

ASTA/NJ Chamber Music Institute at Kean University



Faculty Testimonial

*note: this is a copy of a letter sent by CMI Composition Faculty member Paul Mack Somers
to Kean University President Dr. Dawood Farahi.*

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Dr. Dawood Farahi
President, Kean University
1000 Morris Avenue
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Dear Dr. Farahi,

After four years as a faculty member of the American String Teachers Association-Chamber Music Institute (ASTA/NJ CMI), it is time I express to you my appreciation for the service that Kean University does to the musical community, as well as the community at large, through having this summer program on its campus. If ever there were a youthful collection of "the best and the brightest", this is it. These are high schoolers who are already accomplished, but so often are alone or with few others in their school communities who share their interest in classical music. So to bring them together each summer at Kean University is important for them. It is also important to the University, for it is a chance for the school to present itself as a setting where students experience some of the highpoints of their young lives. And their families get to experience the final concert each week in Enlow Hall, one of the standout gems among concert venues anywhere.

One of the things that I have heard those parents mention as memorable about Kean University may seem cosmetic, but it really matters: the grounds are beautifully kept, filled with trees and flowers. Just this summer one parent with whom I was walking along a path, interrupted our conversation with a spontaneous, "Aren't these borders gorgeous!" I had a conversation one morning with one of the workers tending the flowers. His pride in the beauty he was helping to create was tangible.

Even more meaningful is the excellence of the musical "flowers" on the Concert Artist Faculty of Kean University. Each year there is a concert and subsequent coaching by members of that faculty, and both facets of this ensemble are the envy of many schools.

But most important is the opportunity to make a difference in young lives that the University has given each summer for those of us on the staff of ASTA-CMI. Each summer I, for one, have witnessed one of those "light-bulb" moments in a student when suddenly they recognized something new and important, something which may change their lives. To be sure, this *could* happen on any college or university campus. So it is to the credit of Kean University that it has invited these young musicians to *its* campus so these important experiences may happen at Kean.

On an even more personal note, my family has been in New Jersey since the 17th century. Thus it is with great pride that I drive north from the deep southern part of the state each summer to spend two weeks teaching at a *New Jersey* school, which my own mother attended, and which now is nurturing the artistic life of the state I love and well beyond.

Yours truly,

Paul Mack Somers

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cc: Christopher Kenniff, ASTA-CMI director