



Guitar Council **Dr. Kevin Vigil, Chair**

“The Guitar: Symbol of Change” A Reflection on the Proposed VGDA

On Saturday, September 11, 2021, I had the honor to represent the VMEA Guitar Council to propose the creation of the Virginia Guitar Directors Association (VGDA) to the Executive Board. This proposal did not appear out of thin air. It was the work, advocacy, and support of many individuals over a long period of time.

To give some historic perspective on the demand for guitar education, here’s a quote from a 1967 article published in the November edition of the *Music Educators Journal* written by Meyer M. Cahn; the title of the article is “The Guitar: Symbol of Change.”

This could be told to the first few guitar aspirants who trickled in some years ago, but now there is more than a trickle, there is a trend. These are sensible, trusting, and highly motivated young people, who love their guitar music just as much as those of other generations loved large symphony orchestras in their youth... They have their heroes, as did any past generation. They want training and acceptance from the educator.

Now let’s fast forward to recent precursors that have brought us to this moment:

- 2010 – NMMEA First All-State Guitar

- 2011 – FMEA First All-State Guitar
- 2011 – NAFME formed the Council for Guitar Education with Glen McCarthy (Virginia) as its first chair
- 2012 – NMMEA added a Vice-President for Guitar to its Constitution
- 2013 - VMEA Executive Board’s unanimous approval to form the All-Virginia Guitar Ensemble
- 2018 – First NAFME National Honors Guitar Ensemble
- 2018 - VMEA Guitar Council formation
- 2020 - Presidential task for the Guitar Council to draft Bylaws and Event Procedures to form a new section for guitar under the VMEA umbrella

What is responsible for this forward momentum in guitar education?

Simply put, student demand from decades past to the present. Here is an excerpt from an interview conducted by Glen McCarthy with the two pioneers of All-State Guitar, Ed Prasse (Florida) and John Truitt (New Mexico).

Q: How did you start an all-state guitar ensemble?

EP: Each fall, our principal would congratulate band and chorus members for making all-state on the morning announcements. In the late ‘90s, a student asked me, “How come we don’t have that for guitar?” I replied, “They don’t have those events for guitar.” “Then you start one!” he urged. (Teaching Music Magazine, January 2013, p. 28)

As chair of the VMEA Guitar Council and as the Southern Representative for the NAFME Council for Guitar Education, my daughter often refers to me as a guitar rights activist. She wouldn’t be completely wrong, but I am really an advocate

for all music education. In the words of Ruth LeMay “Music is magical for humans.” (KARE 11 News, July 8, 2019)

I live in a musical family. My wife, Barbara, retired from The US Army Band “Pershing’s Own” after 26 years of service (flute/piccolo). My daughter, Bonnie, is a violin performance major at Baldwin Wallace University. Their music education experiences were rich, rewarding, and recognized. This is not always the case when it comes to guitar.

The proposal to create the VGDA is a step toward equity in music education. The guitar attracts students that would not otherwise be in a music program at all. These students deserve the same opportunities and experiences as that of their peers in other musical disciplines. They will receive guidance from experts in the field, play in ensembles with peers in their districts, regions and across the state. They will experience the magic of music-making in ways they had not experienced previously. It’s time for guitar to be more than a “Symbol of Change”. It’s time for it to be recognized.

I would like to recognize the members of the VMEA Guitar Council for their diligent work to write the proposed Bylaws and Event Procedures necessary to create the Virginia Guitar Directors Association (VGDA): Aaron Kunk, Peter Mercier, Katherine Robinson, Dr. Scott Seifried, Dr. Jaqueline Secoy, Matt Trkula, and William Wells. I would also like to show my gratitude to the VMEA leadership who have supported the Guitar Council’s efforts: Linda Gammon, Terry Hall, John Brewington, Allen Hall, and Annamarie Bollino. Finally, I would like to thank the preacher of the “guitar gospel” himself...Glen McCarthy.