



I'd like to begin with a story. I grew up on Long Island, where school music instruction began in the fourth grade. Near the end of the third-grade school year, I had the great pleasure of hearing a jazz sextet from the outreach group The International Art of Jazz at a school assembly. I was riveted! I heard

trumpeter Dave Burns, and realized there and then that I had to make that music! After a year of school band, my band director sensed that I was interested in how music is put together, so he began to teach me composition after regular school hours in my fifth-grade year. I still have the cassette tape of our performance of my first composition, a jazz-flavored work for trumpet and trombone!

Those early experiences had a profound and lasting effect upon my musical life and development. As I continued my journey in music, I came to realize that improvisation and composition were as important to me as my desire to perform well. The idea that I could shape my own musical thoughts, either in the "real-time" context of improvising or in the more temporally fluid medium of through-composed music, was very compelling to me.

Ever since, I have worked on my craft as an improvising and composing musician, and I have incorporated both kinds of creative work into my classroom and private teaching. I find it incredibly rewarding to watch and listen as students play with the notion that they, too, can create music, and to hear the wonderful results. Those lessons and activities seem inevitably to be the ones that generate the highest levels of student engagement.

As a composer and educator, I believe strongly in nurturing the creative impulses of the younger musicians around us. I'm very excited to know that the Indiana Music Educators Association shares that belief, and I'm pleased to announce a new, ongoing project, the annual **IMEA Composition Competition**, designed to encourage Indiana's young musicians to compose and to create the opportunity for young musicians to experience performing the world premier of a work.

The competition has high school and college undergraduate divisions, and many categories from large ensemble to chamber and solo music. All composers will receive written comments back from the competition judges, to help insure that students have a learning experience. Winning works will be invited for performance at the IMEA State Convention in Indianapolis. We encourage you and your students to read more about the competition on our website, [www.imeamusic.org](http://www.imeamusic.org), and hope that many of your students submit their work this fall.

Serving as chair of this competition is a true honor for me. It is a full-circle return to the days of being encouraged to compose by my fifth-grade band director and experiencing the magic of creating my own music, and it is my sincere hope that this competition will in some way serve a similar role in the musical lives of others. Above all, I'm looking and listening forward to all of the exciting new music by our young Indiana composers!

Judd Danby, A.Mus.D.  
Chair, IMEA Composition Competition  
Composer-In-Residence  
Arts & Communications Academy, Jefferson HS  
Lafayette, IN