NCCO Webinars

Part 3

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

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Mark, What would you say to a composer who may hesitate to submit a manuscript because they fear rejection?

Mark: 1) Every publisher has a different process for consideration. Do your homework: which publisher matches most closely what you are writing? It may be perfectly fine, but not a match for what that company publishes. 2) If you have a mentor, or someone who has done your music, approach through them, so it doesn't come quite so cold. We bet over 1,000 manuscripts a year, and we look at everything.

https://www.morningstarmusic.com/submission-for-publication/

A question from an audience member: Is COVID-19 precipitating any changes in what choral publishers look for in terms of text topics / musical styles? Is this a time when searching for hope in midst of phenomenal change and fear is important in determining immediate choral repertoire to be published, going forward?

Mark: We have already published everything that will be released through Christmas, and are now getting ready to work on January/February looking toward ACDA next year. Immediate publications are tough for standard publishers. We don't know what the [pandemic] impact will be for fall; we may be spreading out some of the fall issues because the music issued this spring has not sold. We may do fewer releases for a little while.

We have seen a trend of social message pieces: how we interact with others, what we want the world to be, the crisis of relationship, etc. What I'm seeing people post [on social media] right now has to do with music from the past about beauty and comfort, as a balm to help through this time. That may shift what we see from composers going forward.

A follow-up from that audience member: Knowing the publisher's repertoire emphases may be misleading because that bulk may be a matter of saturation rather than indicating what they currently are looking for. For instance of publisher who has a lot of TTBB music in their catalog may need no more of that. Would you give advice as to how to read the patterns and a publisher's catalog.

Mark: We go through cycles. One year I may have 20 SSA pieces, and the next year none. Publishers have to balance. The best judge is to ask yourself, "what am I having trouble finding?" If you're a composer, connect with conductors. One of the thing that is happening with self-publishing is that composers don't have to worry about what the market needs. They write what they want, post it, and it might find an audience. Whereas publishers need to sell thousands of copies, and need to make it worthwhile for the money that goes into the process.

Mark, when a manuscript comes to you, what is your process?

Mark: We have three companies: Morningstar, Galaxy, and EC Schirmer. First, we read the text to determine if it's something we want to consider, and acknowledge receipt. Second, we determine which company with it would fit best. Third, the piece goes through a team review process, which is different for

each company.