NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

Site lets liturgical music composers sell direct

Mark Pattison Catholic News Service | May. 20, 2010

WASHINGTON -- Even the Beatles couldn't get a deal with the first record label that auditioned them. Consider the situation of liturgical music composers who have only three U.S. publishers to go to with their compositions and hopes of launching a career.

Now they have another option. A Milwaukee Catholic composer has helped establish a website, www.holymeasures.com, that allows composers to sell their own works directly to church musicians.

Matt Wessel, a part-time liturgical musician at Three Holy Women Parish in Milwaukee, said the website recruited composers for a year before opening for business to the public last fall.

A half-year into the site, Holy Measures has more than 100 composers from Catholic and other Christian faiths, and about 175 songs available for purchase or download.

Wessel, in a May 18 telephone interview with Catholic News Service from Milwaukee, said the site is a more systematic way to collect songs for curious musicians interested in new music.

"There's a lot of people out there online who have put their songs on their personal websites for free downloads," he said. "There are also other sites that offer a service to composers to upload their sheet music," although it requires software that can be hard to use.

Wessel said a Holy Measures composer not having their song in a hymnal or missal aid is not as much of a drawback as it once was, as many churches will project lyrics, sometimes with the melody, at the church during worship.

"It's up to the discretion of the liturgical music director," he added. "If a person in church wants to use a particular piece of music, they can."

Before Wessel started working on a master's degree, he said he would print the songs submitted to Holy Measures and play them. But there is no peer review committee to accept or reject songs.

That leaves the possibility that there could be some low-quality works on Holy Measures, Wessel acknowledged. "It's not a scientific process out there by any means," he said.

"We have songs composed by composers of all skill levels. It doesn't cost us anything to post somebody's song," Wessel said, adding that if someone's tune never registers any sales "it's OK with us. ... Maybe it's inspiration (for them) to keep doing it and get better at it. It's hard to get published, and there needs to be a home for this unpublished music."

The Holy Measures composers are not household names by any means. The most recognizable name is that of Paul Tate, who has recorded some CDs of piano-based instrumental liturgical music for GIA Publications.

Wessel himself has had two songs published by GIA, one of what he called the "big three" publishers of Catholic liturgical music. The other two are OCP Publications and World Library Publications, a division of missalette publisher J.S. Paluch.

He doesn't doubt that some composers using Holy Measures have tried without success to get their material published by GIA, OCP or World Library. For him, though, "the only way other people are going to know about my (other) music is to have them buy it at my shows," Wessel said.

Source URL (retrieved on *04/25/2014 - 03:49*): http://ncronline.org/news/site-lets-liturgical-music-composers-sell-direct