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You Can't Argue With Success - Martha Boonshaft

Martha Boonshaft is a band director at the Garden City Middle School in New York. Her 300-student band program was featured on the *CBS Early Show* because of her use of SmartMusic®. We initially featured Martha's story in our [December 6, 2007 article](#), and now we are following up to see how SmartMusic has transformed her band program in just one year.



"If I were to make a wish for my colleagues it would be for their districts to provide them with SmartMusic. SmartMusic has helped me become more effective, improving the amount and quality of contact time with each of my students.

A majority of my students participate in demanding extracurricular activities and maintain a very high level in their academics. These demands put practicing their instrument on a different level of importance. My lesson groups are commonly eight or more students and meet on a six-day cycle. However, if the child has a test, review, or a project due, they do not come to their lesson. Parameters like these can make it nearly impossible to get to know how each of your students plays and SmartMusic helped us change that.

We piloted SmartMusic one year ago. In that short time, a single year, the program has transformed our bands radically. As my colleagues and I learned how to use the program, we found that it was the ideal avenue for greatly increased communication between student, parent, and teacher. Shortly after the program went home with our students, assignments started to fill our Impact Gradebook. As we listened to each submission, my colleague and I began to fully realize how dramatically SmartMusic could revolutionize the way music teachers issue individual attention. The Gradebook allowed us to see just how many minutes a student had practiced each of his or her exercises. We could then listen to a recording of what the child thought was their best effort. After reviewing each submission, we could send our praise, suggestions, and critiques straight to the student's own Impact account. Through this account, the student and his or her parents could read our comments and communicate freely with us about any instrumental concerns. In selecting what SmartMusic exercises to assign – faced with the reality of our students' hectic schedules – we chose assignments for individual concepts rather than for repetition's sake alone: In short, we emphasized the quality of assignments over the quantity.

Now, this account may sound like we piled a colossal amount of work on ourselves – what with a program of 300 students and only two teachers – but it is completely manageable and the results are worth every single minute.

Thanks to SmartMusic, gone are the days when my lesson periods were considered by many parents to be a mysterious time-waster. The lines of communication are open and growing stronger each day between student, parent, and teacher. Armed with SmartMusic, our band parents have become more confident in their children's musical education and

more confident with us as teachers, watching the individual attention their children have received. If the teachers observe that the child is really struggling with the assignments, the exercises can be altered to meet student needs with the click of a few buttons. Changes can be made surreptitiously by the teacher, all the while protecting the student's identity and avoiding any and all embarrassment for simply working at the student's own level. Such attention to our students' psyches is very important in this competition-driven world. Every student can start from where they are comfortable and progress. SmartMusic is differentiated instruction at its best.

Like the saying goes, "You can't argue with success." I have found that the parents in my program really love the ability to see and hear their children's work. The quarterly phone calls from parents, demanding that we justify a student's grade, have completely stopped. The students get to decide when to submit an exercise and the parents have a direct line to this information. We, the teachers, are seen as part of the overall team. With this attitude everyone wins. I can be even more help to both parents and students. Percentage grades in band classes like mine, equipped with SmartMusic, have lost their traditionally obscure nature. *Finally*, a student's progress can take center stage.

As we start our SmartMusic program for the second year, I would also like to thank the people at MakeMusic for their responsiveness to suggestions made by teachers like me, using their program. The SmartMusic 11 version has many updates that have made the program truly teacher/user friendly. My students have already put into practice the additions that have been made benefitting from these new designs.

As we all know, what works for my program may not work for yours. However, I encourage all teachers to look into SmartMusic. We are all charged with incorporating technology into our classrooms. SmartMusic is the only technology that I have found that can be used both in the full band setting and lesson setting, and have a profound impact."

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Superior Ratings by Benny Davis

"I want to tell you how I achieved a 300% Improvement in Superior Ratings at UIL Solo and Ensemble Contest. I am Benny Davis, Director of Bands at Rockwall Heath High School and this is how I did it.



One of my goals was to have every student perform a solo at contest, and with SmartMusic Impact this has become a reality. SmartMusic Impact has enabled me to have students practice their solos at home, send me recordings of their progress via an Impact assignment, and allow me to listen to everyone and critique their performance.

Every two weeks I would assign one-third of the solo and have them submit a recording to me through Impact. Students felt more prepared and comfortable about performing because SmartMusic gave them the extra help during the preparation period prior to contest. We were also able to have every student perform a solo with the assurance that we could hear each and every student as they prepared. It increased our accountability factor exponentially.

I would never have had the time to hear everyone at school; scheduling the lesson and having an accompanist available just wasn't practical. Having the students submitting recordings of their solos – with accompaniment – enabled me to manage the process and help those students that really needed the help. Many were able to perform very well on their own as they listened to their own recordings and were able to critique their own

performance.

The good news is that we had three times the number of superior rating at the UIL contest. It was truly a breakthrough in efficiency.

If I was asked to give advice to those not familiar with SmartMusic, I would say whether you have a large or small program; SmartMusic is by far the most significant instructional tool to be presented to educators since the Strobe Tuner. To the directors who are unsure about jumping on board with SmartMusic and Impact, I can think of ten reasons to use SmartMusic and Impact for any single reason not to.

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Tips and Tricks

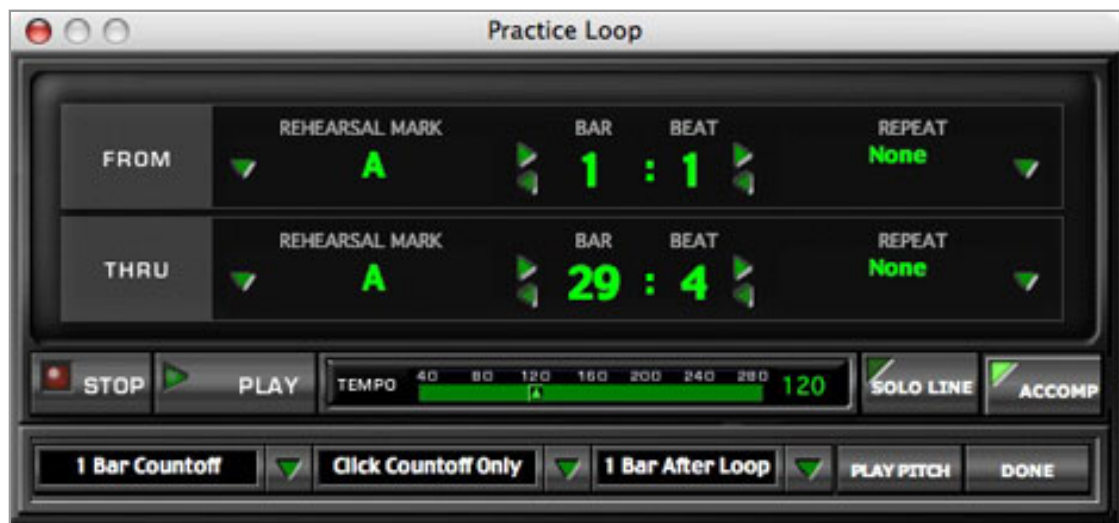
How do you assign solos?

Assigning solo repertoire via Impact is a very efficient way to have all of your students prepare a solo for contest. Identifying an excerpt is the most practical option because assigning an entire piece can result in a lengthy assignment that a student couldn't submit until they had recorded the entire piece. Since the majority of solo repertoire doesn't have the music on-screen, recordings are the only assignment type available.

One suggestion is to assign one-third of the solo six weeks before contest, the second third four weeks before contest, and the final third two weeks before contest. Other teachers have assigned only the most technical passages, knowing that if a student were able to play those, they would likely be able to play the other sections as well.

Here are the steps to assign solo repertoire to your students:

- 1. Login to <http://www.SmartMusic.com/Impact>.
- 2. Find and open the desired repertoire.
- 3. With that repertoire selected, open Measure Range and select the desired measures and tempo.



What was called Practice Loop is now called Measure Range.

- 4. Click Done and return to the Main Play Screen.
- 5. Click the **ASSIGNMENT** button.
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- 6. You will see a summary of the assignment and the Measure Range you selected. Write in the practice instructions and review the other criteria. So that students can practice and submit the assignment at any tempo and not be forced to record at a tempo they might not be able to play, it's best to uncheck Tempo.

Post Assignment to Impact

Teacher: Mr. Hawley Logout

Title: Mozart, Concerto No. 1 in G, KV 313 (Mvt I, Allegro)

Assignment Name:

Instructions:

Practice this excerpt slowly at first, then submit the recording on the due date playing it as accurately as possible.

Required Settings for Student Submission: Learn More...

Play From: A - Bar 1, Beat 1

Play Thru: B - Bar 1, Beat 1

Tempo: 120 or Faster

Countoff: No Countoff

Click: Off

Hear Solo Line: Off

Hear Accompaniment: On

Tempo: ⌵ ⌶

Cancel
Post

- 7. Click Post and the assignment will be sent via the Internet to your Personal Library in Impact.
- 8. Go to www.smartmusic.com/impact. From your Personal Library select and schedule it to the appropriate students. Keep in mind that you can only send it to students that play or sing the repertoire you selected. When the student(s) logs in to get the assignment, they will play it and SmartMusic will automatically record and start and stop at the designated measures.

At this point this is like any other Impact assignment, the student can choose to Try Again, Save Takes, or Submit.

How to view, print, or export your report cards

The SmartMusic Impact site can help you with your grade book and report cards! You can now print out your Impact Gradebook for all your classes, individual student progress reports, or export the grades to use them in your school's grade book program. You can even directly export to Microsoft Excel.

To print a copy of your Impact Gradebook:

- Log in to <http://www.SmartMusic.com/Impact>.
- Select Gradebook at the top of the screen then choose your class and grading period.

- Press the Reports link and use the new controls to select how you want your printout to appear.

You can now print a Class Gradebook, Individual Student Reports, and a Class Roster of your currently enrolled students.

To export your Impact Gradebook:

- Log in to <http://www.SmartMusic.com/Impact>.
- Select Gradebook at the top of the screen then choose your class and grading period.
- Press the Export link.
- Choose what kind of file you want to export, Comma separated file (.csv) Tab delimited text file (.txt), or Microsoft Excel (97-2003) format (.xls).

Have additional suggestions for SmartMusic or the Impact Gradebook? We'd love to hear your feedback. Log in to <http://www.SmartMusic.com/Impact> and click the "Send Us your Feedback" link.

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Spotlight on William Rank, Director of Bands

"SmartMusic has changed the way that I assess student learning and understanding in all my band classes. This is the future of music education! You have to check it out!" William Rank is the Director of Bands for Oak Prairie Junior High School in Lockport, Illinois.



"Students are assessed on scales, exercises, and music excerpts. They get instant feedback from SmartMusic and with Impact, I can give more detailed feedback to students for suggestions to improve. I also like that Impact tracks my students' practice time. I have even had some students audition for jazz ensemble at home using SmartMusic. In addition, my students will prepare for the solo and ensemble festival this year by using SmartMusic accompaniments."

SmartMusic has changed the way I teach. My jazz ensemble students are able to record themselves playing with Aebersold accompaniments and can listen for patterns to become part of their vocabulary. They learn jazz theory and they practice ear training by using jazz exercises in various keys and by changing the keys to a variety of patterns. Jazz is an aural art form that we learn from imitating the great musicians. I love that I can transcribe recorded jazz solos at any tempo. With SmartMusic I can isolate a chorus or two of a solo and have students slow it down, internalize it, and notate it. Fifteen years ago you needed very expensive tape recorders to slow down recordings.

SmartMusic has changed the learning experience for my students. My students like practicing with SmartMusic because they can hear how their parts fit in with the entire ensemble. They are instantly made aware of notes and rhythms that are performed correctly and incorrectly. Instead of practicing a passage over and over again playing the wrong notes, then having to unlearn and relearn the passage, they can fix mistakes the first time around. Parents love the fact that they can see exactly where mistakes are made, and they can even help students with their assignments.

I have seen measurable results from using SmartMusic. My students have increased confidence in their performance ability, alone and in class. We did tape tests and I'd fill out a rubric evaluation, which would have very limited effect, because they couldn't go back

and hear the recording. The recording process is much smoother and students can redo assignments as many times as they like to get their best recording. And of course they are learning faster and playing better too.

The best thing about using SmartMusic is that with Finale 2009, the SmartMusic assignment creation process is very easy. I've taken some of my jazz compositions that were written with Finale 2006, opened them with Finale 2009 and within 5 minutes, I am able to assign parts to my jazz ensemble. This opens a whole new world of repertoire from the Finale showcase! I've also taken the IMEA Junior Winds audition scales and created assessment files for students in about ten minutes using Finale 2009."

Rank has taught middle school band for the past 8 years and currently teaches grades 6, 7, and 8 in Symphonic Band, Concert Band, Jazz Ensemble, Jazz Band, and Music Technology. He's active as an alto saxophonist, composer, and adjudicator. Past performances include the World Saxophone Congress, Elmhurst Jazz Festival, Eau Claire Jazz Festival, and North Texas Jazz Festival. Currently, he is an active member of the IMEA, MENC, NBA, North American Saxophone Alliance, and the University of Illinois Alumni Association.

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Just Released

We've released more than 75 new titles last month including long-standing favorites like Perischetti's "*Symphony for Band*," Hindemith's "*Symphony in Bb*," and Bach's "*Tocatta and Fugue in D Minor*," and [more](#). SmartMusic 11 is required to access the newest repertoire so [download](#) your update now.

View or print the entire catalog of more than 1,450 large ensemble titles sorted by difficulty level:

- [Concert Band](#)
- [Jazz Ensemble](#)
- [String Orchestra](#)
- [Full Orchestra](#)

New features in Impact

Do you want your students to be able to play their assignment at a slower tempo? You can now remove the default tempo requirement when you schedule assignments for Concert Band, Jazz Ensemble, String Orchestra, and Full Orchestra.

You can also edit the tempo and other settings when scheduling assignments for Band and String Method Books and SmartMusic Exercises.

Schedule an entire unit of assignments from the Band and String Method Book library or your personal library. All assignments will have the same instructions, due date, and point values.

[New Videos](#) - Watch our new videos for teachers, including a SmartMusic video to share with parents and an overview of the repertoire in SmartMusic.

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Announcements

Steps to take before you leave for Winter Break

Don't forget to de-activate your subscription before you leave for winter. Each winter, many school districts fix or replace computers by cleaning or imaging machines, which can remove your SmartMusic subscription information unless you do the following before you leave for winter break:

1. Connect to the Internet
2. Launch SmartMusic
3. On the Home Screen, click My Account and click the link to remove your subscription from the current computer.

This will keep your subscription available to be used on another machine during the winter break or to be re-activated when you return from break.

Upon your return, simply:

1. Install SmartMusic from the CD (or open the program if it was not removed).
2. While connected to the Internet, click Activate and enter your e-mail address and password for SmartMusic.
3. Choose the correct subscription for the computer you're activating, and click OK. SmartMusic will be ready to go!

If you need assistance with this process, please contact us online at www.smartmusic.com/support or call our SmartMusic Technical Support team at (866) 240-4041 Mondays through Fridays from 8:30 AM to 8:00 PM CST.

Student Subscriptions

NEW – Students can buy a \$30 subscription directly from www.smartmusic.com without a code. We know that simplifying the purchase process will make it easier for your students to get started with SmartMusic.

SmartMusic for your Entire District

Interested in locking in lower pricing for you and your students over the next two years? Contact us at smartbuy@makemusic.com for more information on volume pricing – now available for a minimum of 100 subscriptions.

Upcoming Events

Come see SmartMusic at the Midwest Clinic 62nd Annual Conference, Florida MEA, and [more](#).



Meet the Team

Mark Maronde is a MakeMusic employee of eight years and is currently the Technical Director for SmartMusic. "The best thing about working at MakeMusic is the people and the variety of tasks. There are not many other companies where most of the employees are top-notch musicians. My coworkers and I have a lot of pride in our products, and you can see this in the quality of our work."

Mark has had a strong interest in music theory and composition since high school. He has worked in the software industry for more than 20 years and is very happy to be working for MakeMusic because "it combines my professional experience with my musical skills." Mark also sings in his church choir and occasionally accompanies the choir or piano.

Mark thinks SmartMusic will revolutionize music education. "In my experience working with customers at tradeshow, in focus groups, and in the field, I have yet to meet a music educator who failed to see how they could use SmartMusic to help their students improve both their performance skills and their overall musicianship. Learning what SmartMusic can do is often a light bulb moment for music teachers."



Mark is also very passionate about Finale. He thinks it has become much easier to use. "I can't tell you how valuable it is as a composer to be able to treat Finale like a word processor. The ability to compose directly into Finale and hear your work immediately is fantastic!"

Mark's wife, Karen, and their children, Eric and Sara, all enjoy music in their lives. Outside of the office, Mark is a voracious reader, often devouring two or three books at once.

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