

THE [LUKE RACKERS](#) AWARD FOR BEST COMPOSITION (ANY STYLE) WRITTEN AND PERFORMED BY THE CONTESTANT

For this prize category, judges will be evaluating the quality of both the performance and the composition itself. Original compositions may be in any style for piano solo, two pianos (including concerto movement with orchestra part as second piano reduction), or three pianos. If possible, please write out neatly or print by computer. If composition is somewhat improvisatory, the piece may be written out in some form of shorthand representation and/or innovative notation (e.g., "fake chart," some kind of structural diagram, etc.). It would be ideal to make one copy for each judge. It's all right if original compositions have already been played in other competitions. However, we do not allow contestants to play repertory that they have played in previous years, unless the piece is a very different version, and/or the performance is significantly altered in some way. If in doubt, contact [Dr. Houle](#).

If a contestant opts to write a concerto movement, the orchestra part must be arranged as a 2nd piano reduction. Contestants are responsible for securing a 2nd pianist to play this reduction.

Contestants are also responsible for securing a 2nd pianist for four-hand duets, two-piano works, etc.

It is certainly expected that students will get constructive guidance from teachers and others on their original compositions (help with theory, form, extra-musical imagery, etc.). However, we are relying on the integrity of teachers, parents and students to insure that original works are principally, if not wholly, the product of the student's own imagination and unique creative abilities.

Contestants may choose to play more than one original piece. There is no minimum length to compositions, but keep in mind that contestants are limited to a maximum total playing time of 15 minutes.

For fledgling composers and improvisers, we recommend the [Pattern Play Series](#).

For more advanced students with a classical background, we recommend: [Improvisation at the Piano](#) by [Brian Chung](#) and [Dennis Thurmond](#)

Houle technique resources:

Scales, arpeggios, and cadences are the building blocks of composition and piano technique. They can be taught as blocks and schematics, as shown in these pdf files:

[Houle_blocking_cadences_etc.pdf](#)

[Blocking_method_explained.pdf](#)

[Jazz_chord_chart.pdf](#)

[Chromatic_scale_fingering.pdf](#)

More resources on the [Colorado Mesa University Music Student Resources](#) page.

Contact [Dr. Houle](#) if you have questions.

For help with understanding theory and musical forms:

Alfred: Basic Forms in Music (1407)

Musical forms are illustrated through representative literature of all periods. Includes complete examples as well as suggestions for further listening and analytical experiences.

[Essentials of Music Theory](#)

[Book 1 \(17231\)](#)

[Book 2 \(17232\)](#)

[Book 3 \(17233\)](#)

[Complete Book \(17234\)](#)
[Teacher's Answer Key Book \(17256\)](#)
[Teacher's Answer Key and 2 Ear Training CDs \(17261\)](#)
[Ear Training CD 1 \(For Books 1 & 2\) \(17252\)](#)
[Ear Training CD 2 \(For Book 3\) \(17253\)](#)
[Ear Training CDs 1 & 2 \(For Books 1-3\) \(17254\)](#)
[CD-ROM: Educator, Volume 1 -- With Student Database holding up to 200 users \(18826\)](#)

The listings above are from [Alfred's web site](#)

You can also order Alfred's music and software from any music store.

Other highly recommended books on composition for students:

- [Piano Teacher's Guide to Creative Composition](#) by Carol Klose
- [Creative Composition Toolbox](#) (in 6 books) by Wynn-Anne Rossi

Flip books -- contact [Christine J. Schumann](#):

Flip for Improvisation--Pictures in Sound (in 3 books):

Level 1 (Beginner, Easy: Animal Games)

Level 2 (Intermediate: Theory Concepts & Technique Tricks)

Level 3 (Advanced: Scales, Modes, and Rhythm)

Flip for Rhythm

Ideal for teaching rhythm. Use it in your classroom or private lessons to enhance rhythmic skills or as an inspiration for rhythmic creativity. Progressive levels.

- [Creative Pedagogy for Piano Teachers: Using Musical Games and Aural Techniques as a Dynamic Supplement for Piano Teaching](#)
by Jeffrey Agrell & Aura Strohschein

This book is a must-read for all who wish to get in touch with our real traditions:

"[After the Golden Age: Romantic Pianism and Modern Performance](#)" by Kenneth Hamilton

[Reviewer Susan Tomes](#) writes: "Throughout the 'golden age' of Romantic piano-playing, it was not usual to perform whole sonatas as these were thought too severe. Improvisation was popular, as was the habit of 'preluding', or making up musical links between items. Players might give themselves breaks while they chatted with friends in the audience. Most pianists were also composers, and routinely included their own pieces. Playing from memory was not required, and sometimes even frowned on."

In his book, Hamilton points out that "anxiety over wrong notes is a relatively recent psychosis, and playing entirely from memory a relatively recent requirement."