

Re-establishing and Developing the BYU Chapter of the American String Teachers' Association

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Part of the mission of BYU is to gain skills that can be used to serve others in the community. In the School of Music, one of the best ways to both gain these skills and serve others is through professional organizations. My mentor, Andrew Dabczynski, and I recently re-established the BYU chapter of the American String Teachers' Association (ASTA). Involvement in this professional organization provides students educational and service opportunities while still in school and encourages students to continue activity in the organization when they begin their careers.

As an organization, our goal is to provide our peers with educational and service opportunities that will prepare them for the professional world as a string musician. This is done by identifying and securing guest artists and speakers, completing community service projects, and strengthening relationships through social activities. While the organization still has room to grow, this year we have increased membership and trained strong leaders to carry on the organization next year.

Some of the most successful activities we have held have been service activities. We helped Springville High School prepare to perform at the national American String Teachers' Association convention by working on music with students in small groups. We also helped Pleasant Grove Jr. High prepare for a fundraising concert. Students who participated in these activities caught the true vision of ASTA and asked us to plan similar activities. These activities increased the membership of the BYU chapter of ASTA.

In November we hosted guest speaker Mimi Butler, an authority on owning and developing private music studios. This is an important subject for all music students. The event was quite successful.

We held several social activities that helped students get to know one another better as well as develop their musicianship skills. The most popular activities we held were the string chamber nights. At these events, the string players from the School of Music got together to play music "for fun." We sightread many quartets and trios and learned jazz string playing.

Another successful program initiated this year is the recital refreshment program. The BYU chapter of ASTA provides refreshments for the recitals of those who belong to our organization. This program has convinced many who would not otherwise join the organization to join ASTA.

The highlight of the year was the national American String Teachers' Association National Conference in Reno, Nevada. Several members of the presidency served as volunteers for the national ASTA board. This was an invaluable experience for all who participated. We learned how a national organization is run as well as met many influential people in our field. The BYU Philharmonic Orchestra performed a concert and many of the members of the orchestra spent a few hours serving the national organization by moving equipment. This event gave all the BYU string students a vision of the purposes of ASTA and the importance of belonging to it and other professional organizations.

While re-establishing the BYU branch of ASTA has been difficult, it has been well worth the time. As I recently graduated and will be leaving BYU, we have developed some strong leaders that will continue the organization next year. As more and more students join, they will realize the benefits and importance of supporting professional organizations. Then, as students leave BYU, they will most likely continue to support these organizations.