

April 5, 2022

To: Grant Committee
Montana Arts Council
From: Alan Johnson
Re: Reference Support Letter-James Rickley

James moved to Great Falls approximately four years ago. I became aware that he had taken over the organist duties at a Lutheran Church. That organ and congregation was given a gift.

Slowly his presence has become known in the music community. He came to a community ensemble (band) concert which I was playing in, and I took the opportunity to introduce myself. He has brought something unique and personal to Great Falls with his musical offerings. His background and perspective somewhat stretch what I see as our community's musical norm. He's aware he has something different to offer and does not try to overstep but continues to "add" his musical ideas to a community that has a strong musical heritage. It is fascinating to see this evolve.

I have performed various times with James, mostly using his original compositions. Easter services with brass and mixed ensembles, solo with trombone and organ, and an original composition with the summer Municipal Band. All incidences have been challenging and thought provoking as a musician and rewarding as a performer.

I have a degree in music education with 40 years of teaching in public schools at various levels. Along with teaching I have stayed active playing wind instruments in tradition bands, jazz ensembles, and various other types of ensembles. In James' music something unique is offered to an ensemble and performer. He writes material that is accessible to the players he has available to work with and creates pieces that give a fulfilling experience. That's not always easy to create nor all the time the case in music literature. There is always genuine content along with attainable challenges in his work.

James Rickley is a well-organized and talented individual with clear vision and direction. As his work evolves, I see his contributions to our (the) music community do so like wise. He is methodical in what he offers and wise in his steps. Any arts grant rewarded to him would be worthy.

Alan Johnson

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