

Stephen Goldman, UCF-CREATE, and The Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra Inspire Students To Compose Music

Young Composers Challenge Teaches Students The Sky is the Limit for Creativity

www.youngcomposerschallenge.com



Stephen Goldman funds the Young Composers Challenge because of his love of music and his commitment to the arts in Central Florida.

Music composers of all ages find it difficult, if not impossible, to get their pieces played live by any musicians, live by professional musicians or live by a full orchestra with an audience of 2,400 seats. Children composers have no chance. Until Stephen Goldman changed that.

The philanthropist, physicist, rock musician and just all around good guy put the Young Composers Challenge in motion. Like a good philanthropist, he sponsored it. Like a good physicist, he measured and tweaked it. Like a good rock musician, he's enjoyed every minute of it.

Now in its fourth year, the 2008 competition is searching for composers ages 13 to 18 to write music for prizes. Students need to register by Jan. 25 and can participate in a free workshop on music composing Mar. 1 with world-renowned composers. They have all summer to write their score due Aug. 1. A panel of judges will choose the top three orchestral and ensemble pieces on these will be performed by the Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra on Sept. 28 at The Bob Carr Auditorium. Top three orchestral composers will win \$1000 and their music teachers \$500; top three ensemble composers win \$500 and their music teachers \$250.

The first two years, the Youth Orchestra played the winning pieces and last year, The Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra played the winning pieces.

"There is nothing else like this where a full orchestra plays kids' pieces," said Goldman. "We play the computer generated MIDI digital files on a synthesizer over the PA, then the orchestra plays the piece. The emotions are high for everyone including the composer, audience and the 65 professional musicians on stage all hearing this original piece of music being played for the first time. It's like a reality TV show."

Goldman described the three very different winning pieces last year as "Beethoven-esque, film style and avant-garde." He said not only does it help inspire young composers, but the competition also inspires the orchestra.

"You don't hear a lot of new music in an orchestra; most of the music was composed 300 or 400 years ago. So, now we take this positive experience of listening to them play familiar music, and we make it interactive and social for everyone involved," said Goldman.

The Winter Park High School band played Goldman's winning Filmore Award score when he was a teenager. Now he's still writing winning scores, but now for movie soundtracks.

When he's not composing, the retired technology entrepreneur is serving on the boards of the Festival of Orchestras, University of Central Florida's College of Arts and Sciences, The Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra, and United Arts of Central Florida.

The Young Composers Challenge creator is as original as the music he creates. And just like his creations, an interaction with Goldman is interactive and social for everyone involved.

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