The maturity and calmness of the students was remarkable. Not a single musician seemed at all distracted by the fact that their teacher was ill and they would perform without him. Also, it impressed me that there were no egos in the orchestra." After Straub introduced the group, the students took the stage to thunderous applause from a very large and empathetic audience—and went to work.

### Performing with Passion

Their first selection was *Suite No.3 in D*, second movement, by J.S. Bach. Beautiful, sonorous, glorious sounds emanated from the Grand Ballroom stage. This set the tone for the entire performance. These students knew what they were doing. The concert finale was the third movement from *Divertimento* by Bela Bartok. Once again, the performance was beautiful—no ragged entrances, no pitch problems, no lack of musical

feeling. Backstage I found myself just enjoying the music, forgetting that they were high school students or that their conductor was still in Kentucky.

Perhaps their calm came from wanting so badly to do well to honor their director. Perhaps it was a result of performing so often in front of other prestigious audiences. Or perhaps their calm stemmed from their teacher having trained them to work independently of a conductor so that "poise under pressure" came naturally. Long after the performance, when I interviewed him, Lawless shared with me that he often told his students, "If you perform the music with unified passion and reasonable accuracy, listeners can't help but respond." And the audience responded indeed, with enthusiastic applause for this wonderful musical presentation and for the students' ability to "go on" under difficult circumstances. Each director present must have wondered if his or her students, under those conditions... under those pressures... could do the same. ■



*Dennis Montgomery is a private brass instructor, General Manager of the*

*Northshore Concert Band, and Stage Manager at the Midwest Clinic.*

# Midwest Clinic Attendees Welcomed at Orchestra Hall

*The following speech was given by Gene Pokorny during the December 16, 2004 Chicago Symphony Orchestra subscription concert at Orchestra Hall. He was asked by the CSO Artistic Department to give a greeting to the Midwest Clinic attendees who were present at the concert.*

**Good** evening ladies and gentlemen. My name is Gene. I am the tuba player in the orchestra. I want to extend a very cordial and warm welcome to all of you this evening, not only to our loyal and faithful subscribers, but to those who may be here for the first time. I would also like to welcome those here who are attending the Midwest Clinic.

Annually, this convention brings together everyone connected with music education as well as various musical organizations from junior high orchestras to community bands, from high school level organizations to the super-powered service bands of our nation's capital. The vast majority of those in attendance at this convention are music educators. It is that band director who is sitting with you up in the gallery tonight who is taking your kids and grandkids away from a computer terminal for one hour a day so they can learn the art of teamwork without having to type that word into Google. This band director doesn't do it with a mere 8 or 11 people on a team like the P.E. coaches do; he teaches teamwork with 50 or 60 or 100-plus players. There is also the school orchestra conductor who is now sitting with you in the terrace who goes well beyond the mandate by the board of education to teach reading and writing. She is teaching the art of listening—a class that is never offered in school, but that is the subject this orchestra

conductor teaches to her students from the first day of class in September.

While professional orchestras attempt to figure out how to fill the seats in their concert halls, it's that director of the marching band at the back of the main floor here tonight who programs great music like the finale to the "Firebird Suite" or "Pictures at an Exhibition" for his school's Friday night football games. His band members will get to know that music and they will remember it. It might just be enough for them to seek it out later in life in a concert at Orchestra Hall. And they might eventually pass that good experience down to their kids as well. Nothing can transport you to a place or a memory as fast as a piece of music.

When the rubber meets the pavement, it is the music educators in our world who day-in, day-out, make a big difference with relatively little recognition. Somebody once described that being a band director is the same as being someone who runs a cemetery. There are a lot of people underneath you, but no one is listening. I disagree with that statement because a lot of people eventually do listen. For example, the people on this stage behind me, I guarantee you, eventually listened to their music teachers. The music educators who are present here tonight are teaching their students probably the most valuable lesson of

all: that it is good to have an enthusiasm and love for music so great that one will make an extraordinary effort in one of the busiest weeks of the year to hear a live performance by one of the world's great orchestras.

Teaching by example is the most convincing lesson of all. For the music educators in the hall tonight, thank you for coming. You are among the greatest friends this orchestra can have. And thank all of you, ladies and gentlemen, for bringing yourselves, your kids, and your friends to this very special place, exactly three days older than 100 years old now. Feel welcome here because you most certainly are. Enjoy the evening. ■



*Gene Pokorny is the Principal Tuba of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.*

# Act Now! Don't Miss these Opportunities at the Midwest Clinic Website

**The 2004 Midwest Clinic may be over and the 2005 Midwest Clinic may still be 300 days away, but there are plenty of opportunities for you to take part in several educational resources available to you throughout the coming months.**

## Attendee Web Survey

You are invited to complete the Midwest Clinic's annual survey, now available at our website. This survey includes questions about clinics and concerts and many other issues affecting the conference. It is your best opportunity to tell us whatever is on your mind and how we can better serve you. Responses to last year's survey directly affected decisions about the 2004 and future Midwest Clinics, including what kinds of clinics to program, how to address space limitations at the Hilton, and when to schedule our 60th anniversary conference in 2006. It will only take a few minutes to complete your survey, and your response WILL make an impact on what is offered at the Midwest Clinic!

**Attendee Survey:** <http://www.midwestclinic.org/survey/>

## 2004 Concert Selection Streaming Videos

You can relive the 2004 Midwest Clinic at any time this year by watching streaming video concert selections through our website. Included in this archive are 75 selections from 27 ensembles that performed at the 2004 Midwest Clinic. These TV-quality videos are available for viewing throughout 2005.

Band Archive:

[http://www.midwestclinic.org/band\\_archive.asp](http://www.midwestclinic.org/band_archive.asp)

Orchestra Archive:

[http://www.midwestclinic.org/orchestra\\_archive.asp](http://www.midwestclinic.org/orchestra_archive.asp)

Jazz Archive:

[http://www.midwestclinic.org/jazz\\_archive.asp](http://www.midwestclinic.org/jazz_archive.asp)

Small Ensemble Archive:

[http://www.midwestclinic.org/smallensemble\\_archive.asp](http://www.midwestclinic.org/smallensemble_archive.asp)

## Handouts Available

Through our website, you can download and print clinic handouts from the last five Midwest Clinics (2000-2004). Handouts from more than 100 clinics are available. The Midwest Clinic gratefully acknowledges all of these clinicians for giving permission for their handouts to be posted.

<http://www.midwestclinic.org/clinichandouts.asp>

## Concert CDs and DVDs For Sale

CDs and DVDs of Midwest Clinic concerts from the last four years (2001-2004) can be purchased from Mark Custom Recording Services, Inc. through the Midwest Clinic website.

<http://www.midwestclinic.org/store/default.asp>

## Appear at the 2005 Midwest Clinic

### Performance

**Performance applications can be printed from the Midwest Clinic website. Also available are answers to Frequently Asked Questions about performance applications and our Performance Application Recording Tips.**

#### Performance Application:

<http://www.midwestclinic.org/perfapp.pdf>

**FAQs:** <http://www.midwestclinic.org/performancefaqs.asp>

#### Recording Tips:

<http://www.midwestclinic.org/recording101/>

### Clinic

**Clinic proposal forms can also be printed from the website. To aid applicants, we have created an instruction video about how to prepare an effective clinic proposal.**

#### Clinic Proposal Form:

<http://www.midwestclinic.org/clinicapp.pdf>

#### Instruction Video:

<http://www.midwestclinic.org/clinicianappvideo.asp>

**All applications must be received in the Midwest Clinic office by 5:00 p.m. CST on Friday, March 18. Please do not delay in preparing your applications. This deadline cannot be extended.**

www.midwestclinic.org

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## *Scenes from the 2004 Midwest Clinic*



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