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SmartMusic is the Future of Music Education by Robert Tanis

I am Robert Tanis and have been an educator for 14 years. I teach five concert bands a day and work with the marching band, pep band, and pit orchestra. I have a BM from The Eastman School of Music in Trumpet Performance and Music Education and an MM from the Columbus State University Schwob School of Music in Music Education/Conducting. As a self-proclaimed "techie" I was immediately intrigued when I was introduced to SmartMusic while walking through the exhibits at the 2007 Midwest Band and Orchestra Conference in Chicago. I purchased a subscription and started using it with my private trumpet students at their next lesson. I showed the students what I call "the three facets of SmartMusic."



1. Solo Accompaniments
2. Full Band Arrangements
3. Etude/Book/Exercise Work

All of my students were completely amazed and excited about how SmartMusic was going to affect their practicing. Since our Solo & Ensemble Festival was right around the corner, I had the students practice both in lessons and at home with the accompaniment for their solo in SmartMusic. I was astounded at their next lesson because they played with a better sense of pulse, a better sense of pitch, and they counted all of the rests correctly. Victory!

The next logical step was to implement the usage of SmartMusic in the full band setting. Where do I begin? The Lakota Local School District starts around 900 beginning band students each year in the 6th grade. Those students then move into one of the four junior high schools before they attend one of two freshman schools that feed into two high schools (Lakota East and Lakota West). The Lakota East Band program consists of 5 concert bands (2 freshman and 3 high school) and 5 jazz bands (2 freshman and 3 high school). I decided to start small and target the freshman concert bands which represent 140 students. I was able to have the SmartMusic subscription added to each student's school fees which meant every student was going to be able to participate. I also worked with my building principal and she purchased 120 microphones. The stage was set to roll this out in the fall of 2008.

After one semester of use in my freshmen bands, I am proud to say that I love it and am learning more each day about the endless possibilities SmartMusic has to offer. I truly feel that this is the future of music education. I have the students submit one assignment per week, 50 points for assessment and 50 points for the recording. They have submitted full band assignments, scales, method book etudes, and some of the built-in exercises. Using Finale, I was able to import our district honor band etudes. I am proud to say that 30% of the honor band is made up of students who practiced using SmartMusic!

One of the benefits of using the recording feature in SmartMusic that I had not anticipated was discussing good balance and the quality of the recording. When a student takes direct

responsibility for making a recording which represents good balance you can very easily address the same issue in full band and know for sure that the students understand what you are talking about!

The Ohio Music Education Association decided to make SmartMusic an acceptable accompaniment for Solo & Ensemble Contest. As a result we had ten students who used SmartMusic for their accompaniment on January 24th. Needless to say, these students were very prepared and had a great experience!

I keep telling my colleagues that I wish I had this tool when I was in high school and college – life would have been MUCH easier! Thanks SmartMusic, and keep it coming!

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What is the Impact Gradebook and Why is it Important?

The SmartMusic Impact Gradebook is a feature in SmartMusic. It is a web-based grade book that makes it easy for teachers to manage, grade, and document assignments for all students. Recordings and other assignment data are stored on MakeMusic's secure servers. Access to the grade book feature is included with all SmartMusic educator subscriptions.

Here are some of the features of the grade book:

- Distribute instrument-specific assignments including solos, exercises, songs from a supported band or string method book, concert band, jazz ensemble, and string orchestra titles, or even files you create in Finale®
- Track all returned and late assignments
- Students record playing tests and assignments at home and submit these to the grade book, freeing you to grade them anywhere with web access
- Administer tests, quizzes, and surveys online
- Calculate grades for assignments based on your grading criteria
- Record grades automatically in your grade book
- Collect student practice reports online
- Document student progress
- Print customized class reports and individual student progress reports
- Free your class time for more instruction

The grade book documents student achievement with graded assignments. In a time of evolving assessment standards and accountability requirements, the grade book feature offers solutions, while automating administrative tasks and allowing more time for teaching the art of making music.

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New SmartMusic Training Guide

New SmartMusic Training Guide

This helpful workbook and accompanying CD are made exclusively for educators and contain information on how to integrate SmartMusic into your curriculum. [Purchase](#) your copy now for only \$49.95.



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Tips and Tricks

Play-by-Ear Exercises - Ron Sikes, Festus, MO

Why not improve your band's aural skills while you warm up the band? Use SmartMusic's Play-by-Ear exercise. Simply run a line out of your computer and through a stereo/PA system. Choose the key, tempo, and level of difficulty. The band will improve on attacks and releases, along with improving the aural skills of your young musicians.

Tuning Charts - Ron Sikes, Festus, MO

The metronome and tuner can be shown at the same time. Great for tuning charts! Have your students work in pairs. First, click on "Metronome," then "Show Tuner." Have one student play a major scale or a chromatic scale at a specific tempo, while another student marks down the pitch tendency of the instrument. Then, let the students switch roles.

Using SmartMusic as a Digital Recorder - Roger Whaley, Mound, MN

With SmartMusic open during rehearsals you have a free digital recorder. In addition to instant feedback for your class, you can send the recording as part of an assignment with the Impact Gradebook.

Method Book Tips - Roger Whaley, Mound, MN

Save time in sectionals by using the navigation buttons found in the upper-left area in the method window. Once you have a song loaded, you can move to the previous or next exercise with the navigation buttons instead of closing the current song and re-opening the next one.

With so many method books in SmartMusic, you can sight-read or test with any book. Students can use the other books to practice music skills or read new material.

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Spotlight on Wando High School Band program

How do we measure success in our music programs? Many in the music world would answer that question with a list of honors or awards. If that's the case, let's consider the accomplishments of the Wando High School Band program in Mount Pleasant, SC, over the past four years:



- four straight state marching band championships,
- a performance at The Midwest Clinic,
- a Sudler Flag of Honor,
- approximately 200 all-state band members,
- straight superior ratings at state and national concert festivals,
- nearly 20 all-state jazz ensemble members, and
- hundreds of superior ratings at solo and ensemble festivals.

Moreover, they have an all-star staff, a fantastic feeder program, and a private lesson program in which most students actively participate, along with a supportive school and district. With all of these great accolades, it's no surprise that SmartMusic and Finale support the accomplishments of this successful program.

Scott Rush, band director at Wando High School, first became interested in SmartMusic and how it might help the program because of the tremendous potential he saw in this software as a practice tool for his students. Rush says, "This is the best software out there if it is used correctly and it is an incredible practice tool. Training is needed for our students to know just how to use it in their practice time, but once we have done that, nothing is better." They now currently use both SmartMusic and Finale for the marching band, region, and all-state band preparation, as well as for playing tests. "We used Finale at Wando to create the marching band files. The music was written in Finale and then we exported those files as SmartMusic accompaniments. Our assistant band director created hundreds of assignments in Finale." This next semester, they will use SmartMusic and its Gradebook feature to create assignments on the literature that their various concert ensembles will be preparing for state festival and concerts, as well as in preparation for solo and ensemble festival.

The decision to incorporate this software into their music program was an easy decision once the outcomes were easy to conceptualize. The Wando Band purchased home subscriptions for all of their students practicing their music. Parents also have access to the assignments that their students are to be preparing, recordings of the assignments already submitted, and they are able to check the grade and feedback that their student received from the directors. SmartMusic and Finale have radically changed the individual practice environment of each student of this impressive band program. Your program can also experience similar practice results with MakeMusic's rehearsal and notation software.

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Just Released

Recent concert band releases include Jager's "Colonial Airs and Dances," Williams' "Star Wars - the Marches," and Gould's "American Salute." Recent string orchestra releases include Siennick's arrangement of "Cripple Creek," Vivaldi's "Concerto in D," and more. SmartMusic 11 is required to access the newest repertoire so [download your update](#) now.

New Method Books

"Foundations for Superior Performance," "Orchestra Expressions Books 1 and 2," and "Premier Performance Book 1" were released in December. [Search](#) the repertoire library.

[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

SmartMusic for your entire district _

Volume pricing now available for a minimum of 100 subscriptions. Contact us for more information at smartbuy@makemusic.com

Upcoming Events

Come see SmartMusic at the California MEA, ASTA National Conference, and [more](#).

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Meet the Team

Allen Heidorn is a MakeMusic employee of 16 years and is currently the Senior Software Engineer for SmartMusic. "The best thing about working at MakeMusic is being able to solve difficult problems."



Both SmartMusic and Finale are woven into Allen's life. In school he played the trombone, but asks that you don't hold that against him. He used Finale to score his wedding music and uses SmartMusic with his oldest daughter who is learning to play the clarinet. Even his dad has used SmartMusic's jazz titles to customize and play along.

Allen graduated from the University of Minnesota and is currently one paper away from obtaining his doctorate in Computer Science. Although he has achieved much in his career and grown here at MakeMusic, he claims that he never wants to grow up. However he wishes that he could play, really play, the piano. As a keyboard player he doesn't feel in the same class as a good jazz or classical piano player with huge left hand chops.

Like most of his co-workers, Allen performs in a band, where he is the keyboard player and lead vocalist. He also volunteers for the Lions Club and plays in their band. Music has always been an important asset in his life and he enjoys introducing his kids to it by teaching them to play piano at home. He enjoys watching technology develop but complains that he has downloaded far too many titles on iTunes that he already owns on vinyl.

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