

## **Wilber T. England**

*Associate Professor of Percussion*

Retiring after his thirty-ninth year at Indiana University, Wilber T. England, associate professor of music, has been an integral part of the percussion faculty for all of those years. Wilber's vast knowledge of percussion performance and pedagogy has helped shape the careers of countless percussion students, providing them with solid insights and thoughtful guidance. At the same time, his devotion to music education and his dedication to the development of future band directors have been an inspiration to us all. There are literally thousands of percussionists and band directors who have benefited from Wilber England's superb teaching.

Mr. England was assistant director of the Indiana University Marching Band (Marching Hundred) for 14 years, and director from 1983 to 1985. During these 17 years he wrote all of the percussion music, and was responsible for "charting" the visual portion of the halftime shows. He also directed the Basketball Pep Band during those years, as well as the bands for the NBA All-Star Classic and the Pan Am Games. The tireless hours of time and energy put into these groups are a testament to his dedication to the students and the university. I've been told many times that visiting a football game with Wilber is like walking around with a rock star or royalty. Wilber seems to know everyone, and they all run up and say hi and tell him what they are doing. Most of all, they want to thank him for his guidance and support.

In addition to working with the athletic bands, he has taught private percussion students. It was long understood in the percussion department that if students had some fundamental technical or reading issue, you would send them to Wilber and he would fix it. He has also quietly taught the Percussion Techniques course to music education majors for 39 years. This five-day-a-week 8 a.m. class is the only instrumental techniques course in the School of Music that is taught by a faculty member and not a graduate assistant. The students who have taken his class often remark that it was the best class they ever had. (Many are on the current Jacobs School of Music faculty.) They are constantly sharing stories about how they're utilizing his teachings on a daily basis out in the workplace. Wilber is now just completing a much-needed percussion methods book, to be published by the FJH Music Company. There is no doubt that this book is destined to become a classic in percussion education.

One of Professor England's most valuable duties has been to serve as an advisor for undergraduate and graduate students entering the Jacobs School of Music. It would be easy to overlook this important task as it is "behind the scenes." However, as percussion department chairman, it's not difficult to see how his wisdom and common sense have helped guide so many of our students. With his easy manner and solid advice, these students are positioned early on to succeed at Indiana University and, more importantly, in life, thanks in large part to Wilber's mentoring. Chatting with Wilber about his successful students, he is proud to mention their success stories not only in music, but in industry, medicine, and politics. His students are doing great things in all walks of life.

Wilber has been involved with the Percussive Arts Society (PAS) since 1964. During his long tenure, he has made valuable contributions to the society. Since 1970 Wilber has been in charge of editing percussion ensemble and solo recital program submissions from around the world, listing them in the *PAS Journal*. This time-consuming, yet important job has helped to shape countless percussion ensemble and recital programs. Everyone looked forward to Wilber's listings. He seemed to know what everyone was doing at all times, and he shared this extensive knowledge directly with the IU percussion students, who then had the inside track when it came to new percussion literature. In addition, Wilber was Indiana PAS president in 1970–1972, 1976–1980, 1982–1984, and 1988–2001, while also serving as the editor of the Indiana PAS newsletter. During his tenure, Indiana hosted a “Day of Percussion” in each of those years, rotating between four different locations. Wilber's percussion days became a model for the society, in that they were musically diverse, featuring all elements of percussion performance. Also, they were focused on education foregrounding fine clinicians, and they always involved many student performances by high school and university percussion students.

Professor England is still “in demand” as an adjudicator for both concert bands and percussion ensembles throughout the United States and Canada. By a rough estimate, he has adjudicated well over 6,000 ensembles and bands over the years. His comments and suggestions have helped literally thousands of students and provided countless directors with experienced musical direction and valuable performance insights. Mr. England also directs and conducts the Indiana Music Educators Association All-State Percussion Ensemble, which performs at the winter convention each year. He is co-founder and director (along with Dr. Erwin Mueller) of this organization now in its thirteenth year. His continued presence at the state level will hopefully continue even after his retirement from Indiana University.

In addition to his teaching, a large part of Wilber's time here has been spent overseeing the entire musical instrument/accessory inventory, which includes issuance, repair, purchase, and maintenance. It has a value of approximately \$18 million. This important administrative role has helped students with their education and their music making, while, at the same time, securing a healthy future for the school's musical instrument inventory.

Quite simply, Wilber England will be very hard to replace. His place in the history and evolution of the school is secure on many different fronts. His teaching legacy is well documented and his passion for music education students is legendary. Finally, his skills and savvy with the instrument inventory will ensure that the Jacobs School of Music is on solid footing for a long time to come.

*Steve Houghton*