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## Sister Gail Buckman, Director of Bands

"One never becomes too old to learn new things, and I am a living example of that statement."



Sister Gail (fourth from right) receives the winning \$2,500 check on behalf of the School Sisters of Notre Dame.

Sister Gail is the Director of Bands at St. Gabriel the Archangel School in St. Louis, Missouri. Below she shares her experiences with SmartMusic:

"One never becomes too old to learn new things, and I am a living example of that statement. I just completed my 40th year of teaching and am as excited about teaching now as I was when I first started. One of the reasons for that is SmartMusic. It took me a few years -- and several workshops -- to be sold on this program. At first I thought that it was just a play-by-rote program and another "gimmick." But I came to realize what a valuable tool it is in the classroom, and for students at home. I am sold on SmartMusic and have used it as a part of my curriculum for the past two years. SmartMusic engages the student, challenges the student, and rewards the student; isn't that what every teacher wants? Having installed a screen and projector into my band room, I use SmartMusic to teach rhythm, ear training, scales, chromatics, enharmonics, and pieces from the method book, and sometimes just have fun.

Since I teach students from grade four through eight, there is quite a range of abilities and interests. I have found, through Smart Music, that all of these ages and interests can be met.

With my younger students, I project the new lesson on the screen and am able to focus the attention of the whole class to whatever it is I am teaching. The students are also able to come to the screen and point to the different elements, rather than just "finding it in the method book."

With SmartMusic being compatible with Finale, I am able to create worksheets for my older students, specifically focused on the material to be covered. For example, this year, two of the concert pieces contained chromatic passages. I used Finale to create a printable chromatic worksheet and then transferred it to a SmartMusic assignment through the

SmartMusic Gradebook. It is important that I can have a printed form of the assignment so that the 2% of students who do not have SmartMusic at home are able to practice the assignment and then record it either at school or at the house of a friend who does have SmartMusic.

Through the Gradebook I am able to assign something to the whole class or create individualized lessons for students who are either ahead of or behind the class. This past Spring I chose music for my beginning band (4th graders) from the SmartMusic library. I assigned these pieces to the students as their quarter grade. Each student was able to work at his/her own pace to learn the music and to learn it well. I was then able to continue teaching new concepts in class rather than drilling band pieces; it was a "win/win" for all of us.

Also, through the Gradebook, I am able to hear and see the assignment recording at my "leisure." I only see my students 60 minutes each week for lessons, so freeing up "testing" time from the classroom situation allows me more time to actually work with the students on technique rather than testing. Having students record assignments at home and playing them as often as needed until they are personally satisfied, requires more commitment and responsibility from the student, and in the end produces greater pride. The Gradebook also helps me by keeping track of who has submitted assignments and averages the grade.

As with any technology program, there are glitches. Students may have difficulties if their home computers don't meet SmartMusic system requirements, or if they do not have high-speed Internet. But, no matter what the technical question or problem, the SmartMusic staff is available every day to answer and solve any problems. For those students who are unable to have SmartMusic at home, I make it available to them at school. They can come to the band room at lunch or after school and record their assignments.

There are many other benefits to SmartMusic. My students are encouraged to explore the other included method books, exercises, and scales. Several students have recommended to me band selections they found in SmartMusic. Many students record themselves playing with SmartMusic and then transfer the resulting audio file to their iPods or e-mail it to grandparents. This year our Solo/Ensemble festival was enhanced by students performing solos with Smart Music, thus having a full accompaniment.

SmartMusic is constantly growing each day; the possibilities for using it are limitless. I am so glad that I chose to make the SmartMusic a part of my band curriculum. I am certainly proof that you can teach an 'old dog' new tricks, and that learning is a never ending process."

We also interviewed Sister Gail about her teaching experiences. Read about this on our [blog](#).

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## Tips & Tricks

This time of year many teachers and students are beginning to think about solo contest preparation. To help you and your students we've posted tips on [selecting contest solos](#) and [preparing for contest](#) on the [SmartMusic Blog](#).

Additional recent blog posts include:

- [The Best Excuse Ever](#) by Scott Yoho
- [Using SmartMusic Recordings](#) by Bob Grifa
- [Activation Made Easier](#) by James H. Anderson
- [Meet Martha Boonshaft](#) by Bob Grifa
- [Are Scales Still Boring?](#) by James H. Anderson
- [Meet Bob Cieslinski](#) by Bob Grifa

- [New "Fun Titles" in SmartMusic](#) by Scott Yoho
- [Have your band students create their own SmartMusic Assignments](#) by Bob Grifa
- [What is the drone?](#) By James Anderson
- [Meet Sister Gail Buckman](#) by Bob Grifa
- [Opening Files in SmartMusic 2010](#) by Bob Grifa
- [Save time with the SmartMusic Gradebook](#) by James H. Anderson
- [Finale 2010a and SmartMusic](#) by James H. Anderson
- [SmartMusic Top Ten](#) by Bob Grifa
- [SmartMusic Microphones](#) by James H. Anderson
- [SmartMusic, the Cursor, and the Click Track](#) by Bob Grifa
- [Bringing solo repertoire into SmartMusic with Finale](#) by James H. Anderson

We'd love to hear from you. Please provide comments on the blog posts, letting us know what posts you've found helpful or what you'd like to see in the future.

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### Author Spotlight: Jeff King

Jeff King has taught band in Texas for 25 years, and has been with the Duncanville ISD for the last 20 years. Jeff is currently the director of the Duncanville High School Honors Band, Jazz Band, and Co-Conductor of the Wind Ensemble. While teaching in Duncanville, his bands have been consistent Best in Class winners and have earned superior ratings in concert and sight-reading every year.



For years Jeff and fellow Duncanville director Richard Williams created warm-ups, scales, and technical exercises to help students meet their consistently high musical goals. Eventually these materials were refined, edited, and organized until they became the basis for "Foundations for Superior Performance," the renowned series from Kjos. This series is designed to help organize the daily rehearsal and to improve the overall performance level of any band.

In early 2009 Jeff worked with MakeMusic to add "Foundations for Superior Performance" to the SmartMusic library. He recently talked to us about how the partnership between SmartMusic and "Foundations for Superior Performance" works.

"In the **warm-up** section of the book (long tones and warm-up sets), students have the opportunity to produce their best tone and intonation while playing along with a metronome click. Students have the option of playing alone or matching unisons with a piano. In playing unisons, students begin to build the necessary skills needed for superior intonation. The ability to vary the tempo allows each student to practice on their level, resulting in a more efficient and productive practice session.

Who knew that playing scales and other technical exercises could be so much fun? Each of the exercises in the **technique** section has been given a musical accompaniment that goes along with each specific technique. Again, the ability to control the tempi allows students to develop technique and articulation in the most efficient and musical setting possible.

I am most excited about the integration of SmartMusic into the **tuning and chorale** section of the book. Students learn to play the 'true' intervals of a unison, third, fifth, and octave in a harmonic setting using a *mean tuning* system. In the chorale section, students learn to 'place' or adjust their chord tone (1, 3, 5 or 7) in major and minor chords using a

*just tuning* system. For instance in a major chord, the root is established, then the fifth is 'stretched' slightly, and then finally the third is lowered slightly. The intonation skills that students can develop through this type of practice should prove extremely valuable when transferred into the band setting. In the chorale melody exercises, SmartMusic is able to play the melody, subdivision, or bopped line, which brings these concepts to life for students in an immediate way.

It is exciting to be able to use this technology, to allow students the opportunity to practice skills that may be refined and addressed more specifically during rehearsal.

In this age of testing and accountability, educators are constantly being asked to provide evidence of student achievement. SmartMusic's Gradebook feature allows the teacher to send assignments to each of their students as well as give individualized feedback, which maximizes limited rehearsal time. The partnership between Foundations and SmartMusic Gradebook makes it possible for music educators to demonstrate and document improvement in our students.

I hope that you will consider using Foundations for Superior Performance and SmartMusic in your own classroom."

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### Just Released

"Easy Popular Movie Instrumental Solos" and "Easy Christmas Instrumental Solos" are perfect for students looking for some fun titles to create recordings for family and friends over the holidays this year. Learn more in our recent [blog](#) or download a [flyer](#) to post in your classroom or send home to parents

[Search](#) for new band and orchestra titles.



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### Announcements

#### **Have you updated to SmartMusic 2010?**

SmartMusic 2010 is required to use the latest repertoire and is a [free update](#) to current subscribers.

#### **Become a SmartMusic Advocate**

Do you love SmartMusic? Read what educators in your area are saying about SmartMusic and sign up using the link below the map. [Join Now](#).

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### Meet the Team

Last month Lindsay Schleicher celebrated her third anniversary as MakeMusic's Licensing Administrator. In this role, she gathers information on what repertoire should be added to SmartMusic, and works with publishers to license that repertoire. In determining future repertoire additions she looks at user requests, educator surveys, state contest lists,



best-seller lists, publisher recommendations, popular new releases, and more.

"I like forming relationships with publishers and hearing their excitement about SmartMusic," says Lindsay. "Many are musicians themselves, or have children who use the program, so they recognize early on what a great teaching and learning tool it is."



Lindsay deals with contract negotiations and answers publisher questions regarding the terms of the license. Once a license is signed, she collects the necessary publisher files needed for our repertoire development staff to create the final SmartMusic accompaniments.

"I've always had an interest in the 'behind the scenes' work associated with the music industry," Lindsay explains. "In college I became interested in things like contract negotiations and copyright ownership. I knew I wanted to be involved with publishing in one form or another." After graduating from the McNally Smith College of Music in St. Paul with a music business degree she worked or interned at record labels, recording studios, and distribution centers before finding a perfect fit at MakeMusic.

Lindsay is very enthusiastic about SmartMusic: "I enjoy hearing how SmartMusic is positively affecting our broad range of subscribers. Everyone from teachers, parents, students, and hobbyists can benefit from this program. I especially like that parents who aren't musically inclined can now become involved with their child's music education. As a former band student, I wish that SmartMusic had been available for me because it would have made my practice time much more efficient and enjoyable."

As a student Lindsay played piano and percussion, and was active in band, marching band, and drumline programs (she was drumline captain for two years at Forest Lake High School). Today she channels her love of music into collecting vinyl records and trying to attend as many concerts as possible "I've traveled across the country on several occasions just to catch a concert or music festival." Her tastes run from classic rock (her first concert was the Rolling Stones), to modern indie rock, blues, old-time country, old R&B/soul, bluegrass, and "a little classical thrown in for good measure." Lindsay is passionate about photography and also enjoys traveling, running, reading, and hiking – including lunchtime walks in sight of nearby Lake Smetana.

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