

◆ TEACHER'S EDITION ◆

THE YOUNG MUSICIAN'S TEXTBOOK

# intune

VOL. 21 • NO. 3

MONTHLY

HOW TO PLAY  
"LIL' BOO THANG"

SINGLE NOTE  
HARMONY

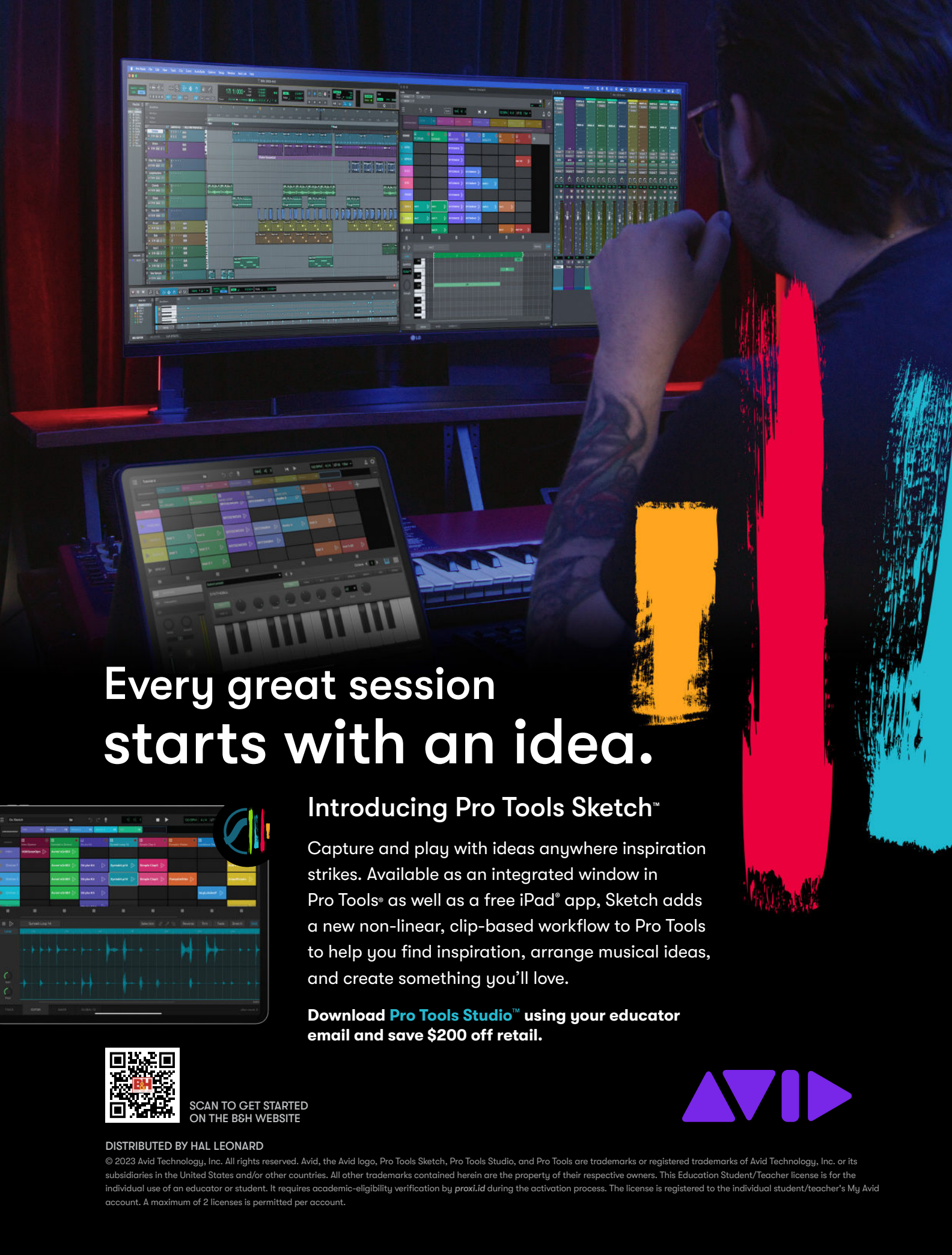
THE  
PRO TOOLS  
PROS

## THE GASLIGHT ANTHEM

This hardworking band was peaking in 2014 but needed a break. No one thought it would last nine years.

- ◆ Music Education Travel '24: Making Plans
- ◆ "R&R" for Newbies
- ◆ Starting a Mariachi Program
- ◆ The Idea of Blend and Balance

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SCAN TO GET STARTED ON THE B&H WEBSITE



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## On The Road Again

**IN THIS ISSUE** of the In Tune Teachers Edition you'll find an essay on "music travel," or traveling with your students. Taking your kids out of school to do anything during the pandemic was fairly impossible for many, if not most, and even planning a future excursion was difficult. Now, however, we face other challenges. Nevertheless, the benefits of being out in the community, or to events around the country or even the world, are too great to pass up.

Music travel can, of course, take many forms. A band or choir can perform in the neighborhood, or at a festival, or even on a tour with multiple stops you create or create with the help of a travel company. But even a class trip to a music store, or music museum or professional concert are all enriching and will have a memorable impact on the development of your students.

The first thing to think about, though, is the time it will take to do the research, get the approvals, and plan every moment of an excursion. We'll leave the discussion of details to the authors of our story, however, we thought it would be worthwhile to underscore that, if you do decide to travel with a class, the environment you do it in will likely be different than it is today.

It's impossible to foresee what that world will look like then, but suffice it to say, things will change. Just look back two or three years at how different things were. Therefore, given the time it will take between the spark of a travel idea until the bus pulls away from the curb, now is as good a time as any to get things rolling! ●

Teachers can go to [intunemonthly.com/lessonplans](https://intunemonthly.com/lessonplans) for full lesson plans and videos. This month, lesson plans are available for the following stories:



### The Gaslight Anthem

After five successful albums and a life on the road, this top-selling rock band finished a tour exhausted and without inspiration. Uninspired as to their next move, they simply decided to take a break, never imagining that it would last nine years. Here's a story about "going with the flow."



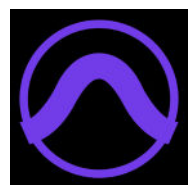
### Single Note Harmony

There is no one right way to harmonize with a melody. There are certainly those that feel great to our ears, built using specific intervals, whether diatonic or chromatic. But, whether singing or playing your instrument, finding notes that connect and lift a melody is a sublime feeling.



### How To Play "Lil' Boo Thang"

In this month's column our record producer and In Tune writer examines "Lil' Boo Thang" by Paul Russell. It's a great example of a recent song that draws on an older one.



### The Pro Tools Pros

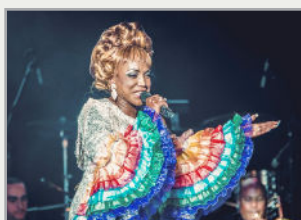
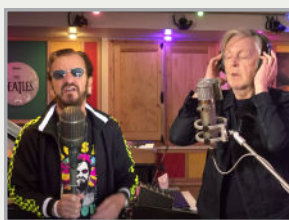
While there are aficionados who use computers to mix multi-track recordings on various digital audio workstation software, Pro Tools remains the audio industry standard. We outline the why's and wherefores and illustrate our story with vignettes about the professionals who use it.

# The Tao of In Tune

Black Keys' Blues Routes

## THE COUNTDOWN TO THANKSGIVING, WINTER CONCERTS (AND THE HOLIDAY BREAK) HAS BEGUN.

High school marching bands are on the field each week, students who began private lessons in September, and those practicing at home, are getting their parts down and getting better, and your music program is in full swing, so to speak. Congratulations. Welcome to high gear. Here then is the December issue of In Tune, a bit of tinsel for your lessons; a plate of cookies by the fire...an extra treat. You can see for yourself what we've put a bow on this month but allow us to point out three special items. Check out the track "C'est La Vie," from a new album by the old ska band Madness in the In Tune Listening List (and podcast) and share what makes ska special. Spend a few minutes with Marj LoPresti's excellent series finale on teaching mariachi music, just a few pages henceforth in this In Tune Teachers Edition. And finally, treat your kids to the free online recordings of performances and interviews, as well as a unique podcast series, from the Delta Blues Museum as profiled on the last page of the In Tune Student Edition. Think of it as a music education stocking stuffer. More on the museum story below.



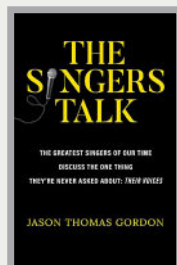
## MUSIC NEWS

Our collection of music news is designed to keep music students aware of the broader music world around them. This issue's vignettes include "Of Taylor and TikTok Tour Power," "Bad Bunny Keeps Going," "The Beatles Now and Then," Cuban singer Celia Cruz' will appear on a U.S. quarter, "Young Pianist Wins Hancock Competition," and more.



## INFLUENCES

Here's how the inspirations of rock band Pinegrove connect through time to Iggy and the Stooges.



## MEDIA

Our monthly collection of music media features the new book *The Singers Talk: The Greatest Singers of Our Time Discuss the One Thing They're Never Asked About: Their Voices* — by Jason Thomas Gordon, a podcast series called "The Profitable Musician Show" about getting started in the music business, a new sheet music collection *Disney 100 Songs — Celebrating the 100th Anniversary of Disney*, and more.



## FRONTRUNNER

This month's Frontrunner column features another collection of artists on the rise, bracketed by a list of noteworthy songs curated with student musicians in mind. It includes profiles of English R&B/hip-hop singer/songwriter/musician and producer Sampha, country traditionalist singer/songwriter Randall King, pop/flamenco artist Maria Jose Llergo, chill wave band Poolside, and 14-year-old singer/guitarist and mandolin player Wyatt Ellis.

## WHAT DO YOU DO?

We profile the career of musician and Director of Music Creator Outreach and Engagement at digital music distribution service Distrokid, Daniel Harmann



## MEMORABLE MUSIC MUSEUMS

Situated in the town where American blues music is said to have originated, the Delta Blues Museum in Clarksdale, Mississippi is dedicated to preserving and sharing the history and heritage of American blues music. Through exhibits and live events, the museum works to help visitors find meaning and perspective by exploring the unique musical form.



# EVEN TEACHERS NEED TEACHERS

As an educator, one of the most impactful ways to improve is by educating yourself. That's why the Yamaha Educator newsletter helps music teachers engage in professional development, music teacher tips, program health information, advocacy resources and more. The Yamaha Educator newsletter is delivered biweekly to over 15,000 music teachers who choose to invest in themselves. Let us help you raise the bar. Sign up. Go to [Yamaha.io/educators](https://Yamaha.io/educators)

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## “R&R” for Newbies

**H**ELP! I just took a new position and only have twenty-six students enrolled in band! My goodness! And, my supervisor just told me that the guidance department has decided to move registration back to February. How will I ever be ready? With all that students have to choose from as they progress from middle to high school, how can our instrumental music program compete? We desperately need new instruments! What can I do to help my administrator understand how critical it is to make these purchases?

So many questions! Luckily the best instrumental music educators in the country have been coming together to provide answers through a series of real-life, hands-on complimentary resources available from the Music Achievement Council. More about how to access this information later. In the meantime, let’s look at some of the above scenarios and possible solutions.

### RECRUITMENT

Whether building a program from scratch or losing a huge chunk of your ensemble to graduation (or a new school

opening in your same zone), recruitment and retention is “job one” and thus a year-round effort. Recruiting requires getting out to *other* schools as often as possible. How often can we visit the schools that prepare students who will eventually come to our programs? Weekly? Twice a week? Can your supervisor help by scheduling your prep time so that you can spend more time off-site with your colleagues who teach these younger students? Can we ensure that students from these programs are performing on a regular basis with our own students even if it means scoring a part for “recorder” so that the third-grade students can be featured in the middle school band, choir, or orchestra concert? How about involving the middle school band students in one of the high school marching band shows? I recently enjoyed watching a half-time show that featured beginning band students “rocking out” on just two well-placed notes in one of the songs being performed. The students, and of course their parents, were *thrilled* to be featured and they now have a solid, meaningful memory of their first (dare I say, “entertaining”?) experience on the field that will stick with them forever!

## RETENTION

Are all levels of your district’s music educators – elementary, middle, high schools – on the same page with regard to the K-12 experience? Are all empowered to help retain students as they progress from one level to the next? It’s important that we think of ourselves as one faculty that works together consistently to provide *one seamless, sequential program* with the ultimate goal of creating life-

long music-makers. Some ideas to retain students not only involve the teachers themselves, but the parents and current ensemble members as well. For example, high school band/orchestra parents could host an “Informational Parents Night” for the middle school band/orchestra parents since parents have their own, distinctive perspective from that of the directors. Another example might be to have the middle school parents write letters of invitation to

## ORGANIZING THE BUDGET

On to the budget. Justifying instrument purchases is easy if your principal was once a music educator (but how often does that happen!) Thankfully, most principals *do* understand budget proposals submitted in a concise, well-thought-out, organized document. Here are some recommendations from those who have put together a template that works.

### A. Present a complete, five-year plan that starts with a written rationale that should include information pertaining to:

- What instruments in the present inventory need to be replaced.
- The likely growth of the program over the next five years
- What additions must be made to the inventory to satisfy the demand that will result from this growth.

### B. Include an Inventory Record

| INSTRUMENT | INVENTORY NUMBER | MAKE | SERIAL NUMBER | NEW | DATE PURCHASED | PRESENT VALUE* | PRESENT CONDITION | REMAINING LIFE |
|------------|------------------|------|---------------|-----|----------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------|
|            |                  |      |               |     |                |                |                   |                |
|            |                  |      |               |     |                |                |                   |                |

### C. Include a chart that clearly shows the anticipated need for these purchases.

| INSTRUMENT PURCHASES | 1ST YEAR                | 2ND YEAR                | 3RD YEAR                | 4TH YEAR                | 5TH YR                  |
|----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Piccolo              | XYZ Brand<br>\$x,xxx.xx |                         |                         |                         |                         |
| Oboe                 |                         | XYZ Brand<br>\$x,xxx.xx |                         |                         |                         |
| Bass Clarinet        |                         |                         |                         | XYZ Brand<br>\$x,xxx.xx |                         |
| Bassoon              |                         |                         |                         |                         | XYZ Brand<br>\$x,xxx.xx |
| Tenor Sax            | XYZ Brand<br>\$x,xxx.xx |                         |                         |                         |                         |
| Bari Sax             |                         | XYZ Brand<br>\$x,xxx.xx |                         |                         |                         |
| French Horn          | XYZ Brand<br>\$x,xxx.xx | XYZ Brand<br>\$x,xxx.xx | XYZ Brand<br>\$x,xxx.xx |                         |                         |
| Etc.                 |                         |                         |                         |                         |                         |

To help determine the Present Value, use a Depreciation Chart.

| INSTRUMENT            | INV NO. | VALUE Now | Yr #1   | Yr #2 | Yr #3 | Year #4 | Yr #5 | Yr #6 | Etc. |
|-----------------------|---------|-----------|---------|-------|-------|---------|-------|-------|------|
| Instrument #1         | 123456  | \$330     | \$1,000 | \$800 | \$650 | \$530   | \$430 | \$330 |      |
| (est. life of 10 yrs) |         |           |         |       |       |         |       |       |      |

the elementary school parents encouraging them to bring their children to an upcoming performance. Parents reaching out to parents – whether through a potluck supper, an informational meeting, or a simple email – is one of the most successful ways to get (and keep) both students and their parents engaged.


Students currently enrolled can also help, and as a result, become even more committed to your program through direct, hands-on involvement. The best high school students could serve as intern instructors in a free “summer lesson program” for students who are starting on their instrument. Supervised appropriately by the director, this win-win-win situation helps in a number of ways. Because the lessons are held when school is out of session, new instrumental students get quality instruction in a casual (yet focused) setting. It also sets up the high school student as a role model to be emulated by the younger student (Academic Service-Learning). The high school student receives additional leadership experience and may even discover a joy for teaching. They could also spend time assisting middle school students by sitting in on their rehearsals whenever schedules permit. The key is to ensure bridge-building activities between all levels of the program so that students


may move seamlessly from one level to the next.


For additional information on how you might develop your budget, as well as numerous other helpful ideas, download the free *Tips for Success* publication from the Music Achievement Council and review Tip #8, *The Business Side of Teaching School Music: Preparing an Instrument Replacement Plan* available at <https://www.nammfoundation.org/educator-resources/mac-tips-success>. The In Tune Music Educator’s Buyers Guide at [intunebg.digital](http://intunebg.digital) is another resource, and offers considerations, as well as manufacturer data, on instrument options. ¶



**MARCIA NEEL** serves as Senior Director of Education for Yamaha Corporation of America. She also serves as Education Advisor to the Music Achievement Council, a 501(c)(6) organization whose sole purpose is to assist directors in recruiting and retaining students in instrumental music programs through effective professional development. Marcia also serves as a member of the Board of Directors of Percussive Arts Society.








## A Career in Music is a Viable Career Choice!

The NAMM Foundation's Consider a Career in Music initiative supports students, parents, teachers, school administrators and counselors and education professionals in their efforts to support student career planning and explore the many fulfilling and sustainable careers in music and the creative field.

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An In Tune Special Report

# Music Education Travel '24

By Andrew Surmani and Daniel Gregerman

On stage Jose Antonio Diaz (drums),  
Founder & Artistic Director, Diaz Music  
Institute, Houston, Texas



# MAKING P



# PLANS

One of Benjamin Franklin's greatest quotes from 1790 was, "If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail." It still holds true to this day and especially in the world of student travel, where in the post-COVID world, the conditions for travel have changed dramatically.

As a director creating a trip, you will of course need a plan, and will be presenting that plan to many stakeholders. Depending on its scope and duration, those stakeholders can include students, parents, administrators, board members, fundraising companies, etc., each with a different perspective. A solid plan that anticipates those views and includes concurrent contingencies will allow you to present it, and if needed defend it, as well as answer questions with the utmost confidence. As your proposal is formulated and your fundraising strategy is outlined, it is important to think of every question that could be asked from any stakeholder. Answering these in advance will make for better responses and a smoother approval process overall.

Start with the "why." Explain the reasons you are planning on conducting your proposed trip, what the educational benefits will be to the students, how it will showcase your school and district, and how it will be funded. It's a big endeavor to plan a trip, and all the stakeholders in the process will want to know "why" and how it will benefit all parties, and how you will mitigate the challenges involved in travel.

"Since my first trip out-of-state thanks to a robust public school music program, I realized that travel can provide the best learning opportunities. Forty years later, and after visiting, traveling, touring, and performing and living in countries all over the world I still believe that travel (and music) provides the best learning opportunities. My life has been enriched through music and travel. The American and international music students I interact with are incredibly knowledgeable, empathetic, and sensitive to global issues thanks to their travel experiences influencing how they positively see the world today," says Scott Rumery, Instrumental Music Director, Humphreys High School, Pyeongtaek, South Korea

Brian Clissold, Director for Animado Events says, "Travel teaches students that the world is bigger than their devices. It introduces them to people and places that are different, yet very much



**Scott Rumery, Instrumental Music Director, Humphreys High School, Pyeongtaek, South Korea**



the same. (It) pushes young people to adapt to new situations and encourages learning. Education becomes hands-on and not just something in a book. Connecting a performance arts curriculum to real-world experiences is the goal for which arts educators strive. These performance travel adventures are the foundation for life-changing experiences!” Animado offers authentic and inspiring performance opportunities at prestigious venues in countless destinations.

Once you have developed and expressed why you are planning a trip and outlined the supporting rationale, the next step is to develop a detailed budget with the two main sections being the income, where the funds will come from, and the expenses: the costs for the trip. Your budget will need to balance so that all expenses will be covered. Start first with any funding the school or district can offer, then consider the fundraising you might be able to do to pay for the trip, and/or look to the various donors, sponsors and grants you can apply for or appeal to. As with all budgets, these are estimates

at best, so build into your budget contingency amounts on both the income and expense side. What if you don’t raise as much from the fundraising that you had budgeted for? What if certain costs are more than planned for?

In addition, you’ll have to determine how many chaperones need to be on the trip and if their trip is free or paid for at a reduced fee with parents or college age chaperones having to fund the difference (as well what that amount will be). There should also be a plan to support students who cannot afford to pay for their share of the cost. Most importantly, be clear on what the school’s insurance policy covers for your trip, and what it doesn’t. In some cases the personal instruments of students may not be covered, so it is recommended that students and their parents obtain instrument travel insurance. All kinds of things can happen to instruments on a trip, and you need to be prepared to answer the “what if” questions. Trip cancellation insurance is also available for individuals, and it’s important to be able to direct those need-

ing insurance to reputable agents or carriers.

Likewise, in a post-COVID world, anticipating health and safety issues is at the top of the list. You will need to be prepared for any situation where someone can get hurt or become ill and prepare for how you will handle it. What if someone catches a cold, the flu, or COVID? What will be the plan for treating them? What if someone needs to go to the emergency room or hospital, especially in a foreign country? There should be an action plan in place for each of these possibilities including things like, in the event someone needs to go to a hospital, which chaperones will stay behind at the hotel, etc. All students need to check with their parents to see what their health insurance covers while on a trip and determine the process to deal with a medical emergency out of the local area or country. In addition if you can travel with a chaperone who has a medical background, it can be very beneficial for all involved.

“I thought I knew how to plan a detailed trip until I met with a professional tour company. With the various protocols and cost factors, there is so much going on with student travel today. The plan the professional tour company put together for my group was exceptionally well organized, thorough, and cost effective. I learned so much in

working with them about all the details of planning for a trip in the post-COVID world,” offers Jose Antonio Diaz, Founder & Artistic Director for Diaz Music Institute in Houston, TX.

Without a doubt, the professionals will surface issues, as well as provide solutions, for conditions that may not even cross your mind. For example, Keith Snode, CEO for Kaleidoscope Adventures explains that *his* company’s biggest operational challenge continues to be securing motorcoaches for groups. “There is a staggering shortage of qualified drivers. As a result, fewer motorcoaches are available to book - particularly during the busy spring travel season. Student tour operators must help manage client expectations and underscore the necessity of booking early. Teachers and group leaders should be prepared to book at least one full year in advance for the best chance of securing transportation,” says Snode. “Booking a student trip early not only helps lock down those motorcoaches, but often also means better rates and selection, admission to popular attractions and activities, and access to the most sought-after performance venues.

Another major issue that you need to plan for is what will happen if students participate in behavior or activi-



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ties that are against school policy? Your school and district should have written policies for these circumstances, and all students and their parents should sign a “travel rules” document and agree to the consequences outlined if they use poor judgment and partake in any of those activities on the trip. Before the trip begins, it is recommended to have a meeting with all stakeholders and discuss the expectation and outcomes of all rules and policies. Also, for both the health and safety emergencies, as well as the inappropriate behaviors, create a “communication plan” on what, how and when information will be communicated back to the other stakeholders on and not included on the trip.

One other circumstance related to travel is that checking bags these days has a big cost and bags can also get lost easily. Students should know what those costs are if they are checking bags and may want to consider inserting Air Tags in their checked baggage, in the event their luggage is lost. It is also possible to obtain preloaded Visa cards to give to each traveler for use at the counter for their baggage fees. You can’t always rely on the airlines to know where your bag is. According to the Federal Aviation Administration

(FAA), having an Air Tag in your luggage is allowed. With carry-on bags, make sure all students are clear on the regulations and size and weight limits related to this in advance, so they do not show up at the airport with a bag too large or too heavy to carry on board. That of course includes their instruments! And speaking of instruments, and other equipment, it’s a good idea to research music stores and gear rental businesses close to your destination(s). Know their hours and what they carry. To paraphrase an old saying, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of performance! **T**

**ANDREW SURMANI** is Professor, Music Industry Studies, California State University, Northridge (CSUN) in Los Angeles. Founding Board Member and Past President of the Jazz Education Network (JEN). Co-author of Essentials of Music Theory, Alfred Music.

**DANIEL GREGERMAN** is Choral Director/Vocal Jazz Director, Niles North High School, Skokie, IL (retired after 35 years) and also current Director of Vocal Jazz, Glenbrook High School, Glenview, IL. Founding Board Member of the Jazz Education Network (JEN) and co-author, Rehearsing the Vocal Jazz Ensemble, Meredith Music Publications.

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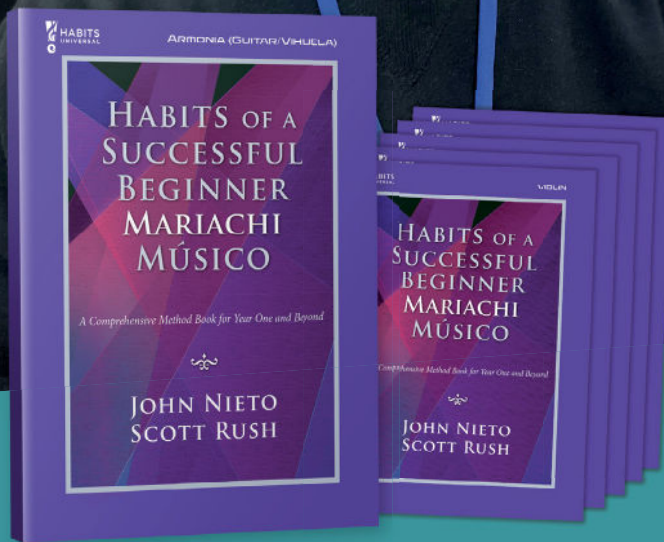
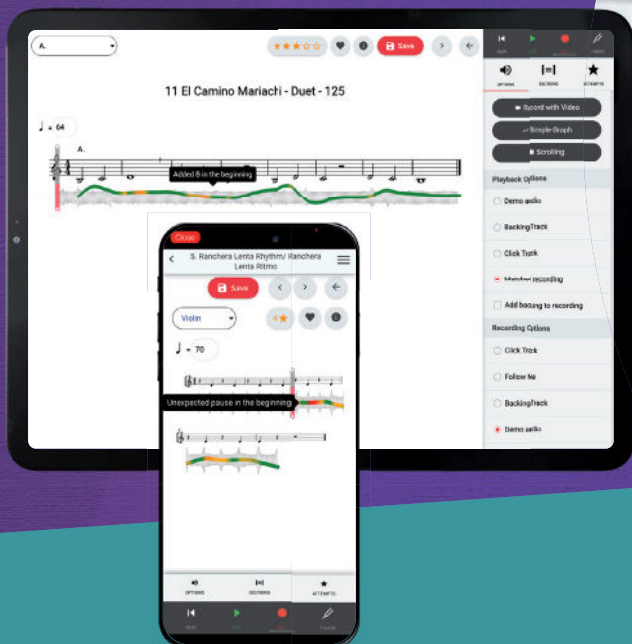
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Author, John Nieto



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# STARTING A MARIACHI



Brackenridge HS Mariachi band  
in San Antonio, Texas



By Marjorie LoPresti

# MARIACHI PROGRAM



**IN THIS THIRD AND FINAL ARTICLE OF OUR SERIES** on mariachi for music educators, we'll get advice from noted experts John Nieto and Ramon Niño. Both John and Ramon came to mariachi during their professional careers and learned the music and traditions along the way. Their advice: as a musician and teacher, you can learn and teach mariachi just as any other musical style. No prior experience is required. Music is music, and kids are eager to learn and grow.

SO, YOU THINK MARIACHI is just for Texas, California, and the Southwest, do you? Well, mariachi programs are popping up all over the country, even in communities without large Spanish-speaking populations. If you've read the prior two articles in this series (In Tune Teachers Edition – October and November 2023 issues available in the archive), you're familiar with this trend, as well as with master mariachi educators John Nieto and Ramon Niño III. What you may not realize is that they did not grow up with mariachi. John considered himself primarily a jazz musician. Ramon specialized in marching band. Both learned the traditions and music of mariachi during their teaching careers. Here then, as lifelong learners, consummate musicians, advocates for professional development, and champions for student success, they are sharing guidance on starting a mariachi program through the Q & A format.

**Marjorie LoPresti:** What would a director with little or no personal mariachi experience need to start a school program? Let's start with instruments and uniforms.



**John Nieto:** Some ensembles have worn mariachi t-shirts and slacks as their first uniform. If you would like something slightly fancier on a budget, black pants (or floor-length skirt), white shirt and a basic mariachi *moño* (tie) will suffice. It is important to find dealers of instruments and *trajes*

(uniforms) that are reputable. If you do not know any, ask friends, acquaintances, or post a question on the Mariachi Community Facebook page. Mariachi educators are eager to help and you will receive many recommendations.

Your school may require that you use a dealer who accepts school PO's. Some reputable dealers of both instruments and uniforms are La Tradición (based in Nashville), Mariachi Clothing Company (based in the San Diego area), Mariachi Connection (based in San Antonio), RGV Mariachi Warehouse (based in the Texas Valley) and others. Some dealers only sell instruments, including Southwest Strings (based Tucson), Bosky Strings (Texas Valley), and Hermes Music (Texas Valley).

**What about learning materials? Teachers will need some training/professional development, learning materials for students, and arrangements for various experience levels.**



**Ramon Niño III:** Mariachimusic.com is a great place to start learning on your own. Also, be sure to connect with professional organizations like TAME (Texas Association of Mariachi Educators) <https://www.tamemariachi.com>.

**JN:** You can find sheet music and other resources online and at some of your favorite sheet music dealers. Mariachi Education Press, Kjos, Northeastern Music, and GIA have published mariachi method books. You can also find online sources such as Teachers Pay Teachers, Mariachi Guru and JW Pepper to find original sheet music and arrangements. (*Editor's note: John Nieto is author of Habits of a Successful Mariachi Músico, GIA Publications, 2023*).

Look for recordings and videos too. You should be able to find a few resources at SmartMusic Cloud and Music-First. Both have an array of traditional method books on their platform and offer free trial subscriptions. Many fine mariachi performances are available on YouTube. Such model performances will help you as the teacher and will inspire your students.

Remember, you know music and how to teach!

**RN:** For professional development, there are several organizations like Mariachi Spectacular and National Mariachi Conference that run summer professional development intensives. And many music education conferences include one or more sessions on mariachi. If you've never attended TMEA, held in February each year, it's an excellent place to start.

**In a perfect scenario where there is strong school community support, established band and string programs, and adequate funding, what kind of budget would be needed?**

**JN:** Before asking for a blank amount of funds, make three lists: your 'dream' list including everything from quality instruments to amazing uniforms, a 'reasonable' list with more moderately-priced options, and a 'make do' list—the bare essentials. Look for prices of each instrument. Most dealers have instruments for various levels (beginner, intermediate and advanced). The instruments to look for are violins, trumpets, guitars, vihuelas, guitarraón, guitarra de golpe and harp. The level of your group should be factor in how much to spend on instruments.

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**- John Nieto**

**RN:** A budget that will begin and sustain a mariachi program is essential. Quality instruments, well-thought out traje de charro and a sound system are the three components that a director must look for first. After the initial purchases are made, a budget to sustain the program and make additions for growth are key factors for long-term success. Many times, adding mariachi to the annual school music budget is overlooked, and the mariachi program is left to fend for itself. Just like uniforms for marching band, *trajes* are made custom and based on measurements provided for the students at the time. Be sure to allow for student and program growth in getting funding for uniforms as well as instruments each year.

**If funding is an issue, what types of grants or fund-raising can you recommend?**

**JN:** Ask for donations, create a GoFundme page, DonorsChoose or consider other fundraising ventures.

**RN:** Look for organizations that provide grants too. The NAMM Foundation, Save the Music, Mariachi

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**Look for organizations that provide grants too. The NAMM Foundation, Save the Music, Mariachi Scholarship Foundation, and Mariachi Women's Foundation all have information online.**

**- Ramon Niño III**

Scholarship Foundation, and Mariachi Women's Foundation all have information online. You may even be able to apply to a state or local education foundation. When all else fails, public performances provide a fantastic opportunity for funding from businesses and the community.

**What is a realistic timeline for starting a program, from the first meeting with students/parents to a first public performance, assuming students have been playing their instruments for at least one year.**

**JN:** The timeline will be determined when you have instruments in hand. A good beginner curriculum should take a year with repertoire that matches their ability. Do not feel coerced by families to play popular songs and always perform music that is age-appropriate for your students.

**RN:** My approach is to begin with the first performance in mind, and work with students to learn fundamentals while preparing for that. Having the goal of a first performance on the calendar will inspire the students to practice their music and work on their playing skills. If the first concert is in December, setting that expectation in August will help everyone prepare to make that performance a success. If you can map out interim goals for students weekly or monthly, seeing their progress toward these goals can help motivate students to work hard and be ready for the first performance.

**Are there any possible pitfalls that a director should keep in mind?**

**JN:** Be wary of families wanting to form little groups outside of the school system. If they do, make sure that they are not using school instruments or uniforms. Assure parents that learning to read music will lead to the students learning songs faster and the music can then be used as reference if they forget anything. Most teachers will gladly remind students how their parts go, but if they can solve issues on their own it will save time.

**RN:** Many students will listen to mariachi music outside of the classroom and want to play songs that may be too difficult for their skill levels. It's essential for directors to choose the appropriate level of music for their ensemble to ensure success. Avoid issues about music selection by making educationally sound decisions and preparing an appropriate repertoire list before classes begin.

**What other advice do you have?**

**JN:** Be patient. Anything worth doing takes time. If the musical fundamentals are solid, everything else will fall into place. Have fun, make mistakes, but most of all let the students have fun as well. Mariachi music is for everyone to enjoy. Viva El Mariachi!!!

**RN:** Have fun in everything you do! Have pride in knowing that you are playing the music of someone's culture, and that you are sharing in the history of Mexico and its music. Create connections and grow together as an ensemble. You are participating in an activity that many people do not get the opportunity to be a part of, so do it with pride. **T**

**JOHN NIETO** has been mariachi director for Brackenridge HS in San Antonio, Texas since 1990. He also holds the position of Lead Mariachi Instructor for the San Antonio ISD. John is author of *Habits of a Successful Mariachi Músico* (GIA Publications, 2023).

**Learn more about John's journey here.**

**RAMON NIÑO III** has been Director of Mariachi at North Side High School since 2004. Through his service on the Texas UIL Ad-Hoc Mariachi and TMEA All-State Mariachi Committees, Ramon helped initiate the first Texas UIL State Mariachi Festival and the first all-state mariachi ensemble for the state of Texas.

**To learn more about Ramon's work click here.**

**MARJORIE LOPRESTI** is Director of Content for MusicFirst and co-author of *Practical Music Technology* (Oxford University Press). She has over 30 years' experience teaching elementary, secondary, and undergraduate music with technology. Marj has presented clinics on general technology, brain-based learning, music technology integration and assessment to thousands of educators and is honored to have been named NJMEA Master Music Teacher and TI:ME Music Technology Teacher of the Year.

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# The Idea of Blend and Balance

**F**ROM THE VERY FIRST time students start to learn an instrument to the last day of a professional musician's career, the idea of blend and balance is pivotal. Blend is foundational to the tone quality of instruments. Balance impacts ensemble tone and intonation. This isn't new; it was discussed in the 18th century and remains a fundamental teaching concept. Focusing on blend and balance teaches students to listen and adjust their sound in relation to others.



## Start with blend

Achieving blend in music is arguably simpler than balance and is akin to a harmonious choir, where each voice complements the other without dominance. Think of a fruit smoothie: individual flavors, like the tanginess of strawberries or the sweetness of bananas, come together to form a unified taste. Just as a well-blended smoothie delights the palate, a well-blended ensemble produces a rich and resonant sound that captivates listeners.

## Work on balance

Similarly, in an ensemble, each instrument should contribute to a cohesive sound, ensuring no one instrument dominates. I've used the analogy of a teeter-totter, especially with younger students, to explain balance. Sharing stories about its dynamics helps students grasp the concept. Another illustrative story I often share is of a painter blending colors. While each hue is distinct, when blended properly, they produce a unique shade that's more captivating than any single color. This emphasizes the beauty and necessity of blend in music.

## Achieving blend and balance

I once worked with a national band in San Jose, Costa Rica. The musicians were older professionals who played forcefully; especially the trumpets. I introduced the concept of blending their sound inside the ensemble. To visualize balance, I used an example with a tuba player, showing how we can adjust levels to achieve balance from the bottom up, emphasizing compromise with the other instrument sections.

## Resulting ensemble intonation

Ensemble intonation results from blend and balance. Francis

**Dr. Robert Gifford**  
Retired Director of Bands and Professor at  
Southeast Missouri State University

Macbeth stated, "Proper balance doesn't guarantee good intonation, but good intonation can't be achieved without it." Balance also affects tone quality, color, and resonance. I suggest you review Macbeth's "Effective Performance of Band Music" for further insights into blend and balance.

## Conclusion

It's vital to involve students in this discovery and concept development. The journey of mastering blend and balance is not just about achieving

musical precision but also about fostering teamwork, listening skills, and adaptability among ensemble members. By teaching students the nuances of blend and balance, we are imparting lessons that go beyond musical notes — we are teaching them the importance of harmony, collaboration, and mutual respect. Every musician, whether young or seasoned, benefits from understanding their role within the larger ensemble. As educators and conductors, it's our responsibility to guide them on this journey, ensuring that each ensemble performance resonates with unity, coherence, and shared purpose. The commitment to these principles will not only elevate the musical experience but also contribute to the holistic growth of the musicians involved. **T**



### ABOUT DR. ROBERT GIFFORD

Dr. Robert M. Gifford has 50 years of experience with bands and band music as a professional performer, music educator, conductor, and clinician throughout the world. His recent series of articles, "Teaching from the Podium," were featured in *WASBE World*, the journal of the World Association for Symphonic Bands and Ensembles. Dr. Gifford is also host of a new show, "Strike up the Band," on KRCU Public Radio.



### ABOUT JAKE DOUGLASS CEO, Practicing Musician

As a teacher and student, Jake has combined the study of music, psychology, neuroscience, and yoga to create a well-rounded and experiential understanding of how humans acquire and integrate knowledge and skillsets.

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# POP QUIZ

The following quiz questions can be used to test for comprehension or for general reading of this issue of *In Tune*.  
(The answers are on page 3 of the Teacher's Edition.)

1. This emerging artist has already collaborated with the likes of Kendrick Lamar and Frank Ocean.

- A. Sampha
- B. Randall King
- C. Poolside
- D. Toosii

2. Giuseppe Verdi is known as a prolific composer best known for his:

- A. Concertos
- B. Operas
- C. Cantatas
- D. Symphonies

3. Which of the following is a way to learn about creating a soundscape using "found sounds?"

- A. Watch a video on mute and imagine appropriate sounds
- B. Listen for sounds in your home or local area and record them
- C. Record a short video and match sounds captured from your environment
- D. All the above

4. Green Day's Billie Joe Armstrong cites which band as a strong influence on his playing?

- A. AC/DC
- B. The Stooges
- C. The Ramones
- D. Phish

5. True/False: Choosing a note three steps up is the right way to harmonize with a melody.

6. Rock band Gaslight Anthem stopped performing in which year?

- A. 2013
- B. 2014
- C. 2015
- D. 2016

7. Which famous rock singer inspired Brian Fallon to bring Gaslight Anthem back together?

- A. Willie Nelson
- B. Prince
- C. Freddie Mercury
- D. Bruce Springsteen

8. Which DAW has been long used by serious artists and industry professionals?

- A. Ableton
- B. Fruity Loops
- C. GarageBand
- D. Pro Tools

9. The trickiest part of arranging "Lil' Boo Thang" is:

- A. Rehearsing the horn stabs
- B. Learning to play a descending bass lines F,E,D,C.
- C. Learning to play electric guitar picking
- D. Finding a French horn player

10. The Delta Blues Museum was opened in which year?

- A. 1918
- B. 1979
- C. 1999
- D. 2013



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