

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.

NSF fee

A NSF fee will be charged for all returned checks. Currently \$15.

Privacy and E-mail Reminders

MNSOTA sends periodic e-mails to members. We strive to protect members on-line privacy by using the blind copy feature to “hide” 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.

Mailing List

We strive to protect members’ privacy by keeping our mailing list unavailable to outside parties. Non-member individuals or organizations who wish to purchase member mailing labels should contact the national office at www.astastrings.org. We will never make the mailing list or database available in electronic form.

Updating Your Contact Information

MNSOTA receives membership updates quarterly from the national office. When your contact information changes, you should notify *both* the MNSOTA Membership Coordinator Cindy Johnson MNSOTAmembership@gmail.com *and* the National ASTA Office www.astastrings.org. By notifying MNSOTA, we will have accurate information without waiting for months before the next quarterly report is processed. But it is essential that you also notify the national office. If the state and national databases get out-of-sync, you could miss important mailings.

If you are a cross-border member (e.g. WI, ND) please be aware that ASTA automatically places you as a member in the state of your primary mailing address. You can request to be a MNSOTA member, but you must remember renew your request every time you renew your national membership. Otherwise ASTA will take you off MNSOTA’s list.

Undisclosed Teacher Commissions

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