

Music Alive: New Partnerships
A Residency Program of
Meet The Composer and the League of American Orchestras

Gordon Beferman
Residency Proposal

In 1999, at Chicago's Orchestra Hall in front of an audience of about 800 people, I got up on stage for the first time to talk about my music. I spoke about what it means to be a composer and what it means to write music for orchestra; the relationship between the composer's private creative work, the orchestra, and audience; and how this related to the music they were about to hear, a movement from my first Symphony. The audience responded very appreciatively to the piece, and I hoped that my talk might have helped them to have a way 'in' to the music.

It has been one of my greatest privileges and joys to hear my orchestral works performed by top-notch ensembles in major halls. Since the Chicago concert I've spoken to audiences about my work on numerous occasions, both prior to, during, and after concerts. These have also proved to be equally fulfilling and exciting experiences, not just because I enjoy talking about my music, but also because I am fascinated by what others hear in my work. Most often I'm asked where my ideas and inspiration come from; sometimes I'm asked what the music "means." I find that audience members frequently want to know if they've heard the piece "correctly." If I can provide guideposts to help them along the way, answer technical questions, or talk about my own creative process, I am happy to do so, but I'm most interested in encouraging audiences to find their own way to listen to and interpret the music. The kind of conversations I enjoy most are when I can provoke listeners to approach my music from a their own personal, emotional angle, rather than be instructed by me. I like it when they challenge me and even ask me personal questions. I want to find common ground with the audience, and it often turns out to be easier than I think it will.

Morbidity and Mortality Report brings up many issues, musical and extra-musical, that I think are worth talking about. What kind of musical language is necessary to express and depict these dark states? Why write such dark music anyway? Should music be entertaining and provide an escape? How can humor be used to offset doom and gloom? What have other composer's solutions to these conundrums been? How can composers exploit the resources of the orchestra? How can listeners get the most out of new pieces that go into unfamiliar territory?

My work has branched out to incorporate some teaching; I've given master classes in composition to undergraduate and graduate students. As with the pre- and post-concert talks I discussed above, my goal with the students is to make the class about mutual discovery and connection rather than assimilation of facts and creation of oppositions between right and wrong.

This is how I would approach a residency as part of New Partnerships: meeting, talking, listening, having conversations with audience members of all ages; presenting a variety of my works; working with young musicians, including aspiring composers.

To inquire about a residency, please contact:
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