

KEVIN WILT – artistic statement (623)

Musical evangelism is the thread connecting all of my work. At a time when audiences have instant access to an overwhelming variety of music, it is imperative that artists define and seek the audience that fits their voice. The audience I intend to reach values depth, color, and clarity, but has varied levels of experience listening to art music. Reaching this audience means writing music that balances sophistication with accessibility, and experimentation with craftsmanship. With this guiding principle, I am creating a body of work that satisfies my creative impulses as well as the needs of my audience.

Whether writing concert music, film music, for professional musicians, or an educational ensemble, it is important that my voice be adaptable enough to seize any collaborative opportunity I find appealing. As such, I have written for professional orchestras, chamber ensembles, and opera singers. I have also written for university wind bands, high school choruses, and middle school bands and orchestras. My media work spans professional shorts and documentaries to student commercials and music videos, recording with musicians of all ability levels. Regardless of opportunity, the music I write is rewarding to explore because of its drama, organicism, and lean structure, yet grabs the audience from the outset with an attractive and colorful surface. It is challenging to play, yet easy to rehearse, because my notation, orchestration, and intention are clear. I find writing with and listening to this voice satisfying. A steady increase in commissions and performances from an ever-expanding geographic footprint suggests my target audience concurs.

My process is largely editorial, decompressing ideas to allow them enough space to make their point, and omitting ideas that no longer have a connection to permanent material. I begin by spending several daily sessions collecting a wealth of ideas, writing down any that appear, moving fast enough to stay ahead of self-doubt, knowing editorial judgment is reserved for another day. During this time, I stay open to the magnetism that a tone or motive might exhibit, following it where it needs to go. Once I have several pieces of material to play with, I make large-scale formal decisions, fuse motivic relationships, streamline texture, and connect musical threads into a single through-line. Only as the piece starts to crystalize do I focus on details of precise notation and efficient orchestration so the music is clear in its purpose, content, and delivery.

Composing helps me better understand all of the music I love. I shape that understanding into a single, refined voice that resonates with my target audience. Whether it is concert music, film scores, classic rock, Motown, or Broadway, acknowledging my musical background is crucial, as it keeps me focused on who I am and where I come from as an artist during the times I am tempted to write something just to impress others. By building on the music I enjoy, I push my own artistic boundaries in an honest manner, and push the boundaries of the repertoire along the way.

Absorbing the music I am passionate about has set me on the path to a unique voice. Working each day, generating, shaping, and refining ideas that stem from that passion allows me to create music that speaks with clarity, color, beauty, and sophistication. Understanding those are the needs of my target audience has helped me gain footholds in various corners of the repertoire. Being adaptable enough to capitalize interesting opportunities has helped sustain my creative energy, letting me savor the exhale at the end of a day's work instead of relying on the rush that comes from finishing a piece or hearing a stellar performance. By channeling my adaptability, process, and passion, I have found a voice that speaks to the audience meant for my music.