

Submitting Music Manuscripts

Composers or arrangers who have never submitted their work for possible publication are often uncertain about how to proceed. Some publishers welcome the opportunity to review new works and the following guidelines explain the process.

Manuscript Preparation

Every composer should fully understand the art of music notation and be able to prepare a neat manuscript which will command attention. Even the highly trained musician will encounter some problems or have questions in the preparation of a score. A handy reference book is available from the Heritage Music Press division of The Lorenz Corporation: *Hemidemisemiquavers...and other such things (A Concise Guide to Music Notation)*, 1989. Product code PP234.

Composers should not copyright their own compositions. Without actually filing for a copyright with the Library of Congress, composers can legally show that they have a vested interest in their work by adding the words "Copyright [year] [composer's name]" at the bottom of the first page of music. Leave the

official copyright registration in the hands of the publisher.

It is the responsibility of the composer to secure all permissions for use of previously copyrighted materials in advance of publication. Any permission fees must be paid by the composer.

Choral parts for SATB should be written on two staves whenever possible to reduce the number of pages. Organ accompaniments for anthems should also be written on two staves for the same reason, with up- and down-stems employed to clearly separate left-hand and pedal parts. Every syllable in the vocal text should be correctly hyphenated. Use a dictionary or word guide to double check. Never guess.

Submitting Your Work

Many publishing houses have a 'personality' which is evident in their catalogs. An arrangement of a gospel song has little chance of being accepted by a firm specializing in music for use in liturgical settings. So select your prospective publisher wisely to ensure a careful examination of your work.

The preferred method of submission is electronic. E-mail your manuscript as a PDF because not all reviewers will have access to programs such as Finale or Sibelius. A brief cover letter stating that the work is being submitted for possible publication should also be included either in the body of the e-mail or as an attachment. It is of little value to elaborate on the merits of the composition or to cite the popularity of previous performances.

The music should speak for itself. If your composition is extremely complex or includes involved instruments, a recording can be helpful to the reviewers. Otherwise, avoid the temptation to send demonstration recordings. Sending only a recording is never recommended.

Some publishers do not acknowledge the receipt of unsolicited manuscripts. Be prepared to wait a reasonable period of time for the review process to be completed.

Never submit your manuscript to more than one publisher at a time.

The Review Process

Your manuscript will initially be screened by an editor. Sometimes the editor alone determines the acceptance of a work. This decision, however, is usually made by a review committee. In either case, the process may take from a few weeks to several months, depending on the publishing house.

If your work is rejected, try another publisher. Publishers have specific areas of need for catalog balance and a rejection does not necessarily imply any lack of merit in a composition.

Financial Matters

When a composition is accepted, one of several agreements will be offered to a composer by the publisher. A standard royalty contract is probably the most common.

Some publishers prefer to pay a fixed amount per copy sold, and in some instances, a one-time fee is proposed.

The Bottom Line

The degree of success which any composer attains will depend not only upon individual craftsmanship but also the need in the marketplace. Overused texts or those containing archaic words and phrases should be avoided. The music should be accessible to limited performance resources. It should be memorable and also say something that has not been said countless times before. The composer should never lose sight of the difficult art of simplicity. If there is nothing to sustain interest on the first page of music, it is doubtful that anyone will bother to look further to see what—if anything—the composer may have to say later.

The Lorenz Corporation does not return submitted manuscripts. To reiterate an important point: the preferred method of submission is a PDF which may be e-mailed to submit@lorenz.com. Otherwise, a photocopy of your manuscript (never send the original) may be directed to the following address:

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