



*I am sometimes asked by school music teachers if applying to **The American Prize** might be worthwhile for their ensembles and for them. My resounding “yes” is explained below.*

Dear Music Educator:

Those of us in arts education know we struggle as never before to gain for our students the recognition they deserve. The media, even locally, often seem more interested in reporting about “popular culture” and sports than the performing arts, let alone featuring school and community music organizations in their stories. Newspapers, television and radio tell us they don’t have space or time; our concerts aren’t really news; “average people” wouldn’t be interested.

We know differently, but that lack of coverage can often affect the visibility and perceived importance of music and music education in our communities. It makes it harder for us to recruit players and students, to find volunteers, to secure proper funding, even to hold on to our jobs, or prove to the “powers that be” that what we do is central to the education of our young people and to the quality of life in our towns and cities.



What if there were a way for school, civic and professional ensembles (and their conductors) to be rewarded nationally for excellence, without having to worry about the expense and hassle of traveling to contests? Wouldn't that get the media's attention? Of course it would...and not just the media: the entire community would take notice, and that's good for every music program.

Enter **The American Prize**. Like state festivals, where school ensembles go to receive rankings and adjudication, **The American Prize** is a national festival for the performing arts, but one that is non-profit and relies exclusively on recordings of contestants to select the winners.

The American Prize was founded to provide recognition to the finest music-makers in the nation, regardless of their location. Whether it is a wonderful string ensemble from the deep South, far West or in the heartland that some superintendent of schools wants to cut out of the budget, or a terrific community chorus in the Northwest or on the coasts that

wants to perform to a larger audience; or a professional orchestra anywhere in the country that is struggling to find the donors it needs to remain in business, **The American Prize** can provide regional and national visibility and reward.

What if your students, parents, board of education, or supervisor woke up to the news that you had just won **The American Prize**, judged to be the finest in the country in your category, chosen by an impartial panel of experienced professionals from all across the United States? There would be prize money and adjudicated comments, but maybe more important might be the bragging rights, to be emblazoned next year on your school or department letterhead or recruitment poster, or announced at the next faculty meeting. There would be the award certificate hanging proudly in your rehearsal

room, studio, office or auditorium lobby; and of course, suddenly, there would be articles in newspapers and magazines, and stories on radio and TV pointing to your winning performance, sent directly to your local media by **The American Prize** itself, all linked on **The American Prize** website. Even if yours isn't selected the top group, semi-finalists and finalists receive local, regional and national recognition as being

among the best in the nation.

If winning **The American Prize** might help you recruit more members, or add to your ensemble's perceived worth, or enhance your resume, or solidify your position; if you have wished there were a way for your work (or your group's quality) to be recognized by someone in addition to your students, audience, board, parents or supervisor; if winning might be the shot in the arm you and your group needs, reminding everyone in your community that what you do every day matters profoundly—then I urge you to apply.

The American Prize is here to stay. It is a series of annual, non-profit competitions that is going to continue to grow in visibility and prestige. Each year, musicians and educators from all across the U.S. are going to win **The American Prize** and be recognized for excellence. Why not you? It would be a pleasure to sample your students' (and your) excellent work.

All good wishes,
David Katz, *chief judge*, www.TheAmericanPrize.org