

ENTERTAINMENT

Marywood University String Project Wins National Award

By Mandy Boyle
Advertising Sales Manager/
Entertainment Editor

When Sophie Till received an email about winning the American String Teachers Association (ASTA) String Project of the Year Award, she was shocked to say the least.

"I actually found out on accident," said Till with a warm laugh.

Till, a member of the violin faculty in Marywood's Music, Theatre, and Dance Department, serves as the director of the Marywood University String Project. Since 2002, Marywood University's String Project has served hundreds of local students by giving them a chance to take small-group lessons in viola, violin, cello, and double bass in a unique program that is part of the National String Project Consortium.

Marywood is one of 24 universities across the United States that participates in this effort, but more importantly, it's the only string project of its kind in the Northeastern Pennsylvania region.

"It's not just a Marywood University project," said Till. "It's designed to follow a formula."

Currently, there are about 70-80 children enrolled in the program, which offers low cost string tuition to students from the local community. Till notes that most students involved in this program wouldn't otherwise have access to such an opportunity.

"(The student teachers) have a chance to change kids' lives through the program and that really transforms the experience for our own students," said Till.

That experience, to Till, is one of the most rewarding parts of the program. The String Project serves as a teaching lab for students within the department where string and music education majors, under the supervision of string music faculty members, can serve as student teachers and assistants in the program.

"I think what's really unique about the whole program is that it creates a tight bond between undergrads, faculty, and students because there's so much contact time," said Till. "Plus, it's incredibly rewarding to see our undergrads develop as teachers and see that development come alive in the children."

So what made Marywood University's approach unique? Till attributes the program's success to the use of the Taubman/

Golansky Approach, a new teaching and playing technique for string musicians at all levels of experience.

According to the Golansky Institute, the Golansky/Taubman Approach is a unique analysis of the mostly invisible motions that take place beneath a virtuoso technique. As a result of this study, it notes that musicians may overcome technical limitations, as well as cure playing-related injuries. This approach also involves a new way of understanding and teaching tone production and other components of expressive playing. In addition, this technique is getting recognized beyond just its use in the string project.

While the Golansky/Taubman Approach has gotten attention, that's not the only thing that ASTA noticed about the Marywood University String Project. In addition to using the Golansky/Taubman Approach, the group's Christmas concert marked the world premier of Suite Scranton, written especially for the String Project by regional composer David B. McGrew and based on Scranton themes. According to Till, this partnership has opened the door to even more opportunities for collaboration between composers and the String Project, which is highly unusual but a wonderful opportunity nonetheless.

"The original piece by David McGrew generated a lot of positive energy and excitement in the company," said Till.

On February 17, Till traveled to Santa Clara, California to accept the award and give a presentation on the Taubman/Golansky Approach as part of the National String Project Consortium's presentations during the 2010 ASTA National Conference. In addition, Till also gave a presentation on the approach to teaching strings in February at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, PA.

On winning the award, Till says that it really changed the way both the members of the String Project and the community view the magic that happens in the classrooms of the Sette LaVerghetta Center for the Performing Arts.

"This shifts the perspective of those involved in the String Project and really shows that we go beyond the region," said Till. "It also broadens the perspective of what we're doing and what it's worth." <

John Mayer's Battle Studies

By Sara Tompkins
Staff Writer

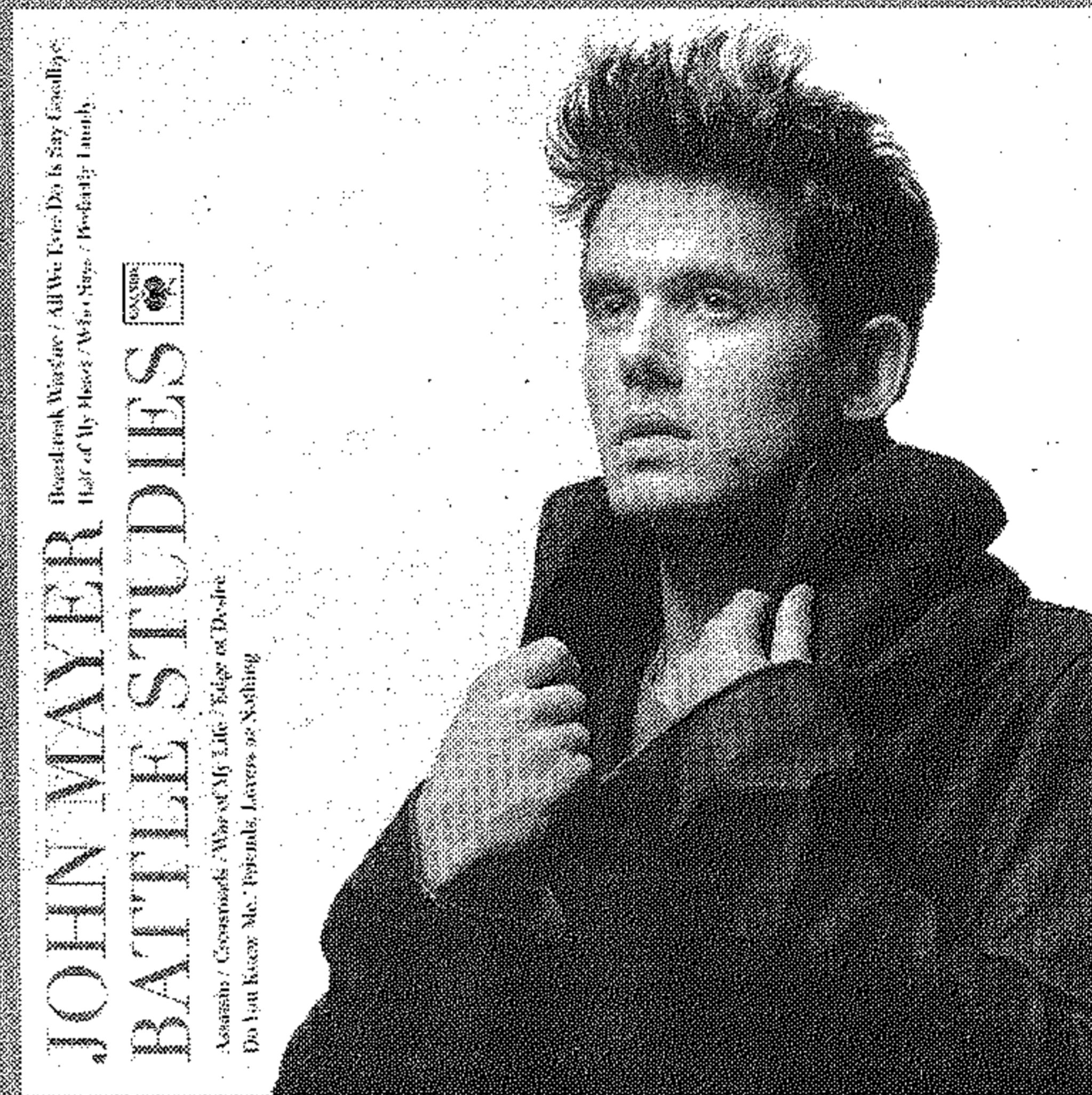
"Battle Studies", the long-awaited fourth album from blues-crooner John Mayer, is an eclectic mix of blues and pop melodies. Quite different from the previous albums he has recorded, "Room for Squares", "Heavier Things", and "Continuum", Mayer's every changing style has appealed to the masses.

Inspired by a recent break-up, "Battle Studies" mixes melancholy lyrics with fun pop melodies. With titles like "Heartbreak Warfare" and "Friends, Lovers, or Nothing", Mayer's song titles match nothing like how the song is played. It's leading you on to think that the song is going to be heart-breakingly slow. However, the songs are upbeat, happy, and unconventional.

To add to the fun beats, Mayer does a collaboration with Taylor Swift, who happens to be considered one of the most breakthrough artists of 2009. On their song, "Half of My Heart", Swift and Mayer sing about only be-

ing able to love someone the whole way. This collaboration is unexpected in my mind, and is something I never saw happening. However, I thoroughly enjoy the song.

"Battle Studies" is one of the best albums I've heard this year. If you like blues mixed with uptempo beats, I suggest this album for you.<



Battle Studies album cover.
Photo Credit: <http://1.bp.blogspot.com>

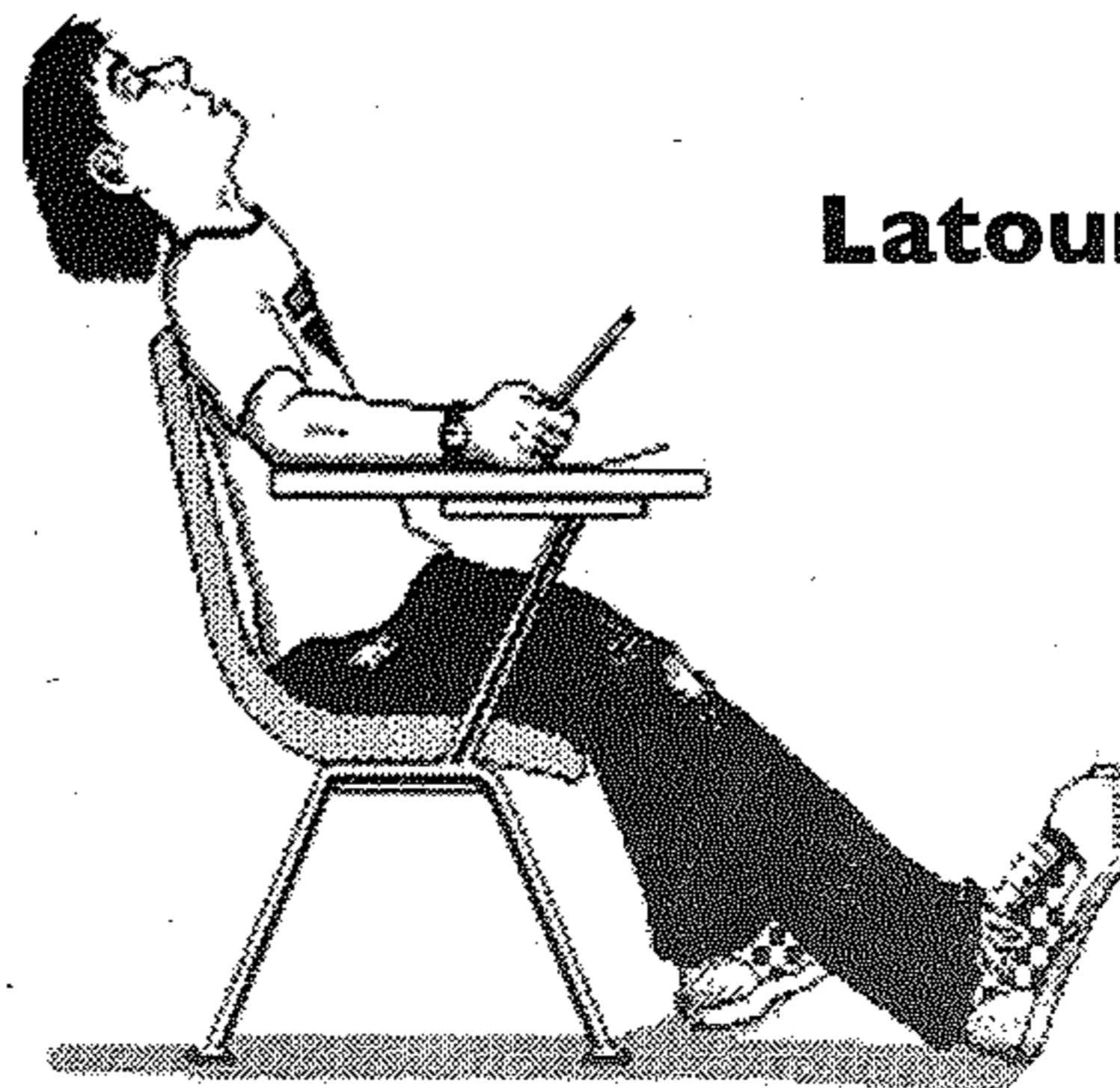
Focus Festival

The Focus Festival is a day of attention testing and improving activities where the grand prize is won by playing mindball which is literally tug o war with your brain. No hands involved.

Food, music, information, games, and prizes will be available. Look for upcoming details!

**April 21st
10am-4pm**

Latour Conference Room



**Read a good book lately?
Watched a good movie?**

Write a review for us!

Contact:
entertainment.woodword@gmail.com