

# smartnotes

the smartmusic e-newsletter



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## SmartMusic 2010 by Scott Yoho

We're pleased to announce the release of SmartMusic 2010, now available as a free download to all current subscribers. You may recall that its predecessor was named SmartMusic 11. Going from 11 to 2010 is a big jump – have we really made it 1999 versions better? Perhaps. But the real reason we've changed the way SmartMusic is named is to make it easy to tell which version is compatible with accompaniments made in Finale® 2010 – and to make it clear that SmartMusic is updated once a year. Selecting a new name that clarifies and simplifies things seems even more appropriate given that the underlying theme of SmartMusic 2010 to clarify and simply the use of SmartMusic for you and your students.



The first thing you'll notice about SmartMusic 2010 is a brand new **Home Screen**, which makes it easier than ever to get started. Music titles, assignments, and all of SmartMusic's features are now accessed easily from one place. If, like me, you're a little apprehensive about change, do not fear: we've provided a [video](#) that demonstrates how easy the new home page is to use. In addition, downloading new titles is faster and more efficient, providing you with just the titles you want, and now you can actually download additional repertoire while you practice.

**Searching for repertoire** in SmartMusic is now faster and more efficient, allowing you to filter results by instrument, skill level, state list, and genre. Educators and students will enjoy improved playlists with method books, exercises and Finale-created files.

Several improvements have been made in the area of Assignments and the **SmartMusic Gradebook™**, benefitting students and teachers alike. Now students can easily view their grades and teacher's feedback by accessing the Gradebook from SmartMusic without a separate web browser. Students will also find that assignments are easy to open, practice, and submit – and they'll be able to see the status of all their assignments at a glance. Teachers will find that they can make assignments faster in the new scheduling interface and that they'll have better visibility of the music that students have performed because the assignment results now include an entire page of music.

**Assessment is improved** for 2010, especially when students play legato or rapidly articulated notes on the same pitch. Low microphone levels are better supported too, freeing students to perform wide dynamic contrasts without sacrificing assessment results. Today one microphone setting works for both assessment and recording, and SmartMusic 2010 also offers improved feedback when students play out-of-tune notes.

Finally, the repertoire library continues to grow in leaps and bounds. SmartMusic 2010 includes more than 300 **new band and orchestra titles** including Grainger's Lincolnshire Posy, Gould's American Salute, and Barnes' Heatherwood Portrait for concert band, Bach's Third Movement from the Brandenburg Concerto #4 for string orchestra, and Thor Johnson's arrangement of Handel's Music for the Royal Fireworks for full orchestra. Also

included are new [jazz ensemble titles](#) from Gordon Goodwin's Big Phat Band including Hunting Wabbits, The Jazz Police, and Swingin' for the Fences. Music is provided on-screen and recordings of Goodwin's wonderful Big Phat Band are featured in the audio accompaniments.

Of course SmartMusic 2010 is required to play the new titles, but that's no problem, because SmartMusic 2010 remains a free download for current subscribers. Download your [SmartMusic 2010 Update](#), or order an update disc by contacting Customer Support [online](#). (Shipping costs apply.)

Whether you [watch the video](#) first, or just jump in by [downloading the update](#), we're confident you'll agree that SmartMusic 2010 is all about making things easier and clearer for you and your students – giving you more time to focus on making music.

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### Getting Started this Fall by Dave Hawley

Welcome back to school. If you're new to SmartMusic, or have questions on how to get started again, this article is for you.

Your SmartMusic Educator subscription includes the SmartMusic Gradebook (formerly called Impact) which was designed to help you manage, grade and document student assignments. Setting it up will take about ten minutes. Take a few more minutes to create some assignments, enroll your students, and you'll be ready to go. Should any questions arise, we've created a series of [QuickStart Videos](#) to walk you through each step of the process, and they're just a mouse-click away.



To set up the SmartMusic Gradebook, open SmartMusic 2010, click on the Gradebook icon, and enter your e-mail address and the password you used to activate SmartMusic. Next, enter your name, the name of your school, grading periods, and classes.

Questions? Watch the Gradebook Setup video at: <http://www.smartmusic.com/Support/QuickStart.aspx>

The next step is to create assignments. Click on the Gradebook icon in SmartMusic 2010 and log-in, then click on Assignments in the menu bar. For a first assignment, I'd suggest you choose Announcement or Reminder and send out a welcome note. This approach offers an easy test of the process for both you and your students (whom we'll enroll below).

Next, specify SmartMusic Assessment and Recording – this is the music library. Choose between Band and String Methods Library or Band and Orchestra Titles Library then select a book and song or a concert title and follow the prompts to schedule an assignment.

Questions? Watch the Scheduling Assignments in the Gradebook video at: <http://www.smartmusic.com/Support/QuickStart.aspx>

Finally, you need to enroll your students. They can do this at home through SmartMusic or on a practice room computer at school: a home subscription is not required for them to enroll in the Gradebook. Simply instruct them to launch SmartMusic, click the Assignment icon, and select Enroll for Class under Getting Started.

Questions? Watch the Enroll for Class video at: <http://www.smartmusic.com/Support/QuickStart.aspx>

You are now set up and ready to go. Best wishes with the rest of your back-to-school preparations.

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## I'll be honest, I am not of the computer generation)

Charlie McGhee is a Band Director for the San Marcos Unified School District in San Marcos, California.



I first saw SmartMusic at our Southern California Music Educators' Conference. I remember thinking at the time that it just makes so much sense to offer my students a way to enjoy their music homework on their favorite medium, the computer. I'll be honest; I am not of the computer generation. In fact, I'm one of those people who struggle with using technology in innovative ways in the classroom. But all that changed when I finally made the commitment to convert my entire program to SmartMusic. Here is what I did)

I used the introduction video on the SmartMusic website to help me make a presentation to my Principal, Mr. Doug Hall. As Mr. Hall is always encouraging us expand our teaching methods by incorporating technology, I expected him to embrace Smart Music, and of course he did. I received his support and blessing to convert my entire program and grading system over to SmartMusic.

Next I spoke to a small group of students and parents and asked them to purchase SmartMusic and work with me in getting familiar with the program so they could offer their impression of this new way to approach practicing. This, too, was an overwhelming success, so the stage was set for me to begin offering SmartMusic to all the students in my program.

I began my next step by sending a letter home to all my students in their first day packets:

*Dear Parents, this year the music department at San Elijo Middle School is going Techno! We will be using new music software called SmartMusic. It is a web-based computer program that will record, instantly grade, and deliver your student's homework directly to me. In addition, this program will offer your student a fun way to practice at home as they will be playing along with recorded music while the program records their progress. I am asking for a donation toward the cost of this program, however, if money is tight, your student will still receive the software. Thanks in advance for your support.*

Principal Hall worked with the District Office and the Parent Teacher Association to chip in along with my Band Boosters. Between all of these organizations and the donations from the parents, the cost was easily affordable.

Of course, during this period, I made several presentations to my kids to get them hyped on this new program. I made these presentations using a SMART Board, however, any computer attached to a projector would work. I let kids try hooking up the microphone to their instrument and let them play along with the music and scales and other exercises. SmartMusic did everything I knew in my heart it would. It really turned the kids on to messing around on the computer while doing their band homework!

As I officially launched the program I began assigning projects, concentrating on selections from the SmartMusic library. That way I could use the automatic playing assessments that SmartMusic provides. For beginning band, I assigned selections from the method book I use. In addition, I assigned scales, twisters, play-by-ear exercises, and a cool feature called the weekly rhythm exercise, which automatically assigned a new exercise – each week – to all my students.

Because I am a strong believer in positive reinforcement, I was glad to see that the SmartMusic Gradebook makes it easy to adjust the grading scale. Based on early feedback and my more liberal standards, I specified more lenient grade requirements for my beginning band than the default of 90% performance being an A and an 80% a B, etc. Now there is good and bad to this. After looking at the overall success of my first year with SmartMusic, I have decided to change the way I approach beginning band slightly, next year. I plan to focus more on tone quality and pitch in the early days of my beginners lessons and I'm confident that that alone will increase the success of their experience with SmartMusic. Plus it's hard to argue that it's ever too early to address these issues.

I believe that overall this year was a complete success using SmartMusic. I know for a fact that my festival performance was greatly enhanced and I chose music this year that was a step up from the music I used the previous year. Plus I actually didn't have to work as hard teaching my students the music as I had SmartMusic to model their assignments.

I'd like to share one more observation: This year I saw a core group of my beginning band students, who totally embraced SmartMusic, who are currently playing music that is at a very advanced level. These students play as well as my eighth graders and can sightread music that I would never expect beginners to read. This is really encouraging: As I learn how to most effectively encourage students on SmartMusic, I'm convinced that I'll be able to continually expand this core group of accelerated learners.

I believe SmartMusic is the best music practice tool out there. It has changed the way I do business despite the fact that I am in my 'golden years of teaching.' It's all about being more effective as a teacher.

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## Tips and Tricks

### Welcome Back to School

Each summer, many school districts fix or replace computers by cleaning or imaging machines so educators often deactivate their SmartMusic subscription in order to use it on another machine over the summer. Just follow these steps to reactivate your subscription when you get back to school.

1. Install SmartMusic (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 follow the on-screen instructions to complete the activation process.

Or if you need assistance with this process, contact our SmartMusic Technical Support team [online](#) or call us at (866) 240-4041.

### Parent Meeting Tips by Dave Hawley

Music educators quickly recognize the benefits students receive from practicing with SmartMusic at home. Additional explanation may be required, however, to help parents understand these benefits, especially those parents who didn't participate in music organizations during their school years.

To help, we've created a For Students video that explains the advantages of practicing with SmartMusic at home. We recommend you devote six minutes of a parent meeting to show this video, which can be found at [www.smartmusic.com](http://www.smartmusic.com) as well as on your SmartMusic installation DVD. You might also encourage your students to write down the link and watch it with their parents at home.

Another communication technique that works well at both parent meetings and concerts is to have one or more students perform with SmartMusic. It's best if you have a projector and screen set up to show SmartMusic, but it's not absolutely necessary. Here are some suggested steps for such a performance:

1. Have a student play a short method book song or assessable band excerpt unaccompanied. Explain that this is how most students practice at home – offering no context for pitch and phrasing – and not much fun.
2. Have the same student play the same piece with a SmartMusic accompaniment. Explain how this does provide musical context – and it's a lot more fun.
3. Turn on assessment and have the same student play the same song while intentionally missing a few notes. With this projected on a screen ask the parents if they can tell which notes were played incorrectly: Even those who can't read music can.
4. Finally, record the student playing the same piece and play back the recording. Explain how this can be saved, e-mailed to grandma or burned to a disc to archive as a family treasure. Who wouldn't want a recording of their child to preserve for posterity?

We also suggest printing out copies of [SmartMusic Student QuickStart Guide](#) for parents to take home. This document guides parents and students through the complete process of fully implementing SmartMusic at home.

As educators, we know that when students practice with SmartMusic they're also developing reading and listening skills, pitch, phrasing, self-evaluation, and much more – all while having fun. Demonstrating SmartMusic in this way can make these benefits apparent to everyone.

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## Just Released

SmartMusic 2010 includes more than 300 new [band](#) and [orchestra](#) titles plus new [jazz ensemble](#) titles from Gordon Goodwin's Big Phat Band. Search the repertoire library. SmartMusic 2010 is required to access the newest repertoire so [download](#) your free update now.



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## Announcements

### Updated Resource Center

Looking for [past editions](#) of SmartNotes or information about [grants and funding](#)? Visit our [Resource Center](#).

### What's your favorite part of SmartNotes?

Take our [short one-question survey](#).

## SmartMusic Training Guide

Newly updated for SmartMusic 2010, this helpful workbook contains information on how to integrate SmartMusic into your curriculum. [Purchase](#) your copy for only \$19.95.

## ARRA Opportunities

Stimulus funding can be used for music education. [More](#).

## SmartMusic for your Entire School or District

Volume pricing is available for a minimum of 100 subscriptions. [More](#).

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### Meet the Team

Keyboardist Mike Dripps graduated from the Berklee College of Music, with majors in Music Synthesis and Jazz Composition, in 1990. Returning to Minnesota after graduation, Mike decided that a job with the makers of Finale would be a perfect fit – and he’s been here ever since. Today Mike creates SmartMusic accompaniments as a Senior Music Production Engineer.



Mike explains how this job has evolved: Content production for SmartMusic has changed dramatically since the days of Vivace. We used to create MIDI files that played back only piano or baroque sounds. A concerto or sonata might have taken a couple weeks to record and edit.

Today, with the support of audio and full-blown notation, we can combine an audio recording of an ensemble with Finale parts in a few hours. Of course this means more Finale work, and we also provide educator-authored assignments for each part, but the basic result is a great sounding, assessable file – WITH music on-screen – in much less time.

This process requires Mike and his team to work with both SmartMusic and Finale, as well as dedicated sequencing and audio software, and the variety keeps things interesting: I enjoy using the breadth of tools involved in creating one easy-to-use SmartMusic file. There’s a lot of detail going on behind the scenes and I enjoy playing a part in the magic.

Outside of MakeMusic, Mike plays more than 50 gigs a year with a variety group that specializes in corporate events, sometimes traveling as far away as Hawaii and Hong Kong. He also does Finale freelance work on the side, having recently worked on a Disney film involving talking dogs.

As if that wasn't enough, Mike and his wife are the devoted parents of three small children, and they both remain active outdoors people, enjoying kayaking, hiking, camping, and biking.

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