

Composer-Performer Collaborations: Commission to Performance

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Outline of Presentation

- Finding Composers
- Creating a Timeline
- The Spectrum of Collaboration
- What Composers Know
- Communication
 - Know Your Skills and Limitation
 - Have a Collaborative Mindset
 - Troubleshooting
- Qs

How to Find Composers?

Connections

- Collegiate composition programs
- Musician colleagues

Reaching beyond your circle

- Look up the commissions of ensembles and performers you like
- [New Music USA: Commissioning Music Guide](#)
- Equitable commissioning resources
 - [Institute for Composer Diversity](#)
 - [Music By Black Composers: Repertoire Directories](#)
 - [Cayambis Music Press](#)
 - [No Broken Links Directory](#)
- NFA Repertoire guide

NAME / VITAL STATUS			
Composer Name			
<input type="text" value="(search a specific string of text)"/>			
Living	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Deceased	<input type="checkbox"/>		
GENDER IDENTITY and SEXUAL / ROMANTIC ORIENTATION			
Intersex	<input type="checkbox"/>	LGBTQIA2s+	<input type="checkbox"/>
Man	<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-binary	<input type="checkbox"/>
Third Gender	<input type="checkbox"/>	Transgender	<input type="checkbox"/>
Two Spirit	<input type="checkbox"/>	Woman	<input type="checkbox"/>
DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION			
African	<input type="checkbox"/>	Black	<input type="checkbox"/>
Latinx/Latin American	<input type="checkbox"/>	Native and Indigenous	<input type="checkbox"/>
East Asian	<input type="checkbox"/>	South Asian	<input type="checkbox"/>
Southeast Asian	<input type="checkbox"/>	West Asian / North African	<input type="checkbox"/>
DISABLED / d/DEAF / NEURODIVERGENT			

Some of the possible filters in the Institute for Composer Diversity's Database Search

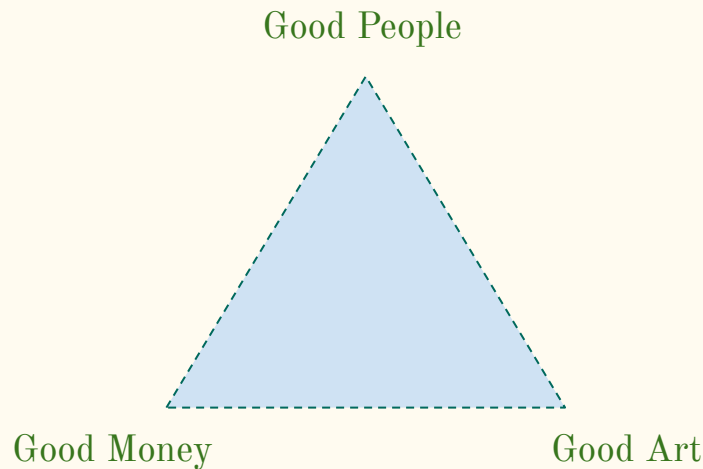
How Much Does it Cost to Commission a Piece?

Monetary Compensation

- Monetary compensation guidelines:
 - New Music USA (general and a bit outdated)
 - Canadian League of Composers (more recent and robust, but in \$CAD)
- Hourly-rate-based estimate

Non-Monetary Compensation

- What else are you offering the composer?
- Performer creative buy-in
- Production work



Put it in writing! Create a written agreement so that all parties have a record of the specifics.

Creating Your Collaboration Timeline

- Plan backwards to include learning & writing time
 - Add extra time if you haven't premiered a new piece before
 - Add extra time if the style is unfamiliar
- Plan check-ins, workshops, etc.
- Communicate clearly with your composer about the writing timeline
 - Varies greatly depending on size of piece and composer's writing style

Have a limited timeline?
Consider setting difficulty guidelines

The Spectrum of Collaboration



Example Collaborative Situations

Co-Creation

Collaborative improvisation
& workshopping with a
composer/performer partner

Targeted Collab

Composer contacted for
commission & collaboration

Recital Commission

Composer commissioned for
a 5' slot on a recital

Align expectations! Be explicit with what is expected, on both sides.

What Composers Know

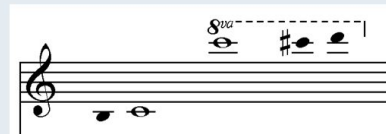
- Orchestration manuals and classes teach:
 - (conservative) Range
 - Register characteristics
 - Traditional orchestral usages
 - Construction/Playing Method
 - Other little things depending on the resource (impossible trills, doublings)
- Other common resources:
 - Colleagues
 - Methods classes

What Composers (Often) Do and Don't Know

- Composers are taught:
 - (conservative) Range and register characteristics
 - Construction/Playing Method
 - Other little things depending on the resource (impossible trills, doublings)
- Composers often don't know:
 - Feel of particular phrases
 - Contextual range and speed limits
 - Breath possibilities
 - Idiomatic articulation
 - Difficulty level
 - Including extended techniques

Range and Characteristics

- Only non-reed in woodwind choir
- Range:



Know Your Skills (and limitations)

- Flute Demo meetings
 - Extended techniques, extremes of dynamics, register, articulations
 - Bring some sample pieces with good notation
- Some things can be uncomfortable - you're doing new things
 - Hold space for discomfort and give it time to settle
- What is technically possible vs. what you personally can do in your timeline

Have a Collaborative Mindset

- Be **clear and explicit** (but kind) with issues
- Keep an **open attitude**
 - New or different isn't bad
 - Always start by doing *exactly* what's in the score - to learn the style/listen to other works, etc.
 - If something isn't working, try a different interpretation before changing the score
- Have an **optimistic** outlook
- Practice **empathy** in meetings - your composer is likely also trying new things!

Troubleshooting

- Don't be afraid to ask questions!
- Common flute writing issues
 - Phrasing slurs
 - Random breath marks
 - Nonsensical or missing articulation
 - Impossible/underestimating the difficulty of skills
- What do when.....
 - You don't like the piece
 - You just don't get it
 - The piece is too hard

Thanks for having us!

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Presentation available here:

<https://annemakermusic.com/teaching/>