

THE YOUNG DIRECTOR'S GUIDE TO COMMISSIONING
The Midwest Clinic
Wednesday, December 16, 2015

“The literature is the textbook.”
Professor H. Robert Reynolds

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Who Does Commissioning Benefit? How?

Students:

- Standards-based music education: Creating/Performing/Responding/Connecting
- Bring a composition to life and see the artistic process from a different perspective
- Opportunities for composer interaction

Teacher/Consortium Members:

- Expands the teacher's professional network that ultimately benefits students—connections to composers, director colleagues, university professors, community organizations, etc.
- Brings recognition to the teacher for their work on a regional, national, and/or international stage
- Receives a work tailored specifically for your band and its strengths/weaknesses (scheduling, instrumentation, ability)
- Commissioning a new work provides an opportunity for you and your students to think outside of the box—connecting each of you to a larger musical community.

Community:

- Brings distinction to the community and music program through media coverage (e.g., press releases, newspaper articles, private fundraisers, school board meetings, etc.)
- Gives community a chance to “buy in” to the program—creating more community/parental involvement within a school

Composer:

- Sustaining livelihood through their commissioning fee
- Free agent writing—not publisher/corporation driven
- An opportunity to elevate the “quality” of our existing body of music and have music performed outside of the consortium

Who to Commission?

There are two philosophies to consider when commissioning a work:

- End-in-mind philosophy: Develop a final goal and create a funding/business plan to attain your desired end result
- Available resources philosophy: Who can you get to write the piece that you want with the resources that you have at your disposal?

Choose a composer based on the following:

- Create a “Dream List”—*without thinking of cost*, put together a list of composers you would LOVE to commission. No composer is too big—Pulitzer Prize winners, Grawemeyer winners, etc.!
- Consider inclusion of young composers (cost-efficient).
- Local collegiate faculty (cost-efficient and good for the community)
- Many major and/or professional composers also have private composition students (cost-efficient as these students may be more open to negotiation). This is a good way to get a terrific piece for less money—as well as helping a great, younger composer become established in the composition community.

The First Steps

1. Establish contact with your desired composer via composer's website or information provided by the publishing company.
2. Address the following in your communications (remember that the commissioner and composer jointly determine all composition parameters that lie within the contract):
 - Rate charged per minute of music composed
 - Length of desired piece
 - Character/tempo/style of the work (this may impact price rate)
 - Instrumentation—be careful not to leave out color instruments (e.g., bass clarinet, etc.)!
 - Grade Level of difficulty – use a reference chart that outlines Grade Level characteristics of pieces
3. Creation/negotiation of contract
 - *Contract may need to go through school/district administration and/or school/district legal counsel*
 - Will there be a period of exclusivity between commissioners and the composer offering the work to the open market?
 - Who gets rights to the world premiere? Who gets rights to the first recording?

Securing the Funds

Apply for funding from grant organizations:

- National Endowment for the Arts (www.arts.gov/grants)
- Parent associations (e.g., Longmeadow, MA Educational Excellence Foundation [LEEF], PTA, booster organization)
- Regional/statewide cultural grants (e.g., Massachusetts Cultural Council, Nebraska Arts Council)
- Kiwanis Club, Rotary Clubs, Knights of Columbus, etc.

Other funding options:

- School funding—discretionary fund (needs to be confirmed with an administrator)
- Program fundraisers
 - Have parents/students purchase spots in the commission (e.g., auditorium chairs)
 - Donor page in the finished score
 - Donation box at concerts (confirm with an administrator)
 - Solicit donations from businesses, etc. (use your boosters if you have them!)

Commissioning consortiums:

- A consortium is a group of contributors (schools, ensembles, donors, etc.) that provides a portion of the commissioning/printing fee.
- The lead/organizing commissioner administers the project and is normally in charge of communications with the composer and all consortium participants.
- When organizing a consortium, remember that the work must be playable by all members. Avoid completely tailoring the piece to fit your ensemble (i.e., if you have a string bass, consider having the part cross-cued, etc.).
- Consortiums guarantee more performances of a particular work.
- More consortium members can complicate bookkeeping efforts.

Process of Payment

The process of paying the composer differs depending on the commission sponsor.

In all cases, keep an administrator informed and seek their advice and approval.

Booster organizations:

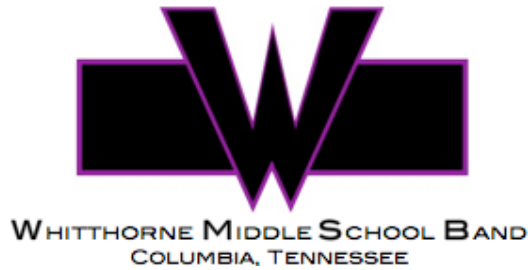
- Can the booster organization sponsor and pay for the commission project independently of the school/district administration?
- 501(c)(3) organizations must abide by rules and regulations at state, federal, and city/school district levels.

School accounts:

- Be aware of district regulations in regards to expending money in school accounts.
- *Work with the school administrator and bookkeeper to devise a legal solution that will prevent the possibility of fund absorption by other departments.*

Private bank accounts—*we do not recommend this option:*

- Be very careful if you establish a private bank account. Be open and transparent with all consortium members.
- Keep careful records of monthly statements, transaction receipts, etc. This eliminates a lot of the difficulties of working within a school account, but adds different risks of which you must be cognizant.
- For additional oversight, consider using dual signed checks with one co-signer being a consortium member.
- Speak with a banker/lawyer to maximize your protection.



1 September 2010

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

My name is Joshua Kearney and I am a band director in the Middle Tennessee area. I teach in Columbia, TN at Whitthorne Middle School. I am writing this letter to inform you of an exciting project that the Whitthorne Band is sponsoring. I would like to take this opportunity to invite you and your program to participate in this project as well. I am assembling a consortium of Middle Schools and High Schools around the United States to commission a piece of music by a noted composer for Grade 3 level ensembles.

The composer selected for the project is Dr. Donald Grantham from the University of Texas at Austin. More information about the composer can be found at his website: www.donaldgrantham.com. The work will be a Tennessee grade 3 and will be roughly 4 minutes in length. It will be completed in Spring 2011. Professor Grantham and I are both excited about the prospect of commissioning a work of substantial quality for these level ensembles.

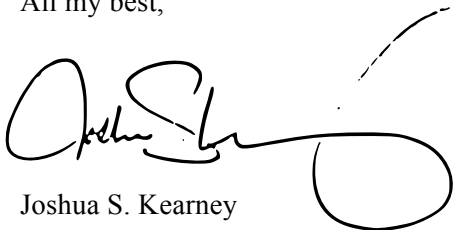
I am capping the number of participants at 25. The financial contribution made by each school will be \$200 for a piece four minutes in length.

If you wish to take part in this exciting project, please contact me directly by telephone, email, or postal mail at:

Joshua Kearney
C/O Whitthorne Middle School
915 Lion Parkway
Columbia, TN 38401

My telephone number is [REDACTED] and my email address is jkearney@k12tn.net.

All my best,


Joshua S. Kearney

LETTER OF AGREEMENT

Letter of Agreement between Donald Grantham (the Composer) and the Whitthorne Middle School Band (Commissioner) regarding a commissioned composition (the Work) for wind ensemble.

1. The Composer agrees to compose the Work for wind ensemble for the Commissioner.
2. The Work shall be of approximately 4 minutes in duration and shall be exciting in character.
3. The Work shall be delivered to the Commissioner by May 1, 2011.
4. The commission fee for the Work shall be \$4,000.
5. Full payment of the commission fee shall be due upon delivery of the score of the work by the Composer to the Commissioner.
6. All rights of ownership, copyright, recording, and public performance for profit of the Work remain with the Composer.
7. The Composer shall provide a master copy of the computer-engraved score and parts of the Work to the Commissioner without charge.
8. The Composer shall provide scores to all members of the consortium. The Commissioner shall provide copies of the Work to all members of the consortium from the master set.
9. The cost of duplication of the score and parts of the Work for performance will be borne by the Commissioner.
10. The Commissioner shall retain copies of the score and parts of the Work and may perform the Work in perpetuity without further payment to the Composer.
11. Compensation for any commercial recording or video/audio representation of the Work shall be negotiated between the Commissioner and the Composer in advance of such recording or video/audio representation.
12. The Commissioner shall not loan, rent, or sell the score or parts of the Work to any third party without the prior written consent of the Composer.
13. These thirteen items constitute the entire agreement and understanding between the Composer and the Commissioner and supercede any previous discussions or agreements.

Donald Grantham (composer)

Date

Joshua Kearney, WMS Bands

Date

Linda Lester, Principal Whitthorne M.S.

Date



WHITTHORNE MIDDLE SCHOOL BAND
COLUMBIA, TENNESSEE

INVOICE

Date: 4/12/2011

Invoice Number: 0010

Bill To:

XXXX

Item:	
Qty: 1: Donald Grantham Commissioning Project @ \$200.00 Ea.	\$200.00
Total Due:	\$200.00

This serves as your invoice. Thank you for your participation in the Donald Grantham Commissioning Project. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Joshua Kearney by email at jkearney@k12tn.net or by telephone at (931) 388 – 2558 EXT. 1276.

Please make checks payable to Whitthorne Middle School. Our school address is 915 Lion Parkway, Columbia, TN 38401.