

# Tips to help your application

- Read the instructions in the brochure carefully and figure out how to present your work to a complete stranger in a concise, well-organized, elegant, and distinct manner.
- Keep up to date résumés, work lists, and artist bios ready to send out with convenience.
- Save a tree. Use a strong mailing envelope that can be re-used for return of materials: please do not use staples or be too zealous with the packing tape; be considerate of the envelope and the administrator's hands.
- Do not staple any of the written materials either; a paper clip should be sufficient. Everything is photocopied before the panel sees it so don't bother to use fancy heavyweight or dark-colored paper, or print on both sides. Also do not bother to put everything in extravagant folders or bindings; it will only have to be taken out in order to copy.
- We have limited storage space and cannot keep any packets beyond the return date for you to pick up. Please send a check to cover return postage (usually about \$4.00), pick them up immediately, or expect them to be recycled.
- Date all submitted work samples (and include the duration) so the panel can tell how your work is developing.
- If your work is on CD, send it. CDs are good for skipping around and getting a flavor of the composer's personality.
- Cassette tapes should start at the beginning of Side One. Do not cue up a section in the middle, it will get lost in the shuffle and we will not hear what you want us to hear. Make sure we know which is tape A, the first one to listen to, as well as B and C, the subsequent ones. If we are to follow a certain section in the score, use tabs so that we can find the place quickly.
- Include a listing and description of all the contents of the tapes. Give the title, composition date, duration, performers, and any other pertinent information.
- Sending only one work is usually insufficient to gain a familiarity with the total range of your work. Send three (bearing in mind quality before quantity). It is better to send scores that match those recorded works but panelists can also read whatever scores you send.
- If the work is an improvisation, make clear the role of the composer in the performance, i.e. how much were the players instructed beforehand?

- For project grants such as JCCP (Jerome Composers Commissioning Program), select work samples that demonstrate that you can accomplish the proposed work but that do not show that you have done this exact project umpteen times before. Panelists prefer to award risk takers (within reason) rather than fund a composer's 23<sup>rd</sup> String Quartet.
- MIDI realizations of orchestra scores tend to strip away all the musicality from your score. Think carefully before sending one in: some styles work better than others but most sound ghastly and reflect negatively on your values.
- Always put forth attention-grabbing evidence of your personal voice. Do not try to second guess or please the panel by covering all possible bases. Include stuff that only you could have done; derivative work is easily dismissed. 90% of the entries are "well-crafted" but do not jump out from the crowd.
- Eschew pompous clichés in written statements.
- Remember that the dynamics of every panel are different; exactly the same application will excite different responses with different panels. Do not take failure or success as objective proof of your worth or lack of it.
- We try to contract three panelists who represent diverse viewpoints; do not assume however that because there is an expert in your field, your field will be favored. In fact experts tend to be more critical of those who are working in styles well known to them.
- Foundations are restricted in the kinds of support they are able to give to the arts field. Consequently the Forum passes on those restrictions to applicants (e.g. career level, geographical limitations, project focus). While we strive to open all programs equally across the nation some people may be ineligible or have to jump through more hoops than others to apply. The only way to make all programs equal is to not have the program at all.
- While you are not prevented from calling the Forum to get feedback on what the panel said about your application, the brief notations made at the time can be misleading if taken as criticism. There are many entries that the panel likes well enough but that do not stand out sufficiently to be supported, so don't take comments personally. Keep applying and presenting your unique face.
- Make McKnight Fellowships/Visiting Composer and JCCP applications a yearly habit, an annual gamble rather than your well-deserved entitlement to success.
- Check the web often ([www.composersforum.org](http://www.composersforum.org)), Sounding Board newsletter opportunities, and chapter newsletters, not to mention other organizations such as the American Music Center and Meet The Composer.