

Growing up, my family put ideas of being a lawyer or businessman in my head. Since I'm only person in my family to be involved in music, it came as a huge shock when I told my family I wanted to be a composer. They were somewhat unsure about the stability of this career option, but my family could tell that this was what I wanted to do more than anything else, so despite having no musical training or knowledge, they supported me in every way they could. Their encouragement was what first led me to explore classical music outside of school, and that was when I discovered what would become the most influential piece of music I would ever hear.

Many years later, as I am nearing the end of my career, I hope that I will remember that distant afternoon in 9th grade when I discovered *A Sea Symphony* by Ralph Vaughan Williams. While there were many things that helped began my desire to be a composer – such as the encouragement and kindness of Ms. Ross, my middle school band director, and the great times that I've had (and the great musicians that I've met) in various music camps and ensembles such as the Indiana University Summer Music Clinic and the Atlanta Youth Wind Symphony – the catalyst that started my love for music and my need to become a professional composer was that first that that I listened to *A Sea Symphony*. I had casually heard parts of the piece before, but the first time I actually sat down and listened to it, I was brought to tears at the climax at the end of the last movement. That feeling that the piece gave me was like nothing I had ever felt before. At that moment I knew that I needed to compose music for the rest of my life.

After that afternoon, I decided I would dedicate my life to becoming the best composer I could possibly be. In my spare time when I'm not composing, I study scores on IMSLP or teach myself music theory in order to get ahead in my music theory class, and I continue to do so today. Besides the fact that I simply enjoy the activity, I think that I am so motivated to compose well because I want to one day inspire people the way *A Sea Symphony* inspired me. That piece helped me want to be a composer, and hope that my drive to be a great composer will teach someone else to love music just like *A Sea Symphony* did for me