

J. Michael Lucas

Pianist, composer, arranger, bandleader, and conductor, J. Michael Lucas was born in Muncie, Indiana, and attended grammar schools in Muncie, Marion, and Jonesboro before graduating from Mississinewa High School in Gas City, Indiana. As a young boy, Mike studied piano with Lorraine Slinger, a former silent movie pianist. At Indiana University School of Music, he received a bachelor's degree in music theory in 1963, studying piano with Joseph Batista for four years. Mike studied for a master's degree in composition with Thomas Beversdorf and Bernard Heiden from 1961 to 1965 and jazz arranging with Roger Pemberton in 1961. Mike began accompanying for modern dance at Indiana University in 1961 and received teaching assistantships from modern dance from 1962 to 1964. From 1965 to 1992 Mike served on the faculty of the dance program in the School of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation. He was transferred to the School of Music in 1992. There he has taught private jazz piano lessons, jazz piano class, and jazz arranging until he retired in 2005.

Mike held numerous positions for the Indiana University Dance Theatre, including musical director (1965–1992), technical director (1984–1992), and acting artistic director (1988–1989). Throughout his career he has created compositions for various chamber, orchestral, and vocal ensembles, and many arrangements and original compositions for jazz band. He has performed as a pianist for several jazz and dance bands, including Al Cobine, Jim Edison, and Tommy Mullinix. In particular, he was one of the founding members, along with Jack Ost and Gary Potter, of Café Jazz Society in 1986, a group that specializes in Dixieland and Early Jazz repertoire. Mike is currently musical director for the Al Cobine Band and the B-town Bearcats, a traditional jazz ensemble, and continues to perform with Café Jazz Society.

Mike's own band, the Mike Lucas Band, is, in reality, several bands ranging from solo piano to piano-bass duo, from trio, quartet, or quintet to a six-piece Dixieland Jazz Band, a seven-piece Dance Band to a fifteen-piece Big Band. All of these ensembles are available with a featured vocalist. Mike's primary style of music is jazz/swing standards, but other styles are offered as well. The arrangements for the seven-piece and fifteen-piece bands were written by Al Cobine and other top quality arrangers. The members of the Mike Lucas Band are among the finest musicians in the country, having performed with Henry Mancini, Johnny Mathis, Andy Williams, Perry Como, Natalie Cole, and many others. Mike's bands provide the highest quality of music available in the area for shows, dances, receptions, concerts, and practically any type of event where music is required.

As a pianist and conductor, Mike has appeared with various internationally known artists, including Johnny Mathis, Henry Mancini, Andy Williams, Perry Como, and the Righteous Brothers.

Mike has distinguished himself as a longtime member and supporter of the American Federation of Musicians since 1957. He served on the executive board of Local 3 from 1988 to 2000, when he became president of Local 3. Mike has been a vital member of the community through his support of music and the arts, and especially for his leadership role in providing work for countless musicians for many years. For this we are all deeply grateful.

He also was a member of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, the stagehands' union, from 1990 to 2004. In 1998 and 2002 he was elected to the Indian Creek Township board in Indiana's Monroe County.

Since 1962 Mike has been active in farming in Monroe County. He has owned and operated a 280-acre grain and livestock farm in Indian Creek Township where he has resided since 1972. He has two children and two step-children, and lives with his wife, Bette Breland-Arcuri.

Luke Gillespie