

Edward R. Schneider,  
Director of Music and Worship  
First Presbyterian Church  
Marietta, GA 30060

February 2, 2014

Ed,

Over the past six years, I have been contracted with my colleagues from the Atlanta Opera Orchestra and Atlanta Symphony Orchestra for multiple concerts and worship services with your Chancel Choir and under your direction at First Presbyterian Church, Marietta. I have also toured with your Chancel Choir through Jordan, Palestine, and Israel seeing first hand your ability to plan, lead, communicate, and quickly adapt to changing circumstances.

The integrity you bring to the podium is refreshing and rare. Your energy and skill inspires both amateur and professional musicians to give above their own believed capabilities. You desire and demand each member of the choir to sing with accuracy and clarity while inspiring them to communicate the emotional quality of the text. The passion you bring to the performance transforms the music into something that transcends this world allowing those listening, as well as those performing, to be touched and moved. It is for this very reason many of us have studied and worked our entire careers to become musicians of the highest caliber. Each time I work under your direction, I am moved as such, to a depth in my soul beyond words. For me these are deeply spiritual moments.

I remember one rehearsal, where several orchestra players tried to figure out what instrument you studied, in addition to voice. It was obviously to us, you were as capable and comfortable conducting and working with professional instrumentalists, as with pro/volunteer choral ensembles. What a talented and gifted individual you are! Your rehearsal style of high expectations peppered with humor, resonate and challenge each individual to grow, whether pro or volunteer.

Recently you led a performance of Handel's Messiah. With each aria and chorus, you found a "groove", allowing the music to "dance". When a soloist (or the choir) would lose tempo and energy, you skillfully coordinated everyone back into the same steady "groove". There were individuals in the orchestra who were practically dancing with the music. These responses are such a rarity as my colleagues and I have played hundreds of Messiah performances, where often the job challenge is lowered to the basic level of staying together. In fact, the concertmaster was raving about you to me..."not only is he a talented conductor and amazing musician, but he's also not a jerk!"

Your musical commitment, and your care and concern for those with whom you are in contact, reveals the depth of your soul and your faith in God.

Sincerely,

-Yvonne Toll  
Principal Trumpet  
Atlanta Opera Orchestra