

School of Music
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, MI 48109
October 16, 1995

Washington University
c/o Professor Jeffrey Kurtzman
7605 Balson Avenue
St. Louis, MO 63130-2150

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing in response to a brief phone conversation with Professor Kurtzman, who asked about policies at our School of Music regarding hugging. I have been on the faculty here since 1967; I also served as a department chair for nine years and six years as an Associate Dean.

Although we at Michigan take any case of suspected harassment extremely seriously, we have no rules about hugging. I also think that a proposal to ban hugging would be hooted out of town by the musicians I know. Perhaps we should also review the many congratulatory hugs and fanny pats that take place during football games.

We musicians are emotionally intense people, and most of us trace our traditions to continental customs (where men kiss each other in public as expressions of esteem) rather than to the traditions of Puritan England. Consequently, both in Europe and here, at the end of a recital it is perfectly normal to congratulate the performer, whether it be a student or a colleague, a male or a female, with a hug. I have done this myself throughout my career, both as a faculty member and as an administrator. I have also had no problems involving consequences. Other moments when hearty congratulations are in order, such as passing prelims or landing a career-oriented job, might also involve a hug.

But the times in which we live are sometimes adversarial, and it is true that some individuals misinterpret situations involving touching. It therefore can be dangerous for a male or a female to rely only on an understanding of traditional behavior for these situations. Rather than trying to ban hugging, perhaps it would be constructive for faculty orientations to include some teaching on this subject. In addition to the normal topics involving the seriousness of harassment, perhaps advice should also be given about how people can conduct themselves to minimize the possibility of a misinterpretation. There are many things that can be said about this. Should such a program spare one person the grave ordeals of a mistaken accusation, it would be well worth the effort.

Sincerely,



David Crawford
Professor of Musicology