

POLICIES

Event Cancellation Policy

Since events cannot be rescheduled, MNSOTA is committed to holding all events as planned. MNSOTA will cancel an event only in cases of a safety emergency (e.g. road conditions/weather), based on state advisories. If an event is cancelled, at the discretion of the board, a partial refund to participants may be considered after expenses have been paid.

Privacy and E-mail Reminders

MNSOTA sends periodic e-mails to members. We strive to protect members on-line privacy by “hiding” the addresses of the recipients to prevent junk mail programs from gaining access to our members’ e-mail addresses. Our goal is to keep the reminders focused and include only information about MNSOTA events, national ASTA events and job openings. We will never sell, loan or give away your e-mail address.

Student Member Subsidy

The MNSOTA board has passed a resolution to make our teacher training events *free* to student members. Currently those events are the All-State Teachers Workshop, the Fall Clinic, and Pedagogy Talk Sessions.

In order to encourage new student members, MNSOTA will pay 50% of the first year student dues for new members who join between August 1 and October 31 of each year. Students should send to the MNSOTA membership coordinator: their completed ASTA application form, a copy of their student ID, and a check for half the dues made out to MNSOTA. The MNSOTA membership coordinator will send the applications with a check for the full amount to the national office.

Awards and Honoraria

The MNSOTA board has passed a resolution to give financial support to students, teachers, and board members who attend national events. The support is to be used to offset travel expenses.

Students who are selected to participate in the National Solo Competition or the National Honors Orchestra are eligible for a \$150 award.

Members who are selected to make a presentation at a national string conference are eligible for a \$150 award.

When the MNSOTA bank balance is over \$7,000, board members are eligible for a maximum \$250 to offset expenses for attending a national string conference. Maximum \$1,000 per year — to be divided among board members requesting financial assistance.

Undisclosed Teacher Commissions

The MNSOTA board has passed a resolution opposing undisclosed teacher commissions because we believe they are against the best inter-

ests of the students. An Undisclosed Teacher Commission is a payment, often a percentage of the purchase price, that a shop makes to a teacher when the teacher’s student buys an instrument. “Undisclosed” means that the student doesn’t know during their instrument search that their teacher is going to get a cut.

In making an instrument purchase, parents expect each shop to be proud of their work and have a “we’re the best” attitude. Students usually need a knowledgeable, trusted guide who is not party to the transaction to help them choose. That guide is usually the teacher. If the teacher accepts a secret commission, they have a conflict of interest between their own self-interest in obtaining commissions and their duty to the student in giving advice. Where the teacher is legitimately representing the shop, it should not be secret. If the student knows that a commission is involved, they can decide if they want to find someone else outside the transaction to advise them.

When a shop routinely gives a percentage commission to the teacher, that cost of doing business is built into the price the student pays and students will find it difficult to recover their purchase price when they sell their instrument or trade up. We prefer that shops not offer commissions but instead offer the best possible prices.

To be sure, teachers should be paid for the time and effort they put into advising students. We need to take lesson time to train students to audition an instrument or bow. We need to teach students how to discriminate the differences in sound and feel, projection, tone color, playability. We need to help students develop their own preferences. When students are comparing instruments, many teachers schedule and charge for extra lessons devoted to that comparison. Some structure their lesson fees so that extra time for advising is already built in. In all these cases it is appropriate that the student receiving the advice is paying for the teacher’s time.

While the MNSOTA board strongly opposes undisclosed teacher commissions, board members have more wide ranging opinions on gifts from shops to teachers. (Some shops occasionally give gift certificates or thank you baskets or other token gifts to teachers.) As shops and teachers work together for the good of the students, it is always nice to have effort recognized and appreciated. It’s always nice to say “thank you.” If a shop wants to give an occasional nominal gift that does not affect the price of the instrument and does not create a conflict of interest for the teacher, the gift is not necessary, but most teachers appreciate it. If the gift appears to have the expectation of special favor or appears to be an attempt to influence a teacher’s objectivity — that’s not OK. Teachers who are uncomfortable receiving gifts, if they happen to be offered, can always give them away, possibly to the student.

MNSOTA is proud that traditionally shops in Minnesota have not offered teacher commissions. We appreciate the good working relationships that we have with the many fine shops in our state and we look forward to continuing to work together in the best interests of our students.