



THE SHEPHERD SCHOOL OF MUSIC

September 8, 1995

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

To whom it may concern:

I am writing in response to a request from Dr. Kurtzman to discuss the nature of physical contact that I have observed in the field of music among students and colleagues.

All sorts of greetings, particularly congratulatory ones, involve an embrace. These can take place on stage, backstage after performances, in the hallways, and in offices. They are so commonplace that they go for the most part without notice. In fact, in some circumstances - after a performance, or on hearing the news that a colleague has received a promotion or a grant, for example - if congratulations were accompanied only by a handshake and not a hug, the recipient might conclude that the good wishes were less than sincere.

The congratulatory embrace is part of our language, and in twenty-five years of teaching and a number of years of professional involvement in music prior to that I have never known of anyone who was offended by it.

If I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely yours,

Ellsworth Milburn
Professor of Music
Chair, Composition and Theory