

TMCP Episode 19: The In Good Hands Composition Project

Heather: Hello, you are listening to The Musicking Community, the podcast that explores and celebrates the role of music and musicians in the context of local communities wherever they might be.

I'm Heather Niemi Savage, composer, collaborative pianist, music teacher and your host of The Musicking Community. Thanks for listening.

If you took music lessons as a child, imagine the impact it would have had on your life to get the opportunity to meet with a living composer and have them write a brand new piece for you to perform the world premiere in a concert at no cost to you. My guest today, Jan Mittelstaedt, is the director of a program titled In Good Hands that pairs pre-college students with living composers to collaborate on brand new pieces appropriate to the student's performance level. If you are a music teacher, the parent of a music student, or a composer who is interested in writing for students, you will want to check out this program to see how you might participate or learn how you might start a version of it in your own area.

You are listening to episode number 19.

Welcome. Today, I have Jan Mittelstaedt on the Musicking Community Podcast. And hi, Jan. I'm so glad that you are joining us today. I told you before we got on that when I first heard about the project that you're going to be talking about today, the In Good Hands composition project, I've been intrigued ever since I heard about it. So I am so glad we get this chance to talk today. So welcome, Jan. It's so good to have you.

Jan: Well, thank you. It's good to be here.

H: Alright, Well, we're going to start off the way I do with all my guests and have you tell us a little bit about yourself and your musical background and how you got to where you are today.

J: Okay well I'm a piano teacher and I didn't know I was going to be a piano teacher when I was a young person but because at first I studied elementary education at Bucknell University. And then, when I started teaching in the school, one of my colleagues had a little sister who was 10. And at the time, I was living in Houston, and I had a piano, and I knew how to play it. And so she asked me to start teaching her little sister. So that's how I got started. And then I found that I enjoyed teaching piano more than teaching school.

H: I understand that.

J: Yeah. So then, later on, I decided to go back to school. And I went to Merrill Hurst University here in Portland, because we were here then. And I studied music and then received a bachelor's degree in not in music, but just in arts or something. And then when we were at Merrill Hurst when we were learning about something, instead of just reading about it, we would write. Like if we were learning about the

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German sixth chord, we'd write a little piece with the German sixth chord in it or something. And then one day one of my colleagues said, told me how she was writing music for her church, the children in the church.

H: Oh, yeah.

J: And I thought - I had to drive to and from Merrill Hurst - So as I was driving home. I thought, I could do that too. So, I kind of in my head, when I was driving home, I came up with a little song called God's Rhythm Band. And I was working with little children in our church too at the time. And so fast forward a couple of weeks or so, they were singing it and with rhythm instruments and marching around the church. And that's really how I got interested and started. And then later on, my teacher at Merrill Hurst, who was a composer actually, had a, I was part of the Oregon Music Teachers Association by then, which is for teachers, you know. And so she had a workshop for OMTA members and there were about eight of us in her little class. And she would give us a contemporary idiom like, or she'd give us like a scale or something like that, and then our assignment was to write a piece using that. And we were writing for children. So I kind of had beginner's luck, and I had a couple of books published by Boston Music Company at the time. And the first one was the things that we wrote in the class for our assignment.

H: Very nice. Yeah, it sounds like you've been writing for children for a long time so that's always been part of your story.

J: Yeah it has right and then I went on and got a master's degree at the University of Portland and I studied with Dr. Walter Saul and I'm still he's still my mentor.

H: Good. Great mentor.

J: Yeah.

H: So what have you been doing since you graduated with your master's degree?

J: Well, I've mainly been teaching. And at first, when we tried to start a little composition group in OMTA at one point, if you compose and there's nobody that's going to play your pieces. They were the only types of pieces I composed then in those years were maybe little piano pieces, but nobody else was going to play them. But then I had, you know, that's not 100% true, because I had composed other things for my master's recital for other instruments. But after that, there wasn't any motivation to me. And so I did, I think after I graduated, I composed a saxophone quartet. And then because I was wanting to go to, well, I didn't know that. But I ended up going to the Bloch festival with that. That was a long time ago, 1993, I guess. And then, as I say, we tried to create a little group in OMTA. And there were a few of us in it, maybe about six or eight or something like that. And then what we would do is we would play. It was mainly piano pieces, because we'd play our pieces. If we wrote something, we'd play for the other people. And that was really pretty much what it was. And some of the

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people in there really didn't have much experience with composing at all. And then there's another person in it, Daniel Brew, who did. And then Cascadia was formed in, let's say in, it was, sorry, it was formed in... founded in 2008 by David Bernstein and Greg Steinke. And then, so it was formed in the summer and then during the fall or getting toward the winter, somebody who was one of the founder people asked Dan and asked me if we would like to join. And so we went to a meeting, our first meeting, in like 2009.

H: OK. So Cascadia, for those who are watching or listening, is the composer group that you're part of. And is that just for Oregon? Or how does that?

J: Well, it's grown from the original eight, I believe, eight founders. And now we have like 100 members. Most of them are from the Pacific Northwest. there are people from all over and even In Good Hands, One of them, Jerry Casey, lives in Florida and she had a few pieces played. And then another one lives in Dallas, Alex Shapiro, and he worked with my students this year. So there are people from even, you know, the East Coast and any place. You don't have to live in Oregon or anything like that to join.

H: Yeah, I've noticed as I look at the different composition opportunities that are around, that Cascadia's name comes up quite often. So I wonder if you are one of the larger groups of composers, but that's good to know that you don't have to live in the Pacific Northwest in order to participate. I assumed that you did. I mean, because of the name Cascadia, I just assumed that's a geographical kind of name, so maybe it's just for that region. But so. if somebody was interested, like myself, for example, how would I join?

J: Well, we're the largest chapter of NACUSA, the National Organization and Association of Composers USA. And so you would go on the website and find NACUSA, their website. And then there would be a place saying join or something like that. And then you would have to join NACUSA first. And then you would choose one or more. You could join any of the chapters. And so then you'd join Cascadia. And if you wanted to join other ones, too, you could.

H: Yeah. And so, yeah, just, I guess, depending how many local membership fees you want to pay right? So, you have been involved with Cascadia almost from the beginning right around from the beginning.

J: That's right.

H: And so now you are involved in the In Good Hands project that Cascadia sponsors.

J: Mm-hmm.

H: Am I saying, am I understanding that right, that Cascadia kind of sponsors this program?

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J: Yes.

H: So tell me about the history of that and how you've gotten involved.

J: Okay, well the, it started in 2010. And that's when we had our first concert. And what happened was the founding member of Cascadia, David Bernstein, got together with some other people. And David, when he had come to us from Ohio, and he had been involved in something where there was a collaboration of composers and students and teachers there. It was maybe not exactly like In Good Hands, but he wanted to start something like that here. And then there was, unfortunately, David is deceased now. And there was another person who was very instrumental, and his name was Harold Gray. And unfortunately, he is deceased now, too. But they got together, and they had lunch. And Harold was in charge of the, he was in charge of Portland International Piano Festival. And so, for the first three years, In Good Hands was part of that. But then, Harold, I don't know if it was then but I think it was then that Harold retired from it, and the Piano Festival took a different turn. And so, In Good Hands went, you know, on, they kept going, but they weren't part of the festival anymore.

H: OK

J: So do you want more history?

H: No, I was just going to ask or clarify. So basically, after you kind of split ways and In Good Hands became completely under control of Cascadia, and you were kind of doing your own specific thing with that?

J: Yeah. Well, it didn't really change because it was just the venue where we had our concert. And so the Portland Piano International was a week long. I believe it was a week long. And a lot of teachers attended it. It had other, you know, events. And that took place in the ForestryCenter in Portland. And so then we had different, some different places where we at first held the concert for In Good Hands. And we have another historical landmark called the Old Church here, and it was there a couple of times. And then it was in one of the piano stores also. And now it's at Portland State, and I think this is the best place for it, because it's very exciting for the children to be performing in a university.

H: Right. That's amazing. So give us a description of In Good Hands and what is involved in the process now.

J: Well, it's evolved over the years because at the beginning, it was just all piano, and then there was, and actually, we would meet here at my studio from the first years. That's how we would, we, the composers that had written pieces, I believe, would come here. And then the teachers that wanted them would come here, too. And then the composers would show the teachers the piece, and then the teacher would take, you know, we would distribute them there. And it was very, you know, beginning

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stages. And then later on, we added other instruments besides piano. And then it changed. And eventually, after COVID, now everything is on Zoom. We do it that way. But the way it works right now is that we have two parts to it. And one we call score call. And a score call goes out in the fall to all the Cascadia composers. And if they want to, they can write a piece or get out one of their old pieces. And they can put it in the score. They can go through the new music engine and put it in there. And then if it's been performed at In Good Hands you have to wait five years before you submit it again.

H: The same piece?

J: You can submit the same piece if a five-year period has gone by.

H: Got it.

J: But the other part of it is called collaboration. And we didn't have that at the beginning. Not sure exactly when we started that. But that, and that was very popular this year. In fact, we had mostly collaboration. But a student, well, first of all, composers who want to do that will send a little bio to me. And then they'll send what they would like to do, maybe, I mean, would I like to work with advanced students? Would I like to work with piano students? Would I like to write for some other instrument or whatever? And then the teachers that have students that want to collaborate look at these. They have a chance to read the bios and what the composer wants. And then they choose a composer, and they ask that composer if he or she will work with the student. This year, it was a little bit disorganized, because I was unable to work on it for three months. And so everything got pushed ahead. I mean, the deadlines were not fast and that sort of thing. Well, obviously, a deadline for submitting your composition, and then deadlines even for the collaboration and for finishing the work. And the way it's supposed to work, if you're in a collaboration, say I'm the composer and you're the student, OK? We would get together on Zoom. And I would ask you all about your interests. And then I would ask you if you'd play the piano for me. And all these teachers are part of OMTA, so they have students in the syllabus program, and there are 10 levels. But the other composers that aren't teachers like I am don't understand half of this stuff. But we're going to try to have some sort of a program this fall for the composers. But then you would say, well, I'm in level five. And then that would help me know what level you are. And the way it's supposed to work is you even maybe could make up the title. And if you like to draw or do artwork, you could design the cover for the piece. And I really should start writing it and send it to you before I finished it. And then you would look at it, and you would say, well, I don't like this part, or I don't like that, or that part's too hard, or something. This is the ideal way. And then you would send it back. And then I would revise it and send it to you again. And then you say, oh, OK, this is much better. And I'd write more of it. But things don't always work exactly.

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H: Yeah. I have a quick question. Is that as students are, I've taught piano too. And are you trying to aim for what they can learn with a good amount of practice or what they can almost sight read?

J: Actually, I think all of the students practice hard. And I have to say the quality of the performances has really improved over the years, too.

H: That's amazing because I imagine that they are highly motivated to work on it, you know, to put a lot of effort into learning a piece that they was either written for them or that they collaborated in the process of writing. That personal meaning with the piece definitely inspires a lot of practice, but I was thinking more of trying to get the sweet spot of how difficult the piece should be, you know, because like if you're a level five, well how many weeks does it take you to learn that level five piece, you know, like that kind of thing, like is that something the composers find out from the teachers?

J: Well, in reality, I'll give you one example from the show. I worked with a little girl. And so I wrote the piece early, so she'd have plenty of time. But she had many other things that she had to do, so she didn't even look at it till later. And then I got a note from the teacher, and it said that the student thought it was too hard. And so could I revise it? Well, so I revised it. But in making it easier, it changed the whole idea and everything. So I renamed it and everything. So then I sent it back. And a week or two later, the teacher wrote back and said, the student's learning the original one, after all.

H: So it's almost like you have two pieces now.

J: Yeah. I was very glad, because I thought the original one was a lot better than the revision,

H: Yeah, yeah.

J: So yeah. So there are things that we are hoping will happen that don't always happen.

H: Right, right. Yeah, so how many, I know it's grown over the years, but how many composers and well, I guess there's a lot of questions involved in this one. Do you have composers that are working with more than one student, or is this always a one-to-one? And how many of each, how many composers, how many students are generally involved?

J: Well, sometimes a composer will work with more than one student, yes. This year especially, I want every student that's interested to be involved. I mean, we don't leave students out. And I think you were wondering about the level of the students. They could be just beginning students and they can be very advanced students. But all the ones we've worked with our pre college.

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H: Yeah, alright, so you were saying that you want all the students that show interest, you want to make sure they have a composer to work with.

J: That's right. And so actually this year, because everything was kind of put off and it was getting to be later, by the time I could work on it again, it was February. And so I started putting composers and students together. And I would read what the composer had written and look at the student and, you know, pair them up and actually, in some ways, this worked better. So I'm going to think about doing this next year, instead of having that, because the other thing is, I kind of know, I know all the teachers and I know most of the composers and it's easier for me where the teachers might not know a composer and they might feel a little funny about contacting that composer. And then frankly a couple of people just on their own got together with the composer because we've been going, you know, this has been going on for a long time. So now, and the same teachers tend to be the ones that put their students in, and that's one of the things I want to change for next year. But that brings up some other things.

H: So you were kind of acting like a matchmaker this year with the students and the composers, but I imagine that as time goes on, the teachers get to know composers that they've worked with and their students have worked with in the past, that they might have a connection outside of this particular program.

J: Yes. This is one of the things that happened this year. a few of them asked composers, you know, who hadn't even, I mean, you know, outside of the whole thing. But that was okay, you know. But we need to have it more organized, better organized than just, you know, so.

H: Right. Make sure you still, you know, fill out your form, things like that, I imagine. But do you know if the teachers keep, like, I know the composers will write for one student, but will the teachers also get copies of that piece and, like, have other students maybe that are not yet at that level, but when they get there, they might learn that piece?

J: That's a hope, you know, but that's part of what the composer's responsibility is. They are to make, if the piece isn't already published, they need to make a self-published copy that looks like a published copy. And so that's what I was talking about, that the student could design the cover. And sometimes they've done that. This year, I thought maybe my student was going to design the cover, but she didn't. But I have a granddaughter who is a graphic designer, so I asked her for permission to use one of her pictures, and I did it that way. But then, I gave, actually, you're supposed to give a copy to the student and a copy to the teacher. So I gave two copies to the teacher, hoping that they'd teach it to somebody else.

H: Right. Good. So, let's see here, how do you find the teachers that will participate and get their students to participate?

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J: Well, you know, I was looking through the old programs and I noticed that some of the teachers have been involved for years. And what I do at the very beginning is I make a list of everyone I can think of, and then I write a mass e-mail and tell them about and try to talk up In Good Hands. And this year, unfortunately, one teacher who had been in it before was, I think she was going to be gone or something like that. So things like that happen too.

H: Right.

J: Yeah.

H: When is the concert? When do you have the concert?

J: Well, we had it this past Saturday. We have, we have it in July always. And I just have to make sure that we don't have it the same weekend as the OMTA conference. And then we have it on a different weekend.

H: So how do you find it to work? I mean, obviously you've been doing this for a long time. So July, I always think of kids are like, you know, taking the summer off from thinking about music lessons and, you know, learning in general. So have you found July to, because of, you know, kind of capitalizing on this motivation to practice in this collaborative experience, that it is kind of getting them through this summer slump?

J: Yeah. Yeah. And I think some of the teachers feel that it's a motivational thing for the summer. maybe everything lessens in August or something. Because if the students, as a teacher, I know if the student takes June, July, and August off, we have to start behind where they were in the spring. So I think all the teachers I know offer some sort of summer lessons. They don't just close up for three months. And yeah, so I think it's a great motivational experience, I mean, idea for the summer.

H: Yeah, I imagine that because you even said that the quality of performance has been rising and I wonder if that – I mean, you know, I said that I teach and my students that have studied through the summer - it's amazing how much in over the course of a few years you can see how much more they progress than the students who don't take during the summer. So, you know, it's obviously a gradual change, but that really compounds over time, those summer lessons and that summer playing. So it's almost like having this concert in July, is keeping that, that practice rhythm going. And over time, that is kind of feeding itself in the level of performance and how much the kids are growing as performers.

J: Yes, I think, and I think also the teachers have noticed that the level is raised a lot and I don't think... This year we had a teacher that decided that her student wasn't prepared enough and so she, before the program was made and and everything, she took the student out. And I don't ever remember that happening before. I do remember like 10 years ago or something, I had an intermediate piece in one of the concerts, and the student didn't know it at all, and only played half

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of it, and played half of it very poorly. And nothing like that has happened in recent years. So, yeah, during COVID we of course had a problem because we did the whole thing online and, you know, there were a lot of people. I think we had more, we might have had two recitals then and there were more, because there, you know, were so few things for them to do. everything was online. And then one year we didn't have it at all. So that was during COVID.

H: Yeah, yeah. COVID really threw a lot of things for a loop. So how many students did you have participate this year?

J: This year was about 20.

H: 20 and is that the maximum that you've ever had or... I guess it wouldn't because you just said you had two recitals one year yeah what's the maximum you've had?

J: Um I was looking through all my uh you know programs before we started but I didn't get through all of them but um I, I would say, see... a couple of years we've had a live program and then we've had for people that couldn't be there, we've had another program that that has been um just uh done online you know or and we didn't have that this year so um that we've had maybe as many as eight students in that other program. And I think probably maybe in during that COVID time when we had both programs that way, I think we might have had as many as 40, but I'm not sure.

H: Wow. So with the OMTA, do you also find teachers to participate outside of that, or is that primarily how you found teachers?

J: That's primarily how I found teachers, but I would love to find teachers outside of it, but I need help in doing it and I had the help to do it,

H: Yeah, yeah, yeah. So how about the parents? What kinds of responses do you get from the parents with this?

J: Oh, they're so proud. I mean, you could at the end of the recital this last time, the concert last time, you could feel the electricity in the room and everybody was excited. And actually I had, as I said, I had one student who worked with Alex Shapiro and his sister came. She had not expressed an interest and she came to the concert to listen to her brother and everything. She was so excited at the end, and she wants to be in it next year, you know. So I think, and the parents are, you know, all taking pictures at the end, and they're so proud of their kids.

H: Yeah, I think, I mean, I don't know about your students, but most of my students over the years have come from families that the parents are not musicians themselves. I mean, like, not even, like, at an amateur level, just having almost no musical experience. So they would be completely clueless about what is involved in the creation of a piece. And do you find that the parents are,

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like, you know, if they also in your area don't have as much experience with music, they're getting now a glimpse of how music is written and watching the process of the composer sending something and it getting revised and the student having input. Have you heard anything about that?

J: Well, the parents of my students are mixed. I have one parent who's very, very involved. She is a doctor, but she also majored in music too. And she, so that for instance, if I'm working on a concerto with one of her students, I mean, one of her children, she is listening and she gives me pointers because she can hear better than I can when I'm trying to accompany that person, you know. And so I have that's on one side. And then maybe there are some parents that haven't had any lessons. But I am trying to think if there are any. Most of them are very supportive of the students. And I think in this area, well, there are probably parents that don't know anything about music, too, you know?

H: Yeah. Yeah. So let's see. I imagine that you get a lot of people who are repeat participants.

J: Yeah, we do. We do. We have one of the teachers who's going to be on my committee. Next year, I decided to ask some teachers to be on the committee but that that would be more beneficial than even having the composers. There's one other composer who's a teacher too, and she's part of OMTA. And she's going to be on the committee. But one of the teachers who's not a composer, Irene, has had the most students in it. She sometimes puts in 10 students or so. Yeah. So yeah, so there's a big variation of teachers. Maybe some, well, I only had one, you know. And then she has 10, you know, so.

H: Right, right. Yeah, so how about students? Like, do they have the option of participating each year? Or do they have to kind of take turns?

J: No, because we want anybody who is interested to participate. And yeah, I mean, there's one of Irene's students. Yeah, I think I collaborated with her one year. And then one year, she did one of my pieces from Score Call. So sometimes that happens, too, you know. So I'm hoping. But I just, I felt badly this year because the score call part was not, there were teachers, you know, composers that had pieces in the score call and some composers, even who have been in it before, if their piece wasn't chosen, or then they didn't have anything in it. And so that's why I need to get more people interested and I would like to also expand it to other areas, other areas in Portland, or even since we have members all over the country, even other areas over the country, but I'd need to get people that would be interested in being chairman for that area.

H: Yeah, so it's like you envision like having a similar type concert, but just set up in a different area that's following the same model.

J: Yeah, the same model. And it would be, yeah, exactly, the same model.

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H: Yeah, I think that'd be amazing to do. So what kinds of memorable moments can you share with us?

J: OK, well, I remember at the very beginning, the very first year they were meeting in my studio, as I said. And there was a composer, and his name was Art Resnick. And so he said to me, well, I don't know what to write. And I said, well, just write a little bagatelle. So the same week, at the end of the week, he comes back. And I think we had maybe two meetings, one to show the teachers the compositions and one to choose them, or something like that. But he came back, and he had written a cute little piece called Bag and N and Tell. I mean, I remember that.

H: Yeah Bag and Tell.

J: Bag and Tell.

H: Yeah. Like Show and Tell, but Bag and Tell.

J: Yeah. And then the second year, we had about five longer works where there were excerpts from longer works. And maybe one student would play one excerpt, and one would play another. So there was more than one student involved in one particular piece. And then in 2014, we were in a music store, and we had 15 pianos, and a composer named Tomas Swoboda, who actually is one of Portland's, he's deceased now, But he had music played all over the world, his compositions. But he had written a canon for unlimited voices. And so somebody directed the children. So there were 15 children at different pianos. And they played this piece. And it was great.

H: Yeah.

J: And then in, I think, 2015, one of our members, Jennifer Wright, who is very creative, and she introduced us to her toy pianos. And so she had she might have had, yeah, she had maybe one toy piano that year, and then students played on that and then since then she's expanded that and other times she's had more than one toy piano and we also had somebody playing the organ that year and that was one of the concerts that was in the old church. And let's see, then we had, in 2016, we had flute and vocal, and there was, somebody played the keyboard, and it was supposed to be the harpsichord.

H: Yeah.

J: And 2017 was, I think, our big year for having different instruments, because we had voice and viola, cello, flute, and two toy pianos that time. And so it's gone, you know. In 2018, one of the composers, Nick Gandel, wrote something that was telling, it was showing modes and it was different scales from different countries and things like that. And it was one piece but different students played different, you know, parts to it. And so it's, and then as the time has

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gone by other composers have done research into other countries and things. And they have expanded, you know, so we've had things that have been more than piano. And I didn't, I'm not going to go into all the details because I didn't get a chance to look at the programs after 2018, but it's been a wonderful experience.

H: Yeah, so are all of these like designed to be for like one, I mean I know you have students that they're kind of taking turns of a piece. But any duets ever, or are they all meant to be solos?

J: No, there have been duets. And there were duets. There were two this year, too. Yeah, duets there have been. But we've only had one piano.

H: Right, OK.

J: So you have one piano, four hands.

H: So it's only been that.

J: OK.

H: And I imagine those students are with the same teacher, or?

J: No. No, not necessarily.

H: Wow.

J: No. No, they are not necessarily with the same teacher.

H: Wow.

J: Yeah, I mean, teachers work together. I'm working with another teacher with duets. We have three groups, and with one student of hers one of mine. It's fun. It's a little bit challenging to get the rehearsal time.

H: Right, that's kind of what I was thinking, but that's amazing though. And so how about in the community? Do you have people come to the concerts that are not directly connected to the pieces?

J: I wish I could say yes, but I don't think we do. I mean, there might be grandparents and things like that.

H: Right, right. No, I think it's such a great idea. Again, I said before, when I first heard about this, I don't know, it was a couple of years ago, I think, that I've been absolutely intrigued ever since. Because I mean, who gets that opportunity to have a piece written for you, and you're a student. Usually, we think about that for people who are

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advanced musicians or professionals or something, and they have the money to commission a piece of music. But these are students, and they have a voice. And I think they must feel very important.

J: Yes, and I think I left out something. Even on the score call part, the student is supposed to connect with the composer. And for instance, when the student learns the piece, the ones I had this year, in general, one did a Zoom meeting with me, and two little boys came over here, which was kind of fun, but in general. And then the other one sent videos of their playing. And so then I would listen to them, and then I would make comments. Well, I'd make comments on the Zoom one in person, but on the video ones, I'd write comments. And of course, you would write positive comments, but even suggestions for improvement. So yeah, so I think it's really an educational experience for the students and for the composer.

H: So when you get ready for the next year do you find out from the teachers like who wants to be involved? And especially when you're talking about additional instruments, do you kind of have a list of instruments so that composers know what they want, kind of make their proposal? Or do you have the composer send in their proposal, and then you try and find students who play those instruments?

J: Oh, no. You're talking about the collaboration part.

H: Right, the collaboration.

J: Because we only, for the score call, we just asked for piano pieces. Because we were afraid that we wouldn't have anybody to choose the other ones.

H: Right.

J: Yeah. So as I say, all the collaboration ones this year were either they were maybe a duet or something like that, or they were piano pieces. But yeah. Next, I want to do it differently, though. I already have asked people to be on the committee. And as I said, I have asked teachers that are not composers for the first time. And I'm going to try to have a Zoom meeting. I know it wasn't much notice, but this Sunday afternoon, I'm going to try to ask them if they would come to a Zoom meeting. And we want to start out now by talking about things that maybe went wrong this year, and things that could be improved, and how we could expand, and how we can get more people involved and things like that. So I want to try starting earlier, and then have the next meeting in September, and then, you know.

H: What are your usual deadlines for signing up as a composer?

J: You mean for the collaboration?

H: Yeah, for the collaboration.

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J: Well, as I say, this past year didn't go so well. But I want to have earlier deadlines next year, yes. So because we did have one incident where the composer was late, and there was a misunderstanding between the teacher and the composer, and one of the composer's pieces didn't get played because the teacher said it came too late and the student couldn't learn it that fast. So we need to have earlier deadlines that are really enforced.

H: Yeah, do you know what you're hoping for? Because I just want to make sure that I get this, you know, aired. I would love to air this so that people can hear about it and know about it before your deadline. Do you know what you hope to have for a deadline?

J: I hope to have for the score call, and maybe the score call and the collaboration will have the deadline at the same time. So then I hope that the score call would be at least by mid-January or something like that, you know, and that the collaborations would be formed by then, too.

H: Okay.

J: That's good. That's one of the questions I'm going to ask on Sunday, too.

H: Yeah, so in order to participate in this as a composer, you need to join NACUSA, which they have a website, and then make Cascadia your chapter. And then will do your members then get emails about the deadlines or what all the details are for signing up, and then if you want to participate as a student, you need to have a teacher that's going to sign you up.

J: That's right.

H: Okay, so technically, I mean like I guess you could potentially have a teacher that is also remote.

J: Oh.

H: That is sending in a, that has a student that wants to participate, or do the teachers have to be local?

J: The teacher doesn't have to be local, but the student has to be able to come to the concert. That's why I'm wishing that we could get, I have somebody that would like to have be chairman in Eugene, but I don't know whether he'll do it or not. But sometimes we've had a student from a different area like that, but they've had to travel. See, when we had the remote thing and we had a video concert, then people could do it from any place but there were all sorts of problems involved.

H: Yeah. All right. So that's great. I will definitely be airing this in time for people to hear it and hopefully sign up for NACUSA and the, you know, Cascadia whatever, yeah,

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Cascadia chapter. That's the word I'm looking for, the Cascadia chapter of NACUSA. And yeah, one last question of, You personally, as a composer, do you have a website that we can find you at?

J: My website is not up to date at all, but I do have a website.

H: So we'll just find you through that. Does In Good Hands have a website or is it just the Cascadia Group?

J: It's just the Cascadia Group. We have been talking about a website for In Good Hands, but we haven't got it yet.

H: Yeah, yeah, that's OK. Everything in its time, right?

J: If somebody from another area would be interested in it, they could just e-mail me my e-mail address.

H: Yeah, I will make sure that all that pertinent information is part of the program notes when I air this episode.

J: OK.

H: Is there anything else you want to share that we've missed in this conversation so far?

J: You wondered how the teachers and students, this is a quote from one of the teachers.

H: Yeah.

J: She said, well, she was thanking me for the whole thing. And she said, my studio students are full of gratitude for everybody involved in this valuable concert. So that's how one of the student teachers felt. Oh, and one thing that we got a grant this year for the first time from the National Federation of Music Clubs. So we were very happy about that.

H: Yeah, congratulations.

J: Yeah. So I think we've probably covered practically everything. You asked if there's an age limit or anything like that, a minimum age, and there's not. I mean, you could be four or three or whatever to play one of the pieces.

H: As long as it's written at your level, right? So that's great. This is very exciting. And thank you so much for coming on the podcast to share about it. And it's a really unique idea. And it's obviously been proven since this project has been going on for a decade and a half. So yeah, thank you so much for telling us about In Good Hands.

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J: Well, thanks a lot. We appreciate it.

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