



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

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

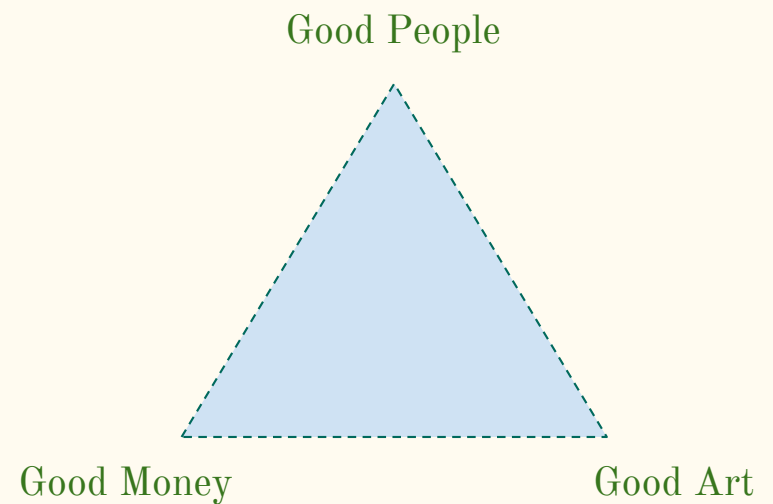
# How Much Does it Cost to Commission a Piece?

## Monetary Compensation

- Monetary compensation guidelines:
  - [New Music USA](#) (general and a bit outdated)
    - Hard copy guide: [New Music USA: Commissioning Music Guide](#)
  - [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

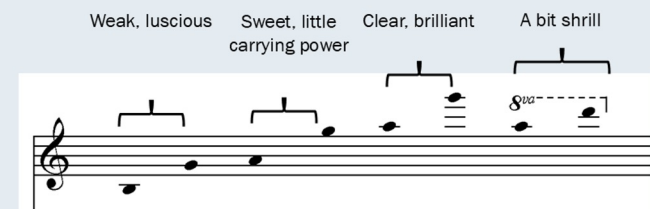
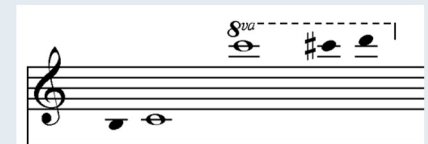
*\*\*Align expectations! Be explicit with what is expected, on both sides.\*\**

# What Composers (Often) Do and Don't Know

- Composers are taught:
  - (conservative) Range and register characteristics
  - Traditional orchestral usages
  - 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 (often over-notated or not considered)
  - Idiomatic articulation
  - Difficulty level
    - Including extended techniques

## Range and Characteristics

- Only non-reed in woodwind choir
- Range:



# Know Your Skills (and limitations)

- Workshops
    - 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
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# Have a Collaborative Mindset

- Be **clear and explicit** (but kind) with issues
  - Keep an **open attitude**
    - New or different isn't bad
    - 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!
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# 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/>