

# How to Teach with *In Tune Music News*

Stoke curiosity in students via tips, tidbits and current events in music. **BY PAUL IRWIN**



**T**HE INITIAL PAGES of *In Tune Monthly* follow a considered formula, with a consistent design for many moons. Like the magazine as a whole, that opening News section of *In Tune* seeks to strike a balance, presenting a potpourri of enlightening pieces for both male and female teen music students of various backgrounds. Its recipe is one-part band and orchestra, something for the singers, a touch of tech,

some instrument info, a bit of business, and anything cool and unusual overall.

What's the method for the story selection here? Well, like most news sources, we seek to keep our readers up to date. Coming out monthly, though, our News section isn't necessarily timely. What we're seeking to highlight most of all in News is achievement. If the criterion for stories chosen for the news on TV has often been "if it bleeds, it leads," then ours is "if it succeeds, it leads."

*In Tune News* celebrates success. Even if we include the rare obituary, it's about someone who had significant musical accomplishments. We'll try to debunk a myth here and there, as well as point to a fading fad on occasion, but almost exclusively, the opening pages of *In Tune* are meant to inspire.

So, beyond recommending our collection of "did you know..." narratives to get students reading about music and keeping them engaged in its study, what lessons can be

derived from the News in *In Tune*?

Lessons using our News stories can be created by category, such as information about tools of the trade. From new developments in instrument construction to product innovations to new instruments themselves, there's always something in the News about new gear. The October issue of *In Tune* included a story in News about an implement for vocal training, the Oovo Straw, a device made of silver and likely out of the price range for most students and teachers. But the short piece was chock full of discussion opportunities. Why might a straw of any material help singers train? This might lead to a discussion about vocal training in general. So there's one universal tip for teaching with News. But each story should be considered a diving board of sorts, a jumping off point to begin the transfer of knowledge about a subject that might not be mission critical to your teaching, but will round out a class, keep things fresh and heighten interest about a set of subjects that creatively connect to your teaching.

Then there's technology. We're interested in it, your kids are interested in it, and technology is inexorably changing everything in music, not to mention our lives. *In Tune* presents extensive features on trends in technology and their impact on music, but the drumbeat of developments in music tech is such that we want to keep up in the moment. With each such News story, the question should be: How does this development change the way we learn to play and sing, as well as the way we perform, record and distribute recorded music? Is it a good thing or could it be bad? How does it work? In conversation and throughout the curriculum, sidebars on technology and its impact are integral to music education, and the News section can be a springboard for classroom discussion, ancillary readings,



Each story should be considered a diving board of sorts, a jumping off point to begin the transfer of knowledge about a subject that might not be mission critical to your teaching.

project work and other interaction.

*In Tune* News covers the various industries of music. Again, we will occasionally do big stories on trends and opportunities in the music business, but when news happens in music creation, publishing and rights, the label community, touring and law, we're interested and will report on it. Those small stories can lead to larger lessons in career preparation. Too often, we hear from adults who are pursuing musical vocations that they wish they had known more about career or music-business opportunities at

a younger age. *In Tune* can turn on those light bulbs. In each issue this year, we're profiling careers in music with a column called "What Will You Do?" But items in News about changes and achievements in commercial music can also easily connect to how those involved came to help influence these events. Discussions about how young students can prepare for careers – materials to read, college and vocational programs to check out, and courses to take – can be linked to stories about the music industry.

Three other tidbits included in each News section of *In Tune* are an intriguing quote; a definition of a musical term, or word; and our "Lesson Link." The quote is simply a few pithy words of wisdom, but always a window on a much larger concept. They each make for great essay themes, which can then jump-start productive classroom discussions. What did Leonard Bernstein mean when, as quoted in the October edition of the News, he said, "To achieve great things, two things are needed: a plan and not quite enough time"? Whoa. How does that concept apply to the great things Lenny composed and conducted?

Our "What's the Word" definition is another lesson-starter that can be a good way of wrapping up a classroom session. Likewise, sending students off with a Lesson Link URL for a particular video tutorial we like is another way of broadening horizons. Sure, double-pedal patterns with Korn drummer Ray Luzier may not seem all that relevant for choral students, but every musician or fan can appreciate rhythm, and providing some diversity in music education, especially as home study or enrichment, makes excellent educational sense. Besides, you never know if your fresh-faced young flutist might decide to become a drummer in a heavy-metal band. Could happen... **T**