

# When you write upon a star . . .

What do you see when you gaze up at the starry sky on a clear night?

Joseph Colombo saw music. Creativity can strike at the most unexpected moments.

Colombo, an 18-year-old Winter Springs student at The Boston Conservatory, remembers lying on a driveway and looking out into the universe one night when the inspiration came over him to compose "A Dreamer's Field of Stars."

That composition went on to win the top prize in last year's Young Composer's Challenge, a competition for musicians 13 to 18 years old in the southeastern United States.

This year's contest is just starting to tune up, with a free music-composition workshop scheduled for March 1 in Orlando. After that, young composers can submit songs to be judged and even performed in September by the Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra at the Bob Carr Performing Arts Centre.

What is the key this year for fellow budding artists?

"Being self-critical in everything you do but also being true to oneself," Colombo said. "Also, studying with a teacher is invaluable. It is a trade that is hard work."

Colombo picked up the guitar in seventh grade, started playing piano in ninth and began composing in 11th while a student at Winter Springs High.

While contemplating that night on the driveway, he was awed by the endless space and pattern of stars before him. In a way, he also saw his future.

He took about a month to write "A Dreamer's Field of Stars," which he describes as a minimalist piece with notes strung together, yet scattered.

"It was slow getting started and then it burst out," he said.

Hearing his winning composition performed last year was "a feeling that you can barely



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describe, to have so many musicians make the piece come to life. It gave me immense confidence in what I was doing, that someone was telling me I can do this."

He lists his musical influences from minimalist composer Philip Glass to classical composer Johann Sebastian Bach. He said he also likes to listen to jazz and some rock 'n' roll musicians, such as the Beatles, Red Hot Chili Peppers and Jimi Hendrix.

The competition is sponsored by Steve Goldman, a composer and Winter Park philanthropist; the Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra and University of Central Florida's Center for Research and Education in Arts, Technology and Entertainment.

"This is the only program in the country where young musicians can have their compositions performed by a professional orchestra in concert," Goldman said.

Attendance at the workshop is not mandatory to enter the contest, but participants will be given tips by Orlando Philharmonic conductor Christopher Wilkins and Stella Sung, an internationally known composer and professor of music composition at UCF.

Last year's competition attracted composers from as far away as Atlanta. Musicians have until Aug. 1 to submit an entry. Finalists and their music teachers also win money.

For registration and details on the workshop and contest, call Anna Goldsmith at 407-353-1402 or go to [youngcomposerschallenge.com](http://youngcomposerschallenge.com). Last year's performance of "A Dreamer's Field of Stars" also is on the Web site.

## How does your garden grow?

If you have a passion for petunias or a liking for day lilies, the Seminole County master gardeners would like to invite you to share your yard with others on the 2008 Garden Walk.

The master gardeners are looking for the "most beautiful, most unique, most interesting gardens" in the county to be part of the May outing.

Nominate yourself, your neighbors, your friends or anyone you know whose yard is a showplace of color and style.

"Some of them are spectacular, complete with ponds and decking," said Jeanne Hand, one of about 60 master gardeners who volunteer with county urban horticulturist Al Ferrer. "You don't realize how much time and effort they put into it."

The group will select about six gardens for the honor of this year's tour, which also will include the demonstration garden behind the Seminole County Student Museum at 301 W. Seventh St., Sanford, she said.

Chosen gardens then will be open for public viewing from noon to 5 p.m. May 18.

If requested, master gardeners will be posted at the gardens.

To enter, send the gardener's name, address, phone number and/or e-mail address to [jeanneh@cfl.r.r.com](mailto:jeanneh@cfl.r.r.com) or call 407-665-5561 by March 1.

Gardens will be reviewed March 3-8, and selections will be made March 10.

A map and program for the free tour will be available by the end of April at the county extension office, 250 W. County Home Road, and at some Seminole businesses, Hand said.

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The Semantics column looks at all the antics going on around Seminole County. If readers would like to respond or send ideas for coverage on a topic, e-mail Gene Kruckemyer at [semanticscolumn@aol.com](mailto:semanticscolumn@aol.com).