

## Behind Closed Doors

Produced and edited by *NewMusicBox*

Ed. Note: Many jurors who adjudicate the various composition competitions serve anonymously, and even the ones who don't are instructed to be confidential. So, in order to present a realistic and informative look at the judging process through interviews with people who have served on important panels, we decided to conduct a series of anonymous interviews. By not identifying our three panelists (and even going to the extreme length of hiding their faces and altering their voices), we hope to offer a real insider's look at the evaluation process.

What we have unearthed is not earth shattering—there is no smoking gun or exposé of rampant foul play—but rather, these conversations will hopefully reveal the mindsets of some key people who have been involved in the process and help us to understand what leads juries on various panels to the decisions they ultimately make.

### Who Are the Judges?

**How many panels have you served on over the years? What are some of the more well-known or prestigious panels you've served on?**

**Informant A:** I've probably served on a total of forty panels. They like me. I've served for the [New York State Council on the Arts](#), [Cary Trust](#), [Jerome Foundation](#), [Bush Foundation](#), [Colorado](#) and [Ohio Arts Councils](#), [BMI](#), [Lower Manhattan Cultural Council](#), and the [New York Foundation for the Arts](#). There are some you can't tell anybody...

**Informant B:** [BMI](#), [Rome Prize](#), [Pulitzer](#), I served on some other panels that are done entirely by mail. [Minnesota Readings](#), [Whitaker](#)... I haven't served on that many panels, just a few important ones. For reasons of geography, I don't get called on that often.

**Informant C:** Let me think for a second. I haven't been on that many panels. Five or six. Seven, maybe. I've been on a [Meet The Composer Commissioning USA](#) panel, I've been on a [Margaret Fairbanks Jory Copying Assistance](#) panel [for the AMC]. I was on a panel for [Chamber Music America](#). I don't remember all the panels I was on. I was on a panel once for [ASCAP](#). I was on another AMC panel and I've been on another Meet The Composer panel.

**Have the judges you have served with been mostly composers?**

**Informant A:** I'm trying to think of situations when they weren't composers, and there have been a few. In that case, they were performers, presenters, arts administrators...but the majority have been composers.

**Informant B:** Yes, but sometimes performers and critics.

**Informant C:** It's been a mix of composers, industry people, artists in other fields and performers.

**Is the music of the other composer-panelists you have worked with stylistically similar to your own music?**

**Informant A:** I've been on panels where they've been musically and stylistically completely different and I've been on panels where they've been somewhat similar. More often, I have something in common with them.

**Informant B:** In the main, no. I would say that on the panels I've served on there's been a reasonable amount of diversity, though I think there could be conceivably more.

**Informant C:** I think it has generally been the case that what I do is not stylistically similar. I wouldn't say that there are light years of difference between what I do and what other people do but, of course, that's a matter of perspective. When you go to a panel, it's not a schmoozing session for the panelists. It would be nice to get along with people and I think it's important not only for the panel process, but also for the field that people learn to have conversations even if they make different aesthetic choices when they're not on panels. After certain panels, I've gone to get CDs of other people or I've asked for them. Upon occasion I've been given work and I think that's a nice thing.

I remember reading in [Sarah Cahill's article in \*NewMusicBox\* about the differences she felt between John Adams and Andrew Imbrie](#). To have someone write that Adams and Imbrie are basically the same because they write notated music...I remember thinking well that's definitely a different perspective and I've been on a panel with someone who had that perspective. I think there's been a pretty divergent sense of style, but, of course, that comes from the perspective of people who generally look for composers who work with notated music. There've been exceptions to that, but I feel that's mostly been the case.

**In general, what is your opinion of the people who have served as judges along with you? As composers? As adjudicators?**

**Informant A:** For the most part, and in most situations, I would have to say that I have dealt with fellow panelists who I have respected and admired. I loved working with them. In a few rare cases, I've had to work with people who were there for their friends or were there for a particular kind of music. That made it very difficult to make judgments based on the art which is what it should be.

**Informant B:** I've thought very well of them as composers and as adjudicators, in the main. I've been annoyed by personal quirks, but that's something else.

**Informant C:** I think that they have, on the whole, been open-minded,

reasonably knowledgeable, sometimes very knowledgeable, and not dismissive of people of any particular school. I have found that there's the occasional [backlash against music which could be described as non-tonal and academic](#), kind of in the way that Eastern European countries sometimes have backlashes against Communists. I have found it unfortunate that someone who writes what could be called "academic music," and in fact teaches at a university, is sometimes given short shrift. On a couple of occasions I have suggested that this [type of] person deserves the same chance and I think people come around and listen.

**How often do you see the same panelists on different panels?**

**Informant A:** There have been repeat panelists on many different panels. I've had the experience of working with a few on different panels, which was good. Sometimes it's good to have repeat people or at least one in there who really knows the ropes. Sometimes it's not.

**Informant B:** I would say that with my experience it's been insignificant.

**Informant C:** I have never been on a panel with an individual more than one time. I think there was one I couldn't do which would have involved a duplicate.

**How did you get to be chosen to be on these panels?**

**Informant A:** These people from foundations, corporate foundations, and even government agencies, speak to each other and they talk about who are good panelists. Then they ask other panelists to recommend panelists they thought did a really good job. Doing a good job to most of us means you pay attention to the art and you make a decision based on the art, not on personality, prestige, profile, even stylistic situations, or I'll even go so far as to say multi-cultural interests just for their own sake—those are the people who are considered the really good panelists. And I've been recommended all across the country because this is the position I take.

**Informant B:** In some cases, I haven't known. I also know that sometimes it has to do with geographic diversity.

**Informant C:** For the [American Music Center](#), I got a call from the Director of Grantmaking Programs both times. I suspect that it was because I knew the Director of Grantmaking who knew that I listened to music widely and that I'm not a firebrand for a particular style. I was asked to do a [Meet The Composer](#) panel because I had received a

Meet The Composer commission and they got to know me that way.

**Are you paid?**

**Informant A:** I've been paid for every panel I've participated in.

**Informant B:** Yes.

**Informant C:** I have always been paid except when I was on some panels for CRI. On occasion I have donated back part or all of my panelist fee.

**Do you feel the pay is adequate for the work you do on the panels?**

**Informant A:** Most often, but not always.

**Informant B:** In the main, yes. I served on some smaller adjudicating things, like university prizes when I'm an outside referee, and those tend to be piddly in terms of a fee and the work is not that much of a pleasure. But I have no complaints about the honoraria or anything of that sort.

**Informant C:** They pay well. I've been paid \$300 a day plus food. I've been paid \$250. I've been paid a \$150 honorarium. I think that's reasonable for what's asked of me.

## **The Applicant Pool**

**In general, are you disappointed or impressed by most of the applicants?**

**Informant A:** Over the years in general, I have been very pleased with the art I've had to deal with. It really depends on where you are, in what part of the country. I've been in some places where there wasn't enough talent to give all the money away. But more often, I've been in the reverse situation where it was just amazingly developed.

**Informant B:** I would say that the picture you usually form is one of a healthy artistic climate. I'm sometimes surprised at the kind of work that gets submitted. I feel there are some people who could submit who aren't doing it. I don't know what the reason for that might be other than a fear on their part that there's a stylistic bent to a given award and they're just not going to get past the main hurdle.

**Informant C:** I'm often a little disappointed at the thought that has gone into the application. People often don't take the time to understand what the grant or the award is for. They don't know how to

tailor an application or they think that general merit is the only criterion for receiving the grant or the award. That's often not the case. People don't often communicate with words what they should in a grant application.

**Do you think there are too many applications or that not enough people apply?**

**Informant A:** That depends on the panel. In previous years, if there weren't enough applicants it was probably because they weren't aware of it. And it has everything to do with the region.

**Informant B:** I don't know, I think that question is like asking Abraham Lincoln how long a man's legs should be. They should be long enough to reach the ground... That's my answer. I suppose that if you're dealing with a competition like [Masterprize](#) that gets 1,500 scores, it's a problem. But [in general] the number has seemed reasonable. It could be more, but I think it's a healthy amount.

**Informant C:** It's difficult. There are often more than enough grant applications for the amount of money that has to be dispersed. I suspect if there was more money to be dispersed, there'd be even more applications.

**Do you feel that the applicants who submit are from a wide cross-section of our society or a much narrower one?**

**Informant A:** If it's an anonymous competition, I don't know when I'm in the middle of it. In fact, I wouldn't know until after they're selected. Other than that, I have no idea.

I want to say, however, that I think just adding judges to a panel because of race, sex, color, anything having to do with diversity, just for the sake of itself, is tokenism, and I feel that it's horrible. That's just giving in to making liberals feel better. Panelists should be selected based on what a particular competition is about. Serving on panels is one of the most difficult things to do, but it's when I feel most responsible as a person and a representative of the new music culture. People should really be attentive to that. Often panelists feel that it is an honor in and of itself, but it's the responsibility that they should be paying attention to.

**Informant B:** A lot of times you just don't know. People don't put that kind of thing on resumes anymore. And you can't tell from a name, sometimes even gender. I don't think it's relevant because it's a self-selecting population. You either submit or you don't. There's no

screening process. I think there are probably people who avoid sending things because they feel they don't have a chance. I've certainly encountered students of mine who need to be encouraged to keep track of these things. When you don't live as close to where the judging is done, it's not a big enough blip on the radar.

**Informant C:** Among the people that apply, I see diversity. Often I don't know the ethnic, racial, or sexual orientation of applicants if I don't know them [personally]. Among those who apply, it's getting better gender-wise and ethnic-wise, at least if you can evaluate ethnicity based on last names which is suspect anyway. It seems to be a wider range if you can evaluate ethnicity based on some of the projects which are often quite explicit about saying, "I am looking to incorporate music of my homeland." I think it's become pretty stylistically diverse, impressively so.

As for geographic diversity, I have very mixed feelings. At times I react negatively towards the idea that there's a disproportionate number of successful composers who come from the Northeast corridor, from the Bay Area, from Minnesota, and people who went to graduate school in Michigan. Those seem to be it. The people who may be quite worthy but have gone to other schools or the people who live in other parts of the country just don't do as well. If you look at the numbers, it's clearly the case. It's easy to say that's not fair. Then you think about the enormous gravitation of people who originally came from these other places to New York, to San Francisco, to other cities which are well represented. There is an escape of talent from these other cities, and you have to wonder about how that affects things.

I feel bad about saying this, but there are times when I've looked at applications from people who come from parts of the country that are not often represented and specifically their concert music seems behind the times. It seems that they are not as up on current trends and so, good or bad, their music seems a little old. I have found that to be the case in the Mid-West and in the South. There are exceptions. There are people who do really interesting things who apply from those regions, but you find a kind of American, often fugal, contrapuntal school which is writing music that sounds a generation old to me. Sometimes it can be very good and you can support it, but I think there's a negative bias because it doesn't sound cutting edge. I don't know how to address that because I want there to be geographical diversity in how things are represented and then sometimes I have an honest reaction that some of this music is falling short. Not because [the composer] is less talented, but because [the music] seems less informed.

Can you make any kind of generalizations about the kinds of works that get submitted and the works that ultimately win?

**Informant A:** Not in any that I've been on. But I would have to say all too often there are those who win because their name is involved and therefore people recognize their name and say: "Their work is always good, therefore they should get an award." That's what's wonderful about anonymous competitions...

**Informant B:** I think at the moment that pieces that are still built on the 1960s aesthetic inheritance of either [serialism](#) or [aleatorism](#) tend to be non-starters. But if the work is good, I've had no problem in recommending it. I think if you're dealing with something like a reading—and I've had to judge those a few times—picking a certain score of that level of complexity to organize for a reading is probably not going to happen.

Lately, in the kinds of things I've been asked to look at, which has involved a fair amount of orchestral music, I do get a sense that there are people who are trying to write the upbeat, 8-minute orchestral opener in an inoffensive post-modernist idiom or a resuscitative Americana idiom. The music speaks to a stylistic shift that I see in the work of my own students. A lot of them are just not interested in the heritage of modernism, so perhaps I shouldn't wonder that we tend to get these things. But a lot of times there are people, and I know because I've had some as students, who want to write that surefire piece and sometimes write a piece that's maybe a little bit insincere.

**Informant C:** I think regardless of stylistic camps, pieces that rhythmically have a strong profile seem to make people respond more quickly than music that has other virtues: something which is very colorful, something which is actually very melodious or contrapuntally intricate, music that sets text extremely well. You don't often have a lot of time to listen and something which is rhythmically interesting and secure gives people a sense very quickly. I find that there's a lot of really high quality music that is serious in nature, if not depressing, and it's very hard for that music to shine though in a panel. Just like there's a lot of high quality music that makes people squirm in the concert hall, people in a panel have a very difficult time relating to works that are like that. What it leads to is that there are plenty of composers who write pieces like that who just don't submit them for these kinds of things.

I have a friend from graduate school who had threatened to write a piece called "Competition Winner" or "Big Prize Piece" and I think that there are a lot of people who are aware in some sense that a piece that is flashy on some level, at least one such piece, is a kind of necessary part of the catalog if you're going to be successful in this game. There are people who just write flashy pieces and I don't think that's healthy. On the other hand, I have found it to be an interesting exercise. I think what is not healthy is a self-conscious attempt to write a competition-winning piece. I found it appalling years ago when I watched people do it. It doesn't tend to impress *me* when I'm on

panels, but I cannot say that is generally the case.

**Are there any other styles/approaches that are under-represented or not represented at all in the applicant pool?**

**Informant A:** I don't think there's enough attention given or competitions that would invite those particular applications that involve a more creative approach to representing music, and by that I mean alternative ways of notation. Improvisation, because that's such a difficult thing to describe, you have to have a product to represent it—there has to be a recording. People who are involved in improvisational music can have a sense from the page of what it's going to be like, but more often than not with improvisation, it's the performer's participation and interpretation that makes it what it's going to be. If it's supposed to be about composition then it should be about composition. If it's about performance, then call it a performance award! In certain panels, it's more about the performance than the composition. And there's nothing more annoying than that.

**Informant B:** Yes, probably there are. But, as I said before, it's a self-selecting pool. It's really up to those people. I feel that the sort of [Bang on a Can](#) school, that particular school of harder-edged writing wasn't particularly well represented in some of the orchestral things that I've looked at but maybe those people don't write much orchestral music, I don't know. The sort of music that springs from the [post-Cage tradition](#) is also not particularly well represented.

**Informant C:** I think there's a definite lack of a particular kind of collaboration: music and dance collaborations. Those collaborations often seem hastily thrown together, the product of not enough composers and choreographers knowing each other's work. Beyond that, it's very difficult to say what seems under-represented as things are more removed from what years ago was thought of as traditional concert music are the subject of applications you kind of evaluate it as they come; it's difficult for me to say otherwise.

## Making an Evaluation

**Do you tend to gravitate toward applicants whose music is stylistically similar to yours or contrapositively do**

**Informant A:** Either way, no. I think we all come to a point—otherwise we shouldn't be on a panel as artists (or a lot of other places either)—where we know the difference between something we don't like and something that just isn't good art. But there's absolutely no equation for that.

**Informant B:** I try to make it a non-issue. I don't think I'm there to



**you tend to gravitate toward music that is not at all like yours?**

judge the music against a template of my own music. I'm there to judge the music on its own merits. Recently I was talking to somebody and I was saying that I really don't like [Dvorak](#), but I recognize that he's a great composer. But if I never hear another note of Dvorak's music again, I don't care.

**Informant C:** I think that I have gone out of my way to understand and support music that is different from mine. I don't know whether I carry a bias against it. I know more of the music that is stylistically similar to mine than the music that is stylistically different.

**Are there any other aesthetic criteria that you use to determine whether something is a winner?**

**Informant A:** It all goes into what makes good art. It could be creativity, spontaneity, excellent structure, anything involved with the elements of music—or not—any combination of those things. I'm not trying to be vague. I really don't think it can be answered. There've been many situations where people haven't received grants or awards because people on the panel did not like them [personally] or because the applicant was on another panel that did not give the panelist an award. It does happen and more frequently than people want to say.

**Informant B:** What I'm looking for in a work is risk taking, and that can be in any direction. It can describe any kind of compositional technical aspect. I certainly have felt that pieces I have been in a position to pick have been of that technical level whether I like the music or not.

**Informant C:** I go out of my way to try to evaluate and support music that in my view is at the edges of the genre: music that is not notated but is inherently concert music. I am interested in being inclusive, because not just on panels but in the field, music on the edges gets dismissed in certain circles. At times I feel I lack the resources to evaluate the music, a problem which in more recent panels seems to have been addressed by getting an even wider diversity of panelists.

**Generally, what do you think the most important element to a proposal or application is?**

**Informant A:** This is so individually based, but generally everything should be legible and clear and really reflect what you do as an artist. That's as common as I can be without being specific to any competition.

**Informant B:** If a score is in bad shape, or if it's been printed out in a poor way, it can affect your judgment. But a lot of us, the older ones who remember hand copying, sometimes we enjoy seeing a hand

copied score for a change because it does reveal personality and because we know that a lot of the computer-generated notation programs, especially [Sibelius](#) and [Finale](#), cover up a multitude of sins by filling in gaps in a composer's knowledge about how a score is supposed to be presented. So if you're looking at an orchestral score with incredibly tiny staves with a separate line for every string instrument but then the bar lines don't go through every system, you know you're dealing with somebody who really doesn't have a clue. Even so, [Beethoven's manuscripts](#) didn't look particularly impressive either. So I do feel, and this is my personal feeling, you have to try to get past those issues because you might be dealing with someone who didn't have the chance or who doesn't have the eye or the capacity to do that sort of thing. I know that some people have grouched at competitions like [BMI](#) that neatness counts. In my experience, that wasn't really the case.

**Informant C:** One question that comes up frequently is: How will a grant for this piece or this residency help you? I think that thoughtful responses to this can be extremely helpful because the applications are read—it's not just the samples. This is important for established composers too, for whom particular commissions or residencies can be helpful, who don't have a particular type of work in their catalog are who are looking to do something in that vein. Shirking that question is a mistake and responding generically is a mistake. Thinking about why what you're applying for is unique for your development is really important.

**How long do you typically spend on each proposal?**

**Informant A:** That's also very specific to each competition. Each one of them, generally speaking, has an amount of time that's supposed to be given to each application. Within their process it's established, whether it's one or two or three rounds or more, or whether you're given materials ahead of time or you have to go somewhere specific to spend that time. Anywhere between five and ten minutes. With scores, I read every page of every manuscript. I probably spend more time than most. Some don't think they need to review them ahead of time even when they're told to.

There are situations where materials are played; they're played for just a certain amount of time so you don't have the opportunity to hear the whole piece. I would particularly like to see that abolished. I know it would take forever to go through all the applications in certain cases, but I would rather have the opportunity to listen to an entire piece of music.

**Informant B:** It depends on the nature of the award and the number of submissions. Certainly, on the [Pulitzer](#) panel, you have to give every piece a fair share no matter what, and that can be anything

from a huge opera to a patriotic song by a postal worker which we got one year. You give everything a try and then you have to narrow it down. If it was a piece that seemed compelling enough and had a shot, how can you judge it if you don't take in its totality? When I was judging 150 scores that were sent to my house in boxes, I tried to go through each score twice. I'd pick up every score a second time. Then the ones that seemed the most intriguing, and there'd be quite a number, I would actually sit and play.

**Informant C:** Only once have I gotten listening examples in advance of a panel meeting. I usually spend about five to ten minutes on an application if I've received materials before hand. When I come in, I find that the panel knows pretty well most of the applications. Sometimes panelists are assigned to present specific applications to the other people who nevertheless have also looked at the materials. I think the amount of listening time has boiled down to five minutes max per application, sometimes a lot less.

## Reaching a Verdict

**In general, have you been pleased with the winners who have been chosen by the panels on which you have served?**

**Informant A:** Yes.

**Informant B:** Pretty much.

**Informant C:** Yes, but I have particular regrets about people and organizations I thought should be supported and the rest of the panel didn't feel that way. There were times I argued for something and it didn't work. But, on the whole, I'd say that the panels I served on did a very good job.

**Have you ever been deeply upset with the final decisions?**

**Informant A:** Never. That's because I'm a fighter.

**Informant B:** No, I've been puzzled, but I'm not the only arbiter of taste on the planet. Sometimes there are competitions that have a pre-screening like BMI. I've never been involved in that but rumor has it that the pre-screening in competitions of that sort is really the most critical juncture because that's where stylistic bias can pop up and then it restricts what the finalist judges get to see. You do sometimes wonder when you get an emphasis in one stylistic direction, what's going on. Another competition that I was involved in, there was an outside panel who made recommendations but there was a central

person who made the final pick, and the final pick seemed to be skewed more toward the taste of that overarching judge than to my taste and the taste of one of my colleagues on that panel and we talked about it. "Do you remember that piece? Did you like that piece? Whatever happened to that piece that was like such-and-such?"

**Informant C:** I never thought a travesty won. There were things I would have preferred at times to have gotten a green light that didn't in favor of other things, but I don't think I'm embarrassed by anything that won.

**How difficult has it been for you to come to a consensus of opinion with the other people on the panels?**

**Informant A:** It can be very difficult. I've worked with some great groups, great panelists. Most often I've been pleased.

**Informant B:** It hasn't been difficult, in my limited experience. I've been fortunate in that it's always a collegial atmosphere and we've had serious, frank discussions about the pieces and we've shifted around and reached a consensus that was satisfactory to everybody.

**Informant C:** It's been remarkably easy. There are things that you know you disagree with, but you know the fault lines and they've been easy to work out. There are times at which I'm willing to recognize that my opinion is a matter of taste. And there have been panels where I felt my view was in the minority, but never where my opinions were ignored.

**Have you ever felt pressured to bend your opinion by a fellow panelist?**

**Informant A:** No.

**Informant B:** No.

**Informant C:** No.

**Has there ever been any pressure from the grantmaking organization, the sponsoring organization?**

**Informant A:** No, not in a certain way about a certain application, but maybe in a certain way by the process and in those cases I've worked to change the process.

**Informant B:** No.

**Informant C:** No, never.

**Have you ever suspected foul play in any of the determinations? Have you ever made a decision in a panel and have seen that decision not be followed through after convening in the final awarding process?**

**Informant A:** Never.

**Informant B:** It's hard to imagine what the foul play would have been. I once felt that there was a little bit of an intrusion of taste. I felt a score was a little bit soft and there was some gnarly stuff that would have been interesting to consider as well and it seems to have disappeared. But I didn't see anything, for example, like too many people affiliated with the same school.

**Informant C:** No, not in any panel I've been on. But there are panels—these are commissioning panels and awards panels both—where the people serving on the committees are mostly academics and the award winners are, in an unusual number, graduates of the program where the panelists are serving.

## **The Philosophy Behind the Awards**

**In your opinion, what is the ultimate value of the award process?**

**Informant A:** The value of the award process is first the honor and prestige. And often it's monetary, so it's very helpful in that capacity.

**Informant B:** The obvious is to increase recognition of artistic achievement by singling out works that seem to be or are interesting, provocative, moving, amusing, whatever. It's also, of course, to encourage people to continue doing what they're doing and to give them a little spending money, which is not a bad thing.

**Informant C:** Hopefully it brings attention to people whose music wouldn't reach audiences without people saying, at least for a little while, "This person won an award, maybe there's a reason for it that's worth celebrating." I don't think there are a lot of ways to get ahead in this business and anything that even temporarily provides some kind of sanctification for what people do that gets the attention of presenters and performers has a value. And there's often cash. A lot of people who win these awards are graduate students and unlike graduate students in computer science, they have no lucrative summer weekend employment—they're just writing pieces. In some

basic ways, these awards give people the money they need to sit around and write some more pieces and the value of affirming, in the judges' view, a good piece or a good composer, means a lot to that composer himself or herself. There is a level of insecurity in what we do which is pretty high and it's nice to be confident about what one does. When someone on the outside says this is good, that helps you in a fundamental way at times.

**Have you personally received awards from panel-judged competitions over the years?**

**Informant A:** Yes, I have.

**Informant B:** Sure.

**Informant C:** I have.

**Did those awards help you overall in your career?**

**Informant A:** Yes, without question.

**Informant B:** There's no question that it's been very helpful, and sometimes it's made the difference between being able to carry on and not. I remember once when I sent in a portfolio for something and I had forgotten all about it. Afterwards I was worried about how I was going to survive during the summer and along came this grant. It wasn't a huge prize, but it was enough to pay the rent for a few months. I think it's one of the things that brings work to people's attention but it's the work that should get the attention not the award. Maybe this sounds a little bit contradictory. The awards are helpful but they're not the sole means by which works gets out there. I do think there are composers who try too hard in that particular direction and rely too much on it. I've been very selective about what I've applied for.

**Informant C:** Some awards in the last two years have provided more financial support than I have gotten from commissions because the money I get from commissions is still so low that it's hard to make a living on it. And I think because some of them have come in a row, a lot of people are suddenly wondering what my music is like when they wouldn't even have known my name a couple of years ago.

**Do you feel that**

**Informant A:** There needs to be a lot of work done on process no

**the process is fair?** matter what the competition is. The fairest competitions I've worked with are the ones that are anonymous, to be honest with you. Also when it comes to listening to performances, there are people who have the opportunity to have or to pay for professional performances and have the finest recording available of their work. It comes off better regardless of its artistic quality and makes it very uneven no matter how you cut it. I would prefer for it to be anonymous and to have the opportunity to listen, but I can't have the opportunity to listen without putting that financial burden on who's applying.

**Informant B:** If it isn't, I can't think of another one.

**Informant C:** Given available resources and the alternatives, yes I do.

**If you could change the process in anyway, what would you change?**

**Informant A:** It should only be about the art that's presented in front of you. That should be made clear to every single panelist. This person might have an unbelievable reputation but that doesn't mean that the piece that's in front of you is deserving of an award; it doesn't mean that it doesn't deserve an award. The guidelines should be submitted and that's what the panelists should be dealing with.

**Informant B:** The geographical issue... Trying to break the stranglehold of the Boston-New York axis and get a little bit more [panelist] participation from the rest of the country. You know, there are cheap airfares. And, like I said, I do wonder sometimes about the preliminary screening, but it's probably not a bad thing.

**Informant C:** In an ideal world, we'd have more time to look at these things. More time would be helpful. It would also be helpful if there were some kind of preliminary round. Applications that were poorly made or disqualified themselves and could be redone are not always caught in advance of the panel meeting. But, at some point, panelists have to get back to their lives.