



Hello Ralph,

I pray that these past two months since ABC have been good to you. They have been very busy for me! I have a student teacher this semester as well as teaching a new computer course (up until now I have only had band and band lessons at this school). Teaching at a parochial school has its benefits!

I am sending this message (finally) as a continuation of our discussion last July at ABC. If you recall, Paul Kassulke and I had talked to you about the possibility of you doing a commission for our National Lutheran Band Festival to be held at Fox Valley Lutheran HS in Appleton, Wisconsin in March of 2007. We would be looking for a grade 4 (hopefully) piece of about 5 - 6 minutes in length. Having said that, I hate putting constraints on creativity! It makes it sound like composing is a cookie cutter process - and for some I'm sure it is. What I would love to hear is a piece based upon a sacred theme (Biblical text, biblical legend, or even hymn tune). As we discussed, I would not like to go through the same process that we did the last two commissions - a committee of 20 directors that have to all agree on a hymn tune or Bible text, and also a piece that all 20 high schools can play at their own school. Obviously, not everyone can agree, and not all bands are at the same level. Some can handle grade 2 very well, and some can handle grade 5 or 6 very well. After all, this is an Honor's Band experience, and I think the music should reflect that.

The purpose of this email is two-fold: Most importantly I am inquiring if you are able to do the commission for us. I know that there is a lot that goes into that question - type of piece and cost, completion date, contracts, etc. - but I guess that is a starting point. The second would be if it is possible for you also to conduct the three-day festival (March 9 - 11, 2007). If that is a possibility, figuring out the total cost for the commitment (commission, clinician fees, and travel) would have to be discussed. You also know better than I do if a three-day band festival would be reason enough to spend (I'm guessing) more than 30 hours on jets and in airports! We may be limited to the commission only based upon logistical concerns.

I am going to guess that the group of band directors would not agree to fund the entire cost. I don't think that the cost of doing the commission would be too high. However if you were to also be the clinician it would be far more expensive than the last two projects. I would most likely have to get "creative funding" to make it possible for you to be here. That is an undertaking I would gladly do all I can to make it happen. I believe that you would be a wonderful choice for doing a commission for us - as we are all bound by faith in our Savior Christ Jesus! I also think that if funding is available you would be a wonderful clinician for our kids. You are an inspiring individual that also has the ability to put kids at ease and make them laugh - attributes that not all clinicians have. I know that the other directors would agree to that. It is just that this would cost more than they are used to spending.

I am not sure of the very best way for us to communicate. I know that email works very well for me. There may be some questions that we can send back and forth in this manner. If we need to speak to each other we would have to find a time that seems to work for both of us. We are in the same time zone as Chicago - if that helps. I don't know how many hours we are different - I looked at a time zone map of the world but got confused at the international date line! If you have questions and we need to discuss by phone, I can easily make that happen. Any way that works for you works for me.

If it appears that the commission and/or clinician will not work, I would also need to know so that other contacts can be made.

Thank you so much for your consideration and interest in this project. I will wait patiently for your response. I know how busy you are.

In Christ's service,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James R. Neujahr".

James R. Neujahr

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