NCCO Webinars

Part 4

Series 1, Webinar 6 - 10 Mar 2020: Writing and Publishing

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Another question from a viewer for Brooks: I was an externally hired chair for nine years at a new institution, and by personal choice taught too much each semester. When I concluded the position and moved to a four-year endowed chair appointment, I realized how much my research, publication, and presentation skills have declined. What suggestions do you have to update my skills during this time?

Brooks: There are all sorts of ways to do research, and publication is just one end of that research. You can publish the same research in very different ways to different audiences. Part of it is finding what form of communication are you most comfortable in, and then do it. Practice, and looking for the right venue effects the way you communicate your content. Write the abstract, call a colleague and get their feedback. Have a number of people look at it before you submit -- that's part of the practice.

Dale, how have you learned to handle the fear of rejection that is nearly universal among artists? We've all felt it -- how do you overcome it?

Dale: Overcoming rejection is a muscle that gets stronger as you use it. I used to submit to choral composition contests as often as possible, and the more rejection I got the less meaning each rejection has. The same is true of learning to speak on stage -- if you do it over and over, even if rejection still stings, it means less and less each time.

Dale's book: "Staying Composed: Overcoming Anxiety and Self-Doubt Within a Creative Life" (2019)

https://www.amazon.com/Staying-Composed-Overcoming-Self-Doubt-Creative ebook/dp/B07RFTHB74/

A question from a viewer: Do we think the possibility of long-term social distancing will impact composer output in regards to types of ensembles?

Mark: There is no shortage of difficult, collegiate-level pieces. A good middle- or high school piece is very difficult to find. We need good composers to write accessible music with beauty. We publish Randall Thompson's music. He didn't mind writing accessible pieces. His *Requiem* for double choir is an hour long -- very difficult, but he also wrote simple pieces that are sung by choirs all over the world.

A follow-up question from a viewer for Mark: Thank you for these practical tips about submission of compositions. Do you require live recordings to be submitted with the score?

Mark: If they're good, it's great. If it's not good, you're better off not sending it. On a related topic, we don't require that the score be engraved (Finale/Sebelius) -- handwritten manuscripts are fine, we just ask that the score be legible.

Amanda and Sean, as editors what are the positive characteristics of a submission that make you want to publish it, and what are the characteristics that cause you to decline to publish?

Amanda: One pitfall is that often the introduction is "blah" and what is in the conclusion should be in the introduction. You need to capture the reader's attention. Don't write for a Music Ed 101 class -- nobody cares about birth and death dates. Hook the reader with something new and interesting.

Sean: I always looked for something new, but not just for the sake of new, but an idea expressed passionately and then back it up with analysis. What is the meat of this topic? Pitfalls? Avoid the verb "to be" in all its forms! Avoid passive voice, contractions, extreme flowery writing. Also, look at the guidelines and follow them. Finally, on the topic of interviews, you would be surprised how willing famous people are to be interviewed, but interviews are tough for the author. Your job is to make the subject's life as easy as possible.

**A question from a viewer for Mark: Would it help to have piano reduction in the score? **

Mark: We're going to go back and put one in anyway, so yes.

The seeds of future discussions have been planted here today, and we may need to come back together and keep going on these topics. Thank you all very much!