

Colorado Music Educator

CLINIC/CONFERENCE  
AND HAPPY BIRTHDAY

# Tradition & Change



*A Celebration*

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# NEWS and ANNOUNCEMENTS

## Gene Aitken Retires Then Resurfaces in Asia!

Compiled from information provided by  
Dr. Gene Aitken  
to  
Ken Anderson, CMEA Exhibits Chair

Dr. Gene Aitken retired August 1, 2002, from the Jazz Studies Department at the University of Northern Colorado in 2002. On August 4, 2003, he was appointed Advisor to the Director of the College of Music, at Mahidol University in Thailand. Prior to this appointment Gene was a member of the adjudication team for the Asian Symphonic Band and Wind Ensemble Competition. The ASBWEC just celebrated its fifth competition in 2003 and now includes wind ensembles. The symphonic bands are defined as more than thirty members and wind ensembles twenty-nine members or less. The winning ensemble is awarded a cash prize of \$25,000 US! The funding for the cost of organizing the competition comes from the Tourist Authority of Thailand, with additional funding from various other organizations in Thailand. The winning ensemble also receives the King's Cup. The four second place ensembles each receive \$2,500 plus the Mahidol University crest. An anonymous donor funds the additional category for Wind Ensembles.

Under Gene's leadership, workshop/master classes were added in 2003. This was new for Southeast Asia and when he asked the Artists/Faculty for "hand-outs," they had never heard the term, so there was an added element of educating the clinicians for their presentations.

Since they didn't know how students and directors would respond to the clinics, they devised a way to track which students attended the clinics.

The attendance was beyond belief! For the first time in Southeast Asia, junior high, high school and college students had the opportunity to "interact" with Artist/Faculty from the Bangkok Symphony, and

Artist/Faculty from many different institutions. In 2004 the ASBWEC will be open to international organizations outside of Asia.

Gene says, "Does the money make a difference in the quality of the ensembles? I'm the last one who would ever wave a flag for competitions, but when the simple element of a *monetary award* is added, it really makes a difference. All the bands hear almost every band during the four days of the event. That in itself is worth considering."

Adjudicators for the 2003 ASBWEC were Timothy Salzman, from the University of Washington and Larry Gookin, Central Washington University.

The concept of the Southeast Asian Youth Orchestra and Wind Ensemble (SAYOWE) grew out of the ASBWEC. Gene, along with Dr. Sugree Charoensook (DMA, UNC 1985), Director Mahidol University College of Music, made the decision to include an honor group consisting of the best young musicians from Malaysia, Philippines, Indonesia, Viet Nam, Singapore, Cambodia, Myanmar and Thailand. This type of endeavor had never been tried before.

The Royal Thai Government honored the request for funding and agreed that all the young musicians should be brought to Thailand and the cost underwritten by the government. The dates were set for April 15th to May 2nd, to coincide with the summer vacation of most Southeast Asian schools. Over 425 students were auditioned for the 140 openings. All students accepted were awarded full scholarships, including airfare, lodging, and food, by the Royal Thai Government. Unfortunately, due to SARS, the event had to be canceled and the only time it could be rescheduled was during the week of September 27th to October 5th. Most of the original members were able to attend and outstanding substitutes were located to fill the vacant spots.

One of the finest resorts in all of Thailand, Cha-Am Beach Resort, was selected to host the event. This was an extra bonus for the musicians as many had never been to a resort before. Many of the musicians had never played in an orchestra or wind ensemble!

Directors for the SAYOWE were

Dr. Russell Guyver, University of Northern Colorado; Engene Migliaro Corporon, University of North Texas; Dr. James Sherry, Mahidol University; and Lt. Prateep Suphanrojn, Royal Thai Army. Conductors, soloists, and Artist/Faculty for the SAYOWE Orchestra, Wind Ensemble and All-Nations Chamber Ensemble represent Austria, Japan, Latvia, Norway, Singapore, Thailand, and the United States of America.

"Throughout eight days of rehearsals, master classes, performances, and activities, one could see the exciting and positive interaction of the young musicians from the different countries that had as many different languages, religions, and cultures as there were countries. The one common bond-- **Music!**"

"I can say without reservation, this was the most incredible experience I've ever had."

"As Executive Director of ASBWEC and Founder/Executive Director of SAYOWE, I am very fortunate to be working with a great team of colleagues at Mahidol University. It's a real organized effort by the Mahidol University College of Music Academic, Activities, Administrative, Budget, Procurement and Foreign Affairs Offices. This event, which was approved in a matter of two months, substantiates the Royal Thai government's commitment to education and the arts."

"The SAYOWE experience is of enormous value to these talented students and demonstrates that when different peoples of Southeast Asia unite and collaborate to create something, they have an extraordinary quality and potential. Studying and playing music is a means of expression that will allow students from different cultures to share their common experiences. SAYOWE brings together the faiths of Buddhists, Muslims, Christians, Catholics and many other religions, for a universal goal to create music."

Gene commutes regularly from Thailand to various events in the United States. For more information and to see his grueling schedule, visit his website [GeneAitken.com](http://GeneAitken.com).

Web sites to check: [www.SAYOWE.com](http://www.SAYOWE.com) and [www.ASBWEC.com](http://www.ASBWEC.com). To contact Gene Aitken, [genejazz0@aol.com](mailto:genejazz0@aol.com)