

**Unedited Dialogue between Band & Orchestra Product News
and Stephen Melillo
concerning the July 1999 Issue**

Hi Steve!

Thanks for agreeing to take part in this interview. Please feel free to expand on these questions as much as you see fit.

Thanks Terry... I will address some real issues here if it's okay with you. I think you and the readers will be fascinated by a real dialogue on these topics. Should my answers trigger more questions, I believe another round should wrap things up for us!

What encouraged you to found *STORMWORKS*®?

I *never* set out to create a self-publishing entity. For years, Music which I knew to be exciting and educational via my many experiences with students and professionals, was rejected by the publishers. In 1993, I let people know what I was doing. That was **2078** worldwide conductors and many, many thousands of Musicians and audiences ago.

Keeping in mind a person who might want to form their own small publishing company, describe the process by which you started *STORMWORKS*®, step by step. Please be very detailed here.

What makes *STORMWORKS*® unique, pioneering and successful is a simple idea, so basic that one is reminded of a statement by Goethe. **“It nettles men's minds to think that Truth is so simple.”**

Step 1: Write Music which you feel is a meaningful contribution to the experiences of students and Music Educators. This judgment will not be left to public relations people, or a board of directors from a publishing house, but rather, to the conductors themselves.

Step 2: Do everything in your power to have the Music properly rendered and recorded. Because of the costs involved, I am still in the process of recording Music written years ago. Just wait until you hear the next CD, though!: **Wait of the World. Wow!**

Step 3: Let people know that you have written this Music, and ask if you can send it to them. This is achieved via advertisements. Again, costs will work against you at first, but starting small is actually better. *STORMWORKS*® has, much to my continued thanks and amazement, always endured by word-of-mouth. I have taken out only 4 ads since 1993! Even the smallest, most humble beginning will have the right people championing your work.

Step 4: Provide Conductors and Educators a choice: the choice to play the Music if they like it, or the choice to reject it. This is the bravest aspect of the process. There is no middle men, no marketing strategy. There is the Music, and then there is the choice. You will stand or fall on just one thing... the Music.

What were some of the difficulties that you encountered in starting the company?

To this day, I don't think of it as a “company”. I am simply a composer. I write Music and then let people know it exists. I am still relatively unknown, but I trust the Music and the many conductors who want to share in “*having found a good thing*”. Being an individual and not an entity or company has potential challenges built into it.

1. I've gone to a bank three times now for a loan to launch an AD or send a CD in the mail. No loans. So I loaned the money to myself via credit cards. Therefore, my ability to reach everyone is limited. I am instead, dependent upon curious, enterprising, like-hearted conductors!

2. Calling up a college and praising one of your students is easy, but recommending yourself is *very* difficult. I believe my only task is to give the conductors a choice. Therefore, the expense of preparing a state-of-the-art, *way ahead -of-the-curve* resource like the *STORMRom* is a necessary step in offering your work for the consideration of colleagues.

The future which is implied by the prototype *STORMRom* makes the conductor *themselves* the publisher. This is the brave new world people have hinted at for years. A conductor receives a piece on CD-Rom or via email. Four years transpire. The director wants to play the piece again. Instead of calling a publisher about a now out-of-print bari sax part, the director simply prints a fresh copy. Going to contest? Save that money for more Music... not additional copies of the score! While making good Music, enjoy logistics freedom!

How do you think that others might avoid these problems?

A composer wishing to self-publish needs to: Write Music that he or she knows is a wonderful new choice for Music Educators. Then, record that Music. That was my pitfall. Many people were playing the Music all of the time, but there was no definitive resource. When you are creating something new, there needs to be a model until you've gained many new champions. I am still working on creating these resources. Next, advertise that you have a recording.

The conductors who are looking to expand the experiences of their students will find you. If your goal is to reach the masses, then you are much better off with a publisher.

Provide some background on the company. For example, who comes to you to get their material published, how many titles do you publish per year, when did you start STORMWORKS®, etc.

STORMWORKS® is simply the Music of Stephen Melillo. I *publish* what I have been commissioned to compose. I have been approached by a few composers who wanted to be published by *STORMWORKS®*. "But why?" I ask. "You can do this yourself." In the future, I may indeed create an offshoot of *STORMWORKS®* called **3MC**. *Third Millennium Composers* will be a refuge for the enterprising, the creative, the people experimenting in ways large publishers don't care to explore. It might also be a resource for conductors wishing to pass the paradigm as established by current publishers. But, even this has changed! Dramatically! After *STORMWORKS®*, publishers began printing Music which might have been rejected only a few years ago. *STORMWORKS®* has successfully demonstrated that yes, **DAVID** can stand against *Goliath* with the sling of technology and the *Touchstone* of passionate Music. I'm sure that publishers are now much more sensitive to the great potential residing in the many unsung composers who are writing Music beyond the parameters dictated by the median of the market. It's interesting how fast things are changing... and always for the better.

Describe the rewards of owning such a company.

I believe the rewards are not just mine, but the students' and the conductors' as well. The Music I compose integrates into it potential logistics challenges that the *faint-of-heart* would shy away from. The Music is unedited, inhomogeneous, and explores the use of a new orchestration for Band of the 3rd Millennium by a 21st

Century Composer! It is a personal letter, unaltered and awaiting an insightful friend to bring it to life. A champion! I've spoken to each of the *STORMDirectors* as I call them. I know who is playing what piece and so on. We are making Music, as we think it was meant to be made... in an intimate and close way. Conductors are free to email me and call, and we share in the Music. I have done everything I possibly could to make the experience as easy on the director as possible. It doesn't work all of the time, of course, but many, many conductors are very pleased with all of the teaching tools and technological ease surrounding the Music.

STORMWORKS® has become so popular in Europe, that there is now a *STORMWORKS*® EUROPE! More traditional publishing methods from the European counterpart now round off all of the many options conductors have in ordering 21st Century Music.

What are some of those options?

Music as: Score and Master Set of easily reproducible parts.

Music on CD-Rom, Floppy Disk or Email.

Music has a standard set of score and parts on traditionally joined pages.

I have heard you refer to your self as a 21st Century Composer. What do you mean by this?

I have always been a 21st Century Composer in spirit, and now in fact.

What in your opinion is 21st Century Music?

It is Music which is so grown up it is young again.

What is the importance, in your opinion, of STORMWORKS® and other like-minded companies?

Choice. It's simple. Choice. The more choice a conductor has in determining the curriculum for his or her students, the more they can carefully craft a meaningful experience for them. In addition, logistics freedom which helps to focus the conductor's efforts on Music and Education, is always of paramount importance.

What other advice would you offer the would-be small publisher?

If you have faith in your work and know in your heart that you can provide something good for others... then you **MUST** go for it, even when many obstacles challenge you. Just remember Mother Teresa who says, **"We can do no great things, only small things with great Love."**

Finally, feel free to include any comments on STORMWORKS®, independent publishing, yourself, or any other topic that I haven't covered above.

I am a Composer and a Music Educator. Like so many of my colleagues, I serve the same noble causes they do, but from a different angle. I hardly consider myself a *business* or even a resource for an article such as this... but if it helps another composer, another Music Educator, then I thank you very much for the opportunity. As it says on the cover of *STORMQuest: Chapter 16*, **"Sometimes our greatest victory emerges from the battle we never wanted to fight"**. Godspeed!

Thanks again, Steve. We will include this piece in our May/June issue.