

The Musicians' Company

The Dankworth Prizes for Jazz Composition 2026



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The Dankworth Prizes for Jazz Composition were established by The Musicians' Company in association with Sir John Dankworth and his family, and The Wavendon Foundation, to encourage young composers to create original works. There are two music prizes for **original compositions in original arrangements by the composer** of music in the jazz idiom.

To that end, The Musicians' Company maintains The Dankworth Prizes for Jazz Composition in accordance with the rules set below. Please note especially the underlined sections below.

Award Rules

- a) The competition is open to all persons resident in the U.K. **aged 28 years or younger** on the date of their submission for the competition. Previous winners of the prize are excluded from the competition.
- b) The compositions and associated arrangements will be for:
 - i) **Big Band** - Compositions for:
an ensemble comprising 4 Trumpets, 4 Trombones (of which one must be bass trombone or tuba), 2 alto saxophones, 2 tenor saxophones, baritone saxophone and piano, bass and drums. A maximum of 2 saxophones may be 'doubled' with clarinets, flutes and/or soprano saxophones. A guitar may be added but may not replace the piano. A score may include a featured soloist, such as a singer.
 - ii) **Small Ensemble** - Compositions for:
an ensemble of up to nine players and a minimum of seven players, comprising one each at least of trumpet, trombone, alto saxophone, tenor saxophone and piano, bass and drums.

All scores must be submitted in concert pitch – that is, no transpositions.

Only one submission may be made by any individual. Submissions should not have been previously publicly performed.

- d) There will be 2 (two) prizes as follows:
Big Band prize – £1,500.00
Small Ensemble prize – £1,000.00
- e) A composition and the composer's arrangement of the composition must be **original** and in the jazz idiom and be the unassisted conceptual work of the competitor, other than receiving general guidance or advice from a teacher or mentor. Contrafacts (original melodies based on an existing chord sequence) are acceptable.
- f) The submitted piece must be designed for a performance duration of between **6 and 10 minutes** and be fully notated **for all the instruments** in the chosen ensemble, **together with a conductor or control score**. 'Open' sections may be included for solos, showing chord notation for performer improvisation but 'backing' figures or 'solis' would also be desirable in these sections.
- g) The technical standard of the composition should be such that a 'College Band' or a 'County Youth Orchestra' could reach 'performance standard' after approximately 3 hours rehearsal.
- h) **The competitive entry must be a legible copy of the control or conductor score of the composition, showing full notation for all the instruments in the chosen category.** Submissions should be generated from formatting programmes such as Sibelius, Dorico or Finale and **submitted as a .pdf file**. Handwritten scores will not be accepted. These must be **sent by email to the Deputy Clerk, Amanda Ratcliffe, at assistant@wcom.org.uk**.

- i) The submission of the piece should be accompanied by a 'live' digital audio rendition *attached as a sound file to the submission email*, the standard of which will not affect the judgement of the piece. *In the event of any problem sending an attachment, the audio files may be sent separately, clearly referenced to the notated submission.* Sampled, midi or similar renditions of the piece will be acceptable. Supporting audio performances of the submitted piece may be wav, mp3, midi files or any other standard format.
- j) It is important to note that submissions will not be returned under any circumstances to the sender and it is the competitor's responsibility to ensure that they do not send any 'masters' of any notated files, audio files or any other content.
- k) The judges' decision will be final and not subject to appeal. The judges also reserve the right not to make an award if in their view no submission is of sufficiently high standard. **No correspondence or communication will be entered into by the organisers or judges on any aspect of the competition.**
- l) For the 2026 competition, submissions must be made by 1200 noon on **Friday 8th January 2027** with the score submitted as a 'read-only' attachment by email to the Deputy Clerk, Amanda Ratcliffe, at assistant@wcom.org.uk. The submission must be accompanied by the completed Award Entry Form, which is obtainable from the Company's website, www.wcom.org.uk. The entry form may be a PDF or Word document copy of the official entry form but must contain a facsimile of the competitor's signature.
- m) There will be a public presentation of cheques to the winners of the awards and performances of the winning submissions, as detailed below.

Performance

A performance of the winning works in the 2026 competition will be presented at a concert in October 2027 at the Royal Academy of Music as part of the Dankworth Centenary celebrations.

Although there will only be one winner in each category, if practicable, in addition to the chosen winning entries, one or more of the other submissions may be publicly performed either at the presentation concert or another appropriate occasion. The point of this would be to give the organisers and the judges opportunity to feature demonstrably different styles of composition, thereby evidencing their inclusive approach to the Award scheme.

Ben Costello
Chairman – Musicians' Company Jazz Committee
September 2026