



Society of Composers, Inc.

*...dedicated to the
promotion, composition,
performance, understanding
and dissemination of
new and contemporary
music...*

NEWSLETTER CONTENTS

XLV: 5, September-October 2015

Articles

*Three Tips for
Composers
Submitting for
Competitions by
Mike McFerron.*

Page 1**Submit**

*Contact information
to submit news,
photos, articles and
more for upcoming
issues.*

Page 2**Resources**

*Learn about the
Newsletter,
upcoming SCI
Events and our many
online resources.*

Page 2**Events**

*Upcoming student,
regional and national
conferences of the
Society.*

Page 2**About**

*Membership info,
members of the
National Council/
Executive
Committee.*

Page 3**Join SCI**

*SCI is an
organization for
composers.
Various
membership
categories are
available.*

Page 3

Three Tips for Composers Submitting to Competitions

By Mike McFerron



As the title indicates this article is written for composers, but there is a lot of good information for organizers of competitions as well. First, organizers need to remember that composers are helping the organization and new music world in general by submitting their music. And second, composers sacrifice a great deal to submit their work. They donate a lot of good will with their music to be sure. Composers on the other hand should recognize that the organizer is on their side. They want your music to be great and to succeed. They want to help the cause of promoting new music in the world – they love new music. If they didn't, they wouldn't be providing an opportunity for you and your music. In addition to submitting your music, you are also submitting yourself. With every submission you make, you build a professional reputation. So...

1. Follow the Guidelines

Read all the guidelines carefully. This may seem obvious, but it's remarkable how often this step is ignored. If the competition is for a piano trio, don't send your piano quintet. Again, this may be obvious, but if you discover a great opportunity that you don't quite qualify for -



About the Newsletter

Editor: Michael Rene Torres
Student Editor: Carter John Rice

Circulation: 1400

Access: available on the SCI website at <http://www.societyofcomposers.org/publications/newsletter/>

Frequency of Publication: bimonthly

Newsletter Contact Information:
newsletter@societyofcomposers.org

For other SCI business:
 Society of Composers, Inc.
 P.O. Box 687
 Mineral Wells, TX
 76067-0687
secretary@societyofcomposers.org

Copyright © 2015
 Society of Composers, Inc.
 All rights reserved.

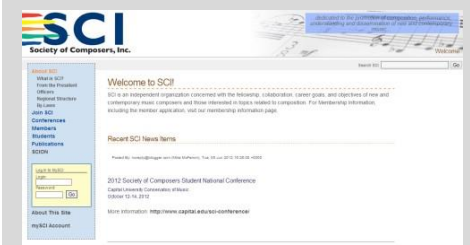


Upcoming SCI Events

2016 SCI Student National Conference
November 17-19, 2016
 Ball State University
 Muncie, Indiana
 Carter Rice, Co-host
 Chad Powers, Co-host

2017 SCI Region VIII Conference
March 1-14, 2017
 Washington State University
 Pullman, Washington
 Ryan M. Hare, Host

2017 SCI National Conference
March 30-April 1, 2017
 Western Michigan University
 Kalamazoo, Michigan
 Christopher Biggs, Co-host
 Lisa Coons, Co-host
 Richard Johnson, Co-host



Internet & Email

www.societyofcomposers.org

- Conference dates and submission guidelines
- Contact information and links to member web-pages
- Student chapters and opportunities
- CDs and journals produced by SCI
- Details on SCI such as membership, contacts for officers, regional structure, by-laws, newsletter archives and more...

SCION

SCION is a listing of opportunities on our website exclusively for members. It is updated on a continual basis so that it may be checked at any time for the most current notices. In addition, members are emailed on the first Monday of each month to remind them to visit the site for new or recent postings. The large number of listings is easily managed by a table of contents with links to the individual notices. In-depth coverage; contest listings in full; all items listed until expiration; this is a valuable resource that you may print in its entirety or in part at any time.

John Bilotta, SCION Editor
scion@societyofcomposers.org

scimembers

scimembers is a member-driven e-mail mailing list that is intended to facilitate communication between members of the Society on topics of concern to composers of contemporary concert music. It conveys whatever notices or messages are sent by its members, including announcements of performances and professional opportunities, as well as discussions on a wide variety of topics. For more information, including how to join and participate in the listserv:

<http://www.societyofcomposers.org/publications/listserv.html>

National Council

President

James Paul Sain
University of Florida

Region 1

Scott Brickman
University of Maine at Fort Kent

Beth Wiemann
University of Maine

Region 2

Anneliese Weibel
SUNY-Stony Brook

Daniel Weymouth
SUNY-Stony Brook

Region 3

Harvey Stokes
Hampton University
Christopher Cook
Christopher Newport University

Region 4

Martín Gendelman
Georgia Southern University
Thomas Couvillon
Eastern Kentucky University

Region 5

Christopher Biggs
Western Michigan University

Frank Felice
Butler University

Region 6

Eric Honour
University of Central Missouri

Craig Weston
Kansas State University

Region 7

Bruce Reiprich
Northern Arizona State University
Glenn Hackbarth
Arizona State University

Region 8

Rob Hutchinson
University of Puget Sound

Patrick Williams
University of Montana

President Emeritus

Greg Steinke

Membership Information

For complete details, please visit
<http://www.societyofcomposers.org/join/membership.html>

Full Membership (\$75/year): Eligible to submit scores to the National Conferences, regional conferences, SCI Recording Series, SCI Journal of Music Scores. Access to the SCI Newsletter in electronic form. Optional subscription to [scimembers], the SCI listserv and all other SCI publications. Eligible to vote on Society Matters and in elections for the National Council.

Joint Membership (\$100/year): Same benefits as full members

Senior Membership (\$35/year): Open to those 65 years of age or older, or retired. Same benefits as full members.

Associate Membership (\$40/year): Open to performers and other interested professionals. Receives the SCI Newsletter in electronic form and can participate in national and regional conferences.

Student Membership (\$35/year): Eligible to submit to national and regional conferences and to vote in society matters. Access to all SCI publications.

Student Chapter Membership (\$25/year): Same benefits as student members, but only available on campuses having Student Chapters.

Institutional Membership (\$40/year): Organizations receive hard copy of the SCI Newsletter and other mailings.

Lifetime Membership (\$1400 or \$150/year for 10 years): Benefits the same as full members, for life.

Executive Committee

Chairman

Mike McFerron
Lewis University

Newsletter Editor
Michael Rene Torres
Ohio State University

SCION Editor
John G. Bilotta

Journal of Music Scores Editor
Bruce J. Taub

CD Series Editor
Michael Pounds
Ball State University

Submissions Coordinator
Anne Neikirk
University of Delaware

**SCI/ASCAP Commission
Competition Coordinator**

Mark Phillips
Ohio University

Student Chapters Coordinator
Natalie Williams

Student Events Coordinator
Adam Vidiksis
Temple University

Marketing Coordinator
Jamie Sampson

Associate Marketing Coordinator
Andrew Martin Smith

Webmaster
David Drexler

System Administrator
Matthew McCabe
University of Florida

System Analyst
M. Anthony Reimer

Student Representative
Carter John Rice

Professional Organizations Coordinator
Thomas Wells

SCI National Office General Manager
Gerald Warfield

you don't qualify. If you have to be under a certain age and you are not—don't apply. The organizers are generally looking for something specific. Most have goals and agendas for the opportunity they are providing, and they aren't going to suddenly change those so your work can be chosen. Rules and guidelines are typically in place to improve the efficiency of the process. Sometimes those rules are governed by funding sources and are beyond the direct control of the organizer. A granting organization or a donor will often define the contest to a great extent. Opportunities that support composers and new music are a good thing even if you don't agree with a competition's rules or guidelines.

There's a false assumption held by some composers who believe they should send their music to everyone because it gets their name "out there." I once received nine CDs from one composer for a call that asked for one work. It's the dreaded "exposure" argument. Of course, name recognition is important in this business, but only because of the music and reputation that is attached to it.

If the organizer asks you not to send an MP3 by email, don't do it. If a competition is seeking works for two violins and a viola, don't send your string quartet. Don't submit two works to an opportunity that asks composers to submit only one work. As earlier, this may seem obvious, but astonishingly these are examples of things that happen quite frequently. Not following guidelines marks you as unprofessional and problematic. Organizers want to help you submit your works and organizers want your music! However, anytime you don't follow guidelines, your submission falls out of a designed system and there's a chance that your submission could be disqualified, overlooked, or simply misplaced.

Never send a recording you have not double-checked to make sure it sounds the way you want it to. This applies to audio files you are going to upload and to CDs you are going to send via post. If the competition is anonymous make sure your name does not appear on any of the anonymously requested materials; if a pseudonym is required make sure it's on all appropriate materials. When sending hard copies that do not require anonymity, make sure your name and contact information is on everything. If you submit a score and a CD, have your name on the CD also, plus the title of your work. If your work is not accepted for the competition, who knows, it might be used later, and you want the

performer to be able to contact you. When submitting a score, it's a good idea to put an accurate timing of the work in an obvious place—perhaps the front cover. Also, make sure your score is completely legible and with all necessary performance instructions. When preparing your score, consider consulting the Major Orchestra Librarians Association guidelines: <http://mola-inc.org/m/articles/view/Music-Preparation-Guidelines-for-Orchestral-Music>

Consider carefully before contacting an organizer directly. Often times, answers to your questions are in the call for submissions, so read those guidelines carefully before contacting the organizer. Remember, every minute you ask of a competition organizer is multiplied many fold. Also remember that in case of conferences and festivals, the organizers are likely organizing and hosting the conference while doing their 'day jobs'.

Don't inquire about when selections are going to be made unless you *really* need to know. Some organizations do include the notification date in their calls, but some do not. Of course there are times when knowing the notification date is important, and you should contact the organizer if that's the case and explain your situation. For example, many of the composers who come to a festival I direct, Electronic Music Midwest (EMM), are also planning travel to other festivals and conferences. For them, they are trying to work out a travel budget, and knowing about EMM results is *extremely* important. I'm sure there are other exceptions such as submissions to publishers; however, knowing when the results are going to be announced for most competitions is generally not going to affect you. Before you write that email, simply ask yourself if you really need to know. *A note to organizers:* consider including a "results expected by" date in your call for submissions.

Similarly, don't send "follow-up" emails under false pretense. The key words here are "*false pretense.*" If you legitimately have a question about your submission, you should absolutely follow up for confirmation, but I often get emails from composers asking me if I received their submission and then continue to tell me how special their submission is. This might not be a problem for some competitions, but in our case the composer can login and view/edit their submission until the deadline and this is made very clear when they submit. Just know that sending a follow-up email is not a way to get your piece sent to the top of the stack, and by the way there really isn't a "top of

the stack” anyway – most competitions go out of their way to be fair and objective. Instead, sending such a letter may just make you look desperate and it could affect your professional reputation. So, do not send an email explaining what inspired you to write the work or the symbolism of your use of C# minor or the 6-Z17 hexachord. If the organizers want to know that, they will ask in the submission guidelines. Trust that the adjudicators are sophisticated enough to “get” your music. In short, let your music and your submission speak for itself.

2. Be Professional

Be nice. That’s possibly the most important piece of advice in this article. Nobody wants to work with a difficult person. Recognize that much of what happens in the new music community is through the efforts of volunteers, and understand that you are likely not contacting a big corporation with a 24-7 internationally outsourced support staff. When you contact an organization, you will be communicating with a real person. This person is probably just as busy as you are, so be patient and accept that from time-to-time, problems and errors will occur.

Sign your emails. Yes, again this might seem obvious, but I’m always astonished by the number of anonymous emails I receive with only an email address attached. They’re usually short and to the point, which is great, but think about how difficult it is to answer a question like this: “Hey, did you get my submission?” Imagine receiving this email where “Hey, did you get my submission?” was the complete email and you received it while juggling four other calls! A relevant subject heading helps tremendously. Include your name, your submission, and the name of the competition. If you have been given a submission identification number, be sure to include it as well.

Consider carefully what you write on social media *before* posting. I’m not talking about pictures of you doing a keg stand (although probably not a great idea to post that either), but avoid complaining that a competition or conference didn’t accept your work. You’ll likely sound petty. Be careful of claiming that a competition is “rigged” or unfair. Too often, I’ve read complaints by composers about the results of a competition or how a competition was administered. Sometimes it’s a consequence of a misunderstanding that could be cleared up with a simple email to the competition organizer. Before publicly

smearing an organizer, make sure you know all of the circumstances, and more importantly ask yourself what is to be gained. I have a colleague who often tells his students that in this field if he doesn’t know someone, someone he knows does. Be aware of the reach of your social media posts. There may be people who see your tweets or Facebook posts that you don’t know or intend to reach. Indeed, it’s a small world.

In a similar vein, there’s nothing to be gained by sending a snotty note to an organizer. For example, if you don’t like that there’s an entry fee (I don’t like that myself), then don’t submit! If there are other requirements you don’t agree with, remember that you’re under no obligation to submit to the opportunity. This doesn’t mean you shouldn’t voice your concern or engage in conversation about the requirement, but too often I have seen people with very legitimate arguments do themselves and the community a disservice by engaging in personal attacks and inappropriate discourse. Unfortunately, there are many composers who have burned bridges and don’t know it. It’s one thing to disagree, and it’s another to be disagreeable.

3. Promote, Promote, Promote

Promote new music opportunities generally, *always* promote the opportunities that accept your work. Promoters need audience and press. In general, audience draw and press mentions are essential to any production. Composers should be aware that every presenter and producer is counting on and watching how you promote their event. Effort counts and means a lot.

A composer that organizes an opportunity for others is quickly recognized. If you haven’t managed a new music call for submissions, you should! When you do such, however, make sure you focus on others and not yourself. Having a festival or concert where 90% of the works presented are yours isn’t likely going to be positively recognized by your peers. Supporting others is an attractive quality and identifies you as a contributing member of the new music community.

Some composers feel that their compositional masterpiece is the only thing necessary for their success. It is not. A successful composer needs to be professional with their craft and their career. This includes how they represent themselves, how they conduct themselves, and how they

promote themselves within our community.

My Credentials: If you got this far, you may be wondering who this guy is, telling you what to do. Over the years, I have produced a number of concerts and created several calls for submissions. I am one of the developers of musicAvatar (<http://www.musicavatar.org>), an online system that makes it easy for composers, ensembles, and producers to manage new music calls. Additionally, I currently chair the Society of Composers, Inc. Executive Committee and I am the founder and co-director of the Electronic Music Midwest Festival (<http://www.emmfestival.org>), which has presented over 800 new electroacoustic compositions over the past 16 years, and I have also produced many concerts at venues ranging from the small recital halls at Lewis University to warehouses on the south side of Chicago.

These thoughts are not solely my own. Special thanks to the following contributors and advisors of this article who have also contributed greatly to the new music community by organizing a large number of opportunities for composers: Christopher Coleman, Amy Dunker, Anne Neikirk, Mark Phillips, M. Anthony Reimer, James Paul Sain, Robert Voisey, and Gerald Warfield.