



COMMISSION QUESTIONNAIRE

Commissioning a work is an incredible way to connect composers and your audience. It can often seem daunting but this short document will help provide some points of which will help you give a clear set of parameters for the process and help the composer meet your needs.

1. What is the purpose of your commission? This could be for a special event, to create new music in the repertoire, to celebrate a person or idea (commemoration), memorial, or any number of reasons.

2. What is your ideal or estimated length of the piece?

3. What type of ensemble/medium are you wishing the piece to be written for (concert band, orchestra, chamber group, etc. - specifying specific instrumentation)?

4. What technical level are you wanting the piece to be written for? Using a grade level numbering of .5-6 is helpful here. This is a good spot to also determine if there are particular strengths of weaknesses in the group you wish the composer to be aware of.

5. Are you specifically looking for a specific tempo? Some commissioning parties let the composer determine what the way to do but if you have strong feelings about a tempo, this is a good time to address it (especially as it relates to point #1 - purpose of the commission). Style is typically up the composer - this is where seeking out specific composers is important as their compositional voice will greatly contribute to the work.

6. The fee for the commission largely depends on challenge and length of the work, timeline needed for completion, any special requests, and general work load the composer has at the time. Price is determined in negotiation and generally half the fee is due at signing of the contract and the rest is due at completion of the project.

6b. There are many ways to pay for a commission. Often commissions are set up in consortiums where the commissioning party gathers different members to pay for the work and then all members have performance rights for a specified amount of time (usually 1 year from the premiere performance). Typically, the lead commissioner contributes the highest amount and has rights for the premiere.

Other commissions are funded solely by the commissioning part either through fundraising or grants.

7. Commissioning Party and the Composer will agree on a deadline for completion of the work. Sometimes, although not often, there are times that deadlines need to be renegotiated should an extreme circumstance take place (such as an act of god or sickness). The contract will specify how to approach this.

8. Typically, PDF parts are delivered for these commissions. This is especially important as the collaborative process often incurs a few small changes. Once changes are done, hard copies can be requested if indicated in the contract.

9. Generally, commissions are not subject to changes from the commissioning party. However, should the commissioning party determine the piece is too difficult for some instruments/parts, it is permissible for them to ask the composer to make alterations as necessary to suit their needs. This is more common in young level music where the commissioning party has specific needs/requests to suit their performers.

10. Arrange in advance to the extent you would like to be communicated with in the process. Some commissioning parties prefer to just wait for a finished product while others like to receive updates. If you are hoping to see samples of the process or have the composer attend rehearsals/performances of the work, this is also a good time to address that as travel arrangements can be a part of the negotiated contract.

11. Most importantly, have fun! This is a wonderful and exciting endeavor to take on. Being a part of creating new art work is imperative to composers, audiences, performances, and all stakeholders in the humanity of the arts.