

Even if they were as prepared as we could make them, taking tests is a big deal. Not knowing an answer is upsetting. There were some tears and sick stomachs with very little we could do about it; there are testing protocols that need to be maintained after all. A year's worth of work distilled into 4 mornings.

That evening, I had a rehearsal at the Kennedy Center. It was the last rehearsal with Norman Scribner, who is retiring this year after 47 years as the conductor of the chorus I sing with, the Choral Arts Society of Washington (CASW). Sunday afternoon we performed Brahms's *Ein Deutsches Requiem* with the National Symphony Orchestra. This is just my 16<sup>th</sup> year singing with the chorus. It was my gift to myself when my children were both off to college. For years they had been telling me to 'Get a life, Mom.' Well, I did. And what a wonderful 16 years it has been.

At the time Mr. Scribner was establishing CASW, I was still a high school student. Each morning I headed off for a day of English, math, science and social studies like all the other students, but the best part of the day was spent in my music classes. I was just about as involved in the music program at Deerfield High School as a student could be. I was in the band - both marching and concert - orchestra, concert chorus and the madrigals during my four years there. Each spring we produced a big Broadway musical. I learned a lot of music. But I also learned structure and discipline, the value of practice and the ability to work with others and take directions. After high school, I continued with other community and church musical activities, but nothing like those four years in high school.

So when the opportunity came to try to really get involved again, I went to an audition (my first one ever) and was accepted as a member of CASW. My first concert was Verdi's *Requiem* at Wolf Trap. Since then I have had the opportunity to do things I never dreamed of in Deerfield. I have been to Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center. To Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro. To London, Rome and Jackson Hole, Wyoming. Each 4<sup>th</sup> of July you will find me at the Capitol, and most Decembers there is the Kennedy Center Honors. I've sung with incredible orchestras and world famous conductors. Next fall there will be a new conductor with new expectations and hopefully I will measure up. The entire chorus has to re-audition every year after all. But with Beethoven on the schedule for next fall, another great year is ahead.

So why all this personal stuff? It's almost May at Lafayette and May is when we show you what we have been doing with the arts this year at school. In another article in this Tuesday Bulletin you will find information about our arts integration open house. Teachers at all grade levels will be doing demonstration lessons in their classrooms so you can see how we use art, music and drama to teach content subjects. We have two Arts Nights scheduled with visual art to see and musical performances on the stage in the cafeteria. DC Theater Café is coming up with its focus on Washington during the Civil War with the appropriate songs. Lots of opportunities for Lafayette students to get up on stage just like I did over 50 years ago in my neighborhood school. Lots of opportunities to hear that applause and get that good feeling of a job well done.

I don't know if music will be as important in the lives of any students as Lafayette as it has been in mine. That has never been the reason Lafayette adopted an arts integration model. That will be an individual choice. What I do know is that without music in my public schools, I never would have had the opportunities I have had. My parents were not the least bit musical. They never played any instruments and the only singing I ever heard were Sunday morning hymns. But they knew that my schools would be able to give me lessons and opportunities to perform. They attended a lot of concerts and were always supportive. They eventually got to see me at the Kennedy Center. That is my hope for the students at Lafayette - that they get the chance to find something new to try, to get some support and decide if this is for them, too. It can be math or writing, sports or the arts. Lifetime interests that are so much more important than tests scores that won't be here until July. So check the May calendar and add some dates to your personal calendars. We've been very busy at Lafayette and we have so many things to show you. And we really like hearing the applause!