

**Brigid McDonald**  
**Rising Third Year Application**

**Project Title:** Attending the 2014 National Flute Association Convention

**Project Narrative:**

I would like to use my Arts Scholars grant money to attend the National Flute Association's (NFA) Annual Convention. This is by far the most important event of the year for the flute-playing community; every year, over 4,000 flautists from around the world come together for four days to teach, learn, collaborate, and inspire. Ever since middle school, my private teachers have recommended that I attend the convention, but it's held in a different city every year (Chicago this year), and it has always been too expensive for me to make the trip. I'm confident that going to the convention will be extremely rewarding and beneficial for my musical skills and flute-playing abilities.

There are a number of unique opportunities for me at the convention that I would not otherwise be able to access. The program for this year's convention has not been finalized, but based on past years' programs, I have a general idea of what to expect. There will also be many vendors at the convention, so I'll have the opportunity to try professional flutes and less common flutes such as alto, bass, and contrabass flutes. Last year, some vendors also gave lectures on what to look for when buying a flute and some innovative designs of flutes that have just recently come on the market. There will be competitions and recitals as well, so I can hear some incredible solo and group performances by the best players in the world. Last year, there were workshops called "Recover Your Rhythm," "Restore, Relax, Preserve: Massage Therapy as Part of the Musical Athlete's Repertoire," "Training Yourself to Become a Better Musician," "Brazilian Choro Style," "Audition Preparation," "Dalcroze" (a movement-based workshop to which participants are invited to come barefoot or wear dance shoes), and "Irish Flute." Some notable masterclasses include Wil Offermans class on "extended techniques like harmonics, bamboo tones, and wind tones,"<sup>1</sup> Barthold Kuijken's class on "how to perform baroque music on the modern instrument while maintaining an informed approach to the style,"<sup>2</sup> and Keith Underwood's class on "breathing, embouchure, vibrato, articulation, and relaxed use of hands."<sup>3</sup> All of these are just a few examples from the first day alone! Although this year's program isn't published yet, I'm sure that there will be just as much variety as last year.

Over the past year, I've branched out from my classical training and tried some more modern repertoire, such as Sound Bytes by Katherine Hoover (the duet I played at the Arts Scholars Showcase), Fish Are Jumping by Robert Dick, and Charanga by Michael Colquhoun. These pieces all incorporate extended techniques such as playing and singing, multi-phonics (playing more than one note at once), and flutter tonguing (rolling your R's while playing). I also participated in a weeklong workshop led by the chamber group Project Trio in which I

---

<sup>1</sup> 2013 NFA Convention program booklet, page 55.

<sup>2</sup> 2013 NFA Convention program booklet, page 58.

<sup>3</sup> 2013 NFA Convention program booklet, page 59.

learned many new skills such as beat-box flute, jazz improvisation, and composing for chamber ensembles. The NFA Convention is one of the best places to explore these new techniques because many of the people who invented these extended techniques or write pieces that include them will be at the conference performing and giving lectures and masterclasses. There really is no better place to explore modern flute music than at a convention that aims to present the coolest, most recent developments in the flute community.

To make my attendance at the convention a tangible project, I'll make a report reflecting on the experience and tracking how I apply the knowledge I gain at the convention to my playing throughout the year. At the convention, I'll attend many workshops, exhibitions, and masterclasses, but I'll focus on one or two per day of which to give a detailed review. I'll take notes (and pictures or video if allowed) during each event, focusing on elements I can apply to my own playing, such as musicality, extended technique, breathing, posture, and techniques for practicing. Most events will be participatory, though some such as masterclasses will not be. Many of the participatory workshops will be designed to teach some new skill or introduce a new technique. When I'm trying something new, I'll take note of my first impressions: what is easy or difficult, what feels natural or unnatural, which habits of mine hinder me from being successful, and what I would like to incorporate into my own playing. Although I won't get to play in the non-participatory events, I can still apply a similar approach. In masterclasses in particular, I can see what the performers have trouble with initially and how they overcome those challenges. After the convention, I'll practice the new things I learn and track my progress over time, noting both breakthroughs and slow improvements. Within the year, I will record a few pieces to play at the outcome report presentation. When I present the samples of my playing, I'll include "before" and "after" samples and explain how the techniques I learned at the convention have directly impacted certain pieces.

I'll keep my flute teacher directly involved in this project so she can guide me to achieve my goals throughout my third year. She will also be at the conference (she's even performing!), so she'll get to see many of the same events I'll see. Every semester, she has me fill out a goal sheet, on which I have to identify my own strengths, weaknesses, and goals as a player. She has always encouraged me to document my progress and then communicate my concerns to her, so she'll be an extremely valuable asset to me as I complete this project.

**Timeline:**

Spring and early summer 2014: pick a few pieces to record as "before" samples, identify areas in my playing where I would like to improve and focus on for this project

August 6th: travel from Newark/New York to Chicago

August 7th-10th: attend NFA Convention, listen and participate, and take notes

August 11th: travel home

Late summer 2014 and the rest of the school year: apply new techniques to my playing, record "after" samples

**Budget:**

Travel to conference: \$400 for airfare and taxi to/from airport

Accommodations: \$400 - NFA charges \$179/night for 5 nights in the hotel they provide - but I will see if I can share a room, get a cheaper hotel, or stay with a friend who lives in Chicago  
Registration Fees: \$50 NFA student membership plus \$145 convention registration fee  
Total: \$995

**Participation in the arts:**

I'm the first chair flute player in the Wind Ensemble. During the fall, I play the piccolo in the Cavalier Marching Band, and during the winter, I play in the basketball band. I also take lessons with Kelly Sulick, and last semester, I took Theory I through the Music department. My first year, I played in the pit for the First Year Players production of The Mystery of Edwin Drood. I've found the arts community on grounds to be vibrant and diverse, and I've enjoyed going to the performances and exhibitions of my colleagues both in and out of Arts Scholars.

**Participation in the Arts Scholars program:**

I've been very involved in the Arts Scholars program during my time at UVA. This fall, I led a collaboration for a piece for the Arts Scholars Showcase. Julia Rauen and I played a flute duet to accompany Becky Galt's dance. Last year, I volunteered for the Progressive Performance. Though I haven't held a formal leadership position, I do consider myself a leader in the program. Last year, I organized dinners with all the Arts Scholars after class every week. It was a great way for us to get to know each other outside the hour we spent together during class. This year, although I haven't been able to organize dinners, I've tried to really get to know the first years and to make them feel included. Arts Scholars has been one of my most important activities at UVA and has truly been influential in shaping my perspective on myself as an artist. I'm very thankful for the opportunity to receive funding to pursue my passion.