

## ENTERTAINMENT



Dr. Howard J. Buss played several instruments in student groups at Emmaus High School.

## Ex-Valley musician wins composition competition

By TIM BLANGGER  
Of The Morning Call

**A**Lehigh Valley native and musician who performed in several music ensembles at Emmaus High School in the '60s recently won an international composition contest sponsored by a New York City-based chamber music ensemble.

Dr. Howard J. Buss, a musician and teacher now living in Lakeland, Fla., was the winner of the fourth annual Erik Satie Mostly Tonal Award sponsored by Eclectix! Chamber Orchestra.

Eclectix! presents melodic music in the tradition of Claude Debussy, George Gershwin and Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington, according to Lee McClure, the orchestra's artistic director.

Past winners have included Allan Blank, a composer from Richmond, Va., and the late Earl Robinson, a Seattle-

based composer and political activist who championed the American labor movement in songs like "Joe Hill." Robinson died July 20.

Buss's winning composition, "Concord," was first performed in 1990 by the Mid-Florida Brass Quintet. By winning the Satie award, Buss's "Concord" will also be performed March 21 by The Saturday Quintet at CAMI Hall, 165 W. 57th St., New York City, which is opposite Carnegie Hall. The concert, sponsored by Eclectix!, includes Jane Ira Bloom, the jazz soprano saxophonist, and her ensemble.

"I had heard [the chamber orchestra] was looking for brass music specifically," Buss said in a recent telephone interview from his Lakeland home. "I just happened to have this piece. It had been published and it was doing very well, so

Please See BUSS Page A51 ▶

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## BUSS

► Continued From Page A47

I just mailed it off to them."

Buss says the music he writes is mostly tonal, meaning it is usually based on the idea of a central key or tonal center.

Certain modern classical composers, most notably Arnold Schoenberg, Alban Berg and Anton von Weber, challenged the ideas of tonality by writing essentially atonal music, or music that disregarded musical keys or tonal centers.

"My music uses melodies," Buss said of his work. "They are lyrical. And they are rather technical, but they are memorable. My music also places a great emphasis on a wide rhythmic vocabulary."

"Concord," for example, contains fanfare-like sections as well as dance-like sections, Buss said. The Buss piece shouldn't be confused with the work of another U.S. composer, Charles Ives, who subtitled his Piano Sonata No. 2 "Concord, Mass. 1840-1860." The Ives piece and the Buss piece are not related, Buss said.

To Buss, the fact that the award was named after the late French composer, Satie, has special relevance.

**Buss says his music** is inspired, in part, by the music of Satie. "Erik Satie's music was considered serious, but it had a popular nature, a lot of humor, something audiences could relate to. He wasn't caught up in the complex harmonies of many of the 20th-century musics," Buss said.

And even though "Concord" contains fairly complex musical elements, Buss said he writes music for audiences, not music theorists.

Buss graduated from Emmaus High School in 1968. During his high-school years, he played trombone and trumpet, and also played cello in the orchestra.

Since 1978, he and his wife, Judy, have been teaching and writing music. She is a woodwind specialist. The couple often performs together at musical conventions and seminars around the nation.

Howard Buss is also president of Brixton Publications, a music-publishing company that specializes in contemporary classical music. Some of the published composers include Haskall Small, a Washington, D.C.-based pianist, and Virginia Nanzetta, a flutist.

For information on the March 21 concert by The Saturday Quintet at CAMI Hall, 165 W. 57th St., New York City, call Eclectix! at 718-729-7785.