

## **Garrett Schumann**

### **1. Do you like writing for strings? What are the challenges? What do you enjoy?**

I am very fond of string music and writing for strings because they are such facile instruments capable of performing so many different kinds of ideas, from soft, lyrical phrases to powerful, athletic passages. The only challenge I can imagine is balancing a solo string instrument against a large ensemble, such as a full orchestra or wind ensemble.

### **2. If you had to write a piece for viola, which could be of any form or style, what would it be like? And why?**

At this point, I would be delighted to write a viola concerto. Concertos are always exciting works to write, because it gives the composer a chance to explore the virtuosity of a great performer. I find a viola concerto attractive because I have never written one, and there are a number of examples (the Druckman and Eötvös, for two, not to mention to older Bartók) of how well this kind of work can succeed.

### **3. What would you want us (instrumentalists) to do before we approach you for a commission? (e.g., play for you, send you a recording, listen to your works, etc.)**

I think the most important thing to do before you approach a composer is listen to their music, particularly if you don't know them personally. You can use their work both as grounds for an introduction and as guidance for the commission (i.e., you can point out qualities of a specific piece that you would want the composer to bring into the newly written work).

After introducing yourself to the composer, they should ask for a recording of you playing so they can tailor the piece to your sound and abilities.

### **4. Under what circumstance and for what reason would you accept/reject a commission?**

For me, the only factor that would lead me to reject a commission would be if my work load in a given period is such that I cannot fulfill the timetable of the commission.

### **5. How clearly of an idea for the piece should we have before approaching you? (e.g., instrumentation, length, number of movements, etc.)**

In my experience, typically a number of these factors are built in to the commission opportunity (i.e., there is a set ensemble or length attached to the commission at the get-go). However, if these qualities are not set, determining the characteristics/details of the commissioned work can be one of the most rewarding parts of the collaboration between composer and performer.

## **6. How and how much can we take part in the creation process?**

This depends on the composer, frankly. Some composers I know like to record their performers practicing or warming up and will incorporate that into the work, others will write in virtual isolation from their performers, though I think this is much more rare.

Personally, I think it is important for composers to, at least, run the sketches of their commissioned works by the performers they are working with so they can build the final product hand-in-hand with the person who will be playing it.

## **7. How far ahead of time should we ask?**

This depends on the composer's schedule, but a few months is the minimum in my mind. Particularly if your interest is in receiving a high-quality composition, and I can't imagine why that would not be the case, the more time the better!

## **8. What do you expect in return?**

Obviously, it is commonplace for a composer to receive monetary compensation in return for writing a new piece, but this is negotiable and depends on the circumstances of a given commission. New Music USA has commissioning guidelines that are helpful for anyone curious about some of the baseline amounts composers and ensembles use in the professional marketplace.

As a student, I understand it is difficult for fellow students to raise money to commission composers, but, generally, I feel it is good idea to compensate your composers in some way, if only as a sign of respect.

An arrangement that has served me well in my past is an exchange of remuneration for performances. In other words, if funds are hard to come by, a commissioning group or player will agree to perform the work a number of times that is agreed upon prior to the completion of the work.

## **9. Any other things we should know or be aware of?**

I think the most important thing is that every commission involve some kind of written agreement so the composer and performers understand the expectations involved with a given project, such as the fee for the composer, the date the performer(s) expect the work to be ready and, possibly, the number of times the piece will be played.