

◆ TEACHER'S EDITION ◆

THE YOUNG MUSICIAN'S TEXTBOOK

intune

VOL. 23 • NO. 7

MONTHLY

HOW TO PLAY
THE POLICE'S
**"EVERY BREATH
YOU TAKE"**

SONGS IN THE
BIG KEYS

OPPORTUNITIES TO USE
**TECHNOLOGY IN
SONGWRITING**

CHARLIE PUTH

The Genius Behind the Groove

- ◆ **The Tao of In Tune**
- ◆ **Start Planning Now for Summer Activities!**
- ◆ **Lost Mountain Middle School Finds MusicFirst**
- ◆ **Website and Subscription Information**

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Student Needs
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Hard Work Pays Off

THIS MONTH'S InTune Student Edition is about a new and growing InTune plaint about the road to success in music. We've explored it in this issue's Student Edition Editor's Letter – the myth that success in the music world is achieved by posting one's music to social media, gaining popularity, getting discovered, and becoming a star. This has happened for some, and because it's so remarkable compared to the journey required by those in "the old days" (prior to 2020), they have gained media attention and spurred the lore. For the overwhelming majority, that's not how it's done.

InTune's April issue cover artist Charlie Puth is the poster boy for hard work, the development of virtuosity and making good decisions. Yes, he is very talented, but that begs the old question: genetics vs. environment. We've learned that there's a continuum for both, and that all talent and no environment doesn't work. All environment and no talent doesn't do it, either.

Puth has been called a genius, accused of "perfect pitch" and more. And his story is noteworthy now on the eve of his latest album, again containing at least one standout hit. He's a creator and a performer, a musician who plays and sings. But thinking that those qualities emerged at birth, and that he didn't have to develop them is wrong and misses the point.

If you're not already doing so, teach the lesson that old school hard work pays off. We hope this issue helps! •

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



The Genius Behind The Groove

In the era of laptop pop production and algorithm-friendly singles, Charlie Puth occupies a rare lane: a chart-topping artist who thinks like a studio engineer.



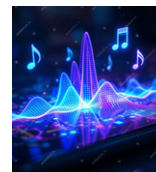
Songs In The Big Key Space

Our authors tells readers to "give your songs a sense of expansiveness and grandeur with melodies that move in more than one key at a time."



How To Play "Every Step You Take" by The Police

Often mistaken for a romantic love song, the lyrics to "Every Step You Take" actually convey obsession and surveillance, reflecting themes of control and possessiveness. The song's haunting melody, paired with Sting's evocative vocals, made it an enduring hit and 1980s pop-rock classic.



Using Songwriting Technology

Technology has changed the way songs are written, recorded, and shared in the world. Today, you don't need a full recording studio to start creating or recording music. Digital tools can help you capture ideas, experiment with sounds, and even collaborate with other musicians around the world.

The Tao of In Tune

THERE ARE A NUMBER OF REFERENCES IN THIS ISSUE (and most others) of In Tune to “music business” or “the music industry.” In the April issue “What Do You Do” column, attorney, professor and entrepreneur Deborah Kidd advises student readers to learn about music business as early as possible. We might imagine that few middle or high school programs include much about the industry, but we also like to think that our coverage of some of it gives educators an on-ramp for such conversations. There are likely some within your midst who are getting an early start on music careers. Could make for an interesting and valuable curriculum segment. Just an idea...

Megan Moroney



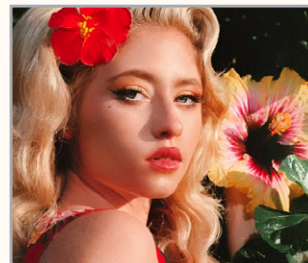
Ella Langley



Mimi Webb



Remy Bond



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 “Megan Moroney and Ella Langley Make Chart History Together”, “Shakira performs for 400,000 at Record-Breaking Mexico Concert”, “Newborns Can Detect and Anticipate Rhythm At Two Days Old”, and more.



Grentperez



Chuck Berry

INFLUENCES

Gretn Perez combines nostalgic soft-rock melodies with contemporary bedroom-pop and was inspired by the music of the 70’s band Bread. Like so many others, the members of Bread called The Beatles their key influence. The Beatles famously nodded to “The Father of Rock ‘n’ Roll, Chuck Berry.



MEDIA

Our monthly collection of music media features the new book “The Industry Guide to Musical Theatre Auditions” by Shaun Aquilina, The Music Production Podcast covering “the creative process, to workflow, to gear and equipment”, and a video of ambient artist Oh No Noh who accompanies himself with a bizarre, self-playing instrument.

FRONTRUNNER

This issue’s five emerging acts are powerhouse pop vocalist Mimi Webb, grunge-tinged alt-rocker Violet Grohl, folk artist Henry Jamison, one of the most talked about rising artists in the 2020s, Remy Bond, and introspective alt-R&B storyteller Dov Ellis.



WHAT DO YOU DO?

As an entertainment lawyer, Deborah Kidd helps musicians, producers, and music companies understand their rights, negotiate contracts, and protect their creative work. She is also an associate professor of music law at Berklee College of Music in Boston, and founder of Airhug Radio, a web radio station dedicated to discovering and promoting independent artists.



MUSICAL MOMENTS

While not a live performance, the cross-genre music video collaboration of “Walk This Way” by Run-D.M.C and Aerosmith brought hip-hop to mainstream rock audiences, breaking down racial and musical boundaries. The song was originally a 1975 hit by Aerosmith from their album Toys in the Attic. It featured a funky rock riff and Steven Tyler’s fast-talking lyrics. Though successful in its time, it wasn’t seen as groundbreaking—until a Run-DMC version a decade later.



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What I see from some of the students who come to a DCI Tour event is a lot of light bulbs where they are connecting what the performers are doing and transitioning it into what they do on a day-to-day basis. They're seeing the things these performers are doing and saying, 'Hey, that's cool. That was awesome. I want to try to recreate that.'"
— BAND DIRECTOR ROBERT MARSHALL | LA PUENTE, CA

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BY MARCIA NEEL

Once You Get 'Em, You Gotta Keep 'Em:

Start Planning Now for Summer Activities!

RETAINING middle school recruits is only half the battle—the real win is keeping them engaged and energized all the way through graduation. That means staying connected year-round, showing up in their world, and making every student feel essential to the program. Summer is your secret weapon but now is the time to make your plans to keep relationships alive, momentum strong, and excitement high.

Summer is a time for rest, freedom, and sunshine—but also a time when music can slip out of our students' daily routines. A few small touchpoints during summer can make a huge difference in keeping students connected and excited about returning.

Why Stay in Touch?

- Prevents musical and emotional “drop-off”
- Encourages students to continue playing their instrument
- Lets students know you are thinking about them
- Reinforces that students are still part of something important
- Helps build anticipation for the start of their high school experience
- Helps younger members and new recruits feel included and valued

Low-Effort, High-Impact Ideas

- Send a summer email that says “Hey! We miss you! Hope you are having a great summer!” or “Looking forward to having you in the (name of ensemble) this fall.”
- Schedule a quick check-in call with incoming freshmen or students who may be at risk of quitting. It demonstrates that they matter and that you care.
- Create a “Band/Orchestra Summer Group Chat.” This is a great way to engage and involve your leaders to share memes, provide encouragement, and just have some music-related fun. Perhaps your leaders could schedule a pick-up basketball or volleyball game with one section playing another.
- Meet with your leaders regularly and encourage them to create their own fresh ideas to keep their peers—especially incoming students—engaged over the summer. The key is to keep it fun!



Build Anticipation

- Share the upcoming show theme or a teaser clip of repertoire to be performed.
- Run a countdown to band camp or your first rehearsal
- Ask student leaders to issue “summer challenges” or scavenger hunts

Peer-to-peer Influence

Nothing beats peer-to-peer influence when it comes to student retention. A “Big Brother /

Big Sister” mentorship model also creates bonds between experienced and new students, helping them feel supported, welcomed, and valued.

Pair a veteran peer with a newcomer — ideally one moving from middle to high school — and give them fun, low-stress ways to connect over the summer.

- Veterans host a “Freshman Night In” at the school with games, a movie in the gym, or a karaoke night run entirely by student leaders.
- Veterans give freshmen a folder with music, pencil, tuner, program calendar, and “pro tips” sheet.
- Veterans help freshmen deal with fears like “I’ll never be good enough” or “I’m afraid to play by myself.”
- Veterans teach freshmen music traditions — fight song, stand tunes, spirit yells — so they’re ready for the first pep rally or football game.
- Veteran/mentee pairs take photos together for the program bulletin board.

When school is about to start, jump straight into community-building. Whether it’s camp, a leadership retreat, or casual sectional get-togethers, these pre-new school year moments cement your culture and spark enthusiasm. **T**



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.

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Lost Mountain Middle School FINDS MU

Jay Champion has taught at **Lost Mountain Middle School** in Kennesaw, Georgia, since 1998, where he currently manages 200–250 chorus students annually alongside 18-week music technology courses. For a single teacher balancing performance ensembles and project-based creative work, success requires more than just strong instruction—it requires a unified system.

The Challenge: Scaling Individual Growth

Before adopting a cloud-based approach, Jay’s music technology classes relied on a dedicated lab with installed software that required constant maintenance. In chorus, documenting individual growth for over 200 students was simply unrealistic; stronger singers often carried the room, and differentiation meant a significant increase in planning and grading time.

Structured Growth in Chorus

Using **MusicFirst Classroom** as his central hub, Jay now structures differentiated assessments that allow students to record individually in a focused setting.

- **Mastery-Based Advancement:** Students work through uniquely generated examples in **Sight Reading Factory**, where advancement to a harder level requires a 95% score.
- **Proven Results:** Across six assignments over three years, 38% of students advanced at least one level per assignment.
- **High Engagement:** Approximately 80% of students score 80 or higher at their assigned level, with some students even



Jay Champion and his choir at ACDA

♩ = 120

Option 1:

Phrase 1 and 2 start the same but end differently
 Phrase 2 and 4 are the exact same thing
 Phrase 3 is completely different than all the other phrases

4 Phrase Melody in Noteflight

“There’s no practical way I could manage differentiated, recorded sight-reading assessment for 200+ students without MusicFirst Classroom.” — Jay Champion

ool

By Dr. Lee Whitmore

MUSICFIRST

emailing Jay to request harder levels after meeting their thresholds.

- **Simplified Grading:** Performances are recorded and auto-scored, with grades flowing directly into the MusicFirst gradebook.

Structured Creativity in Music Technology

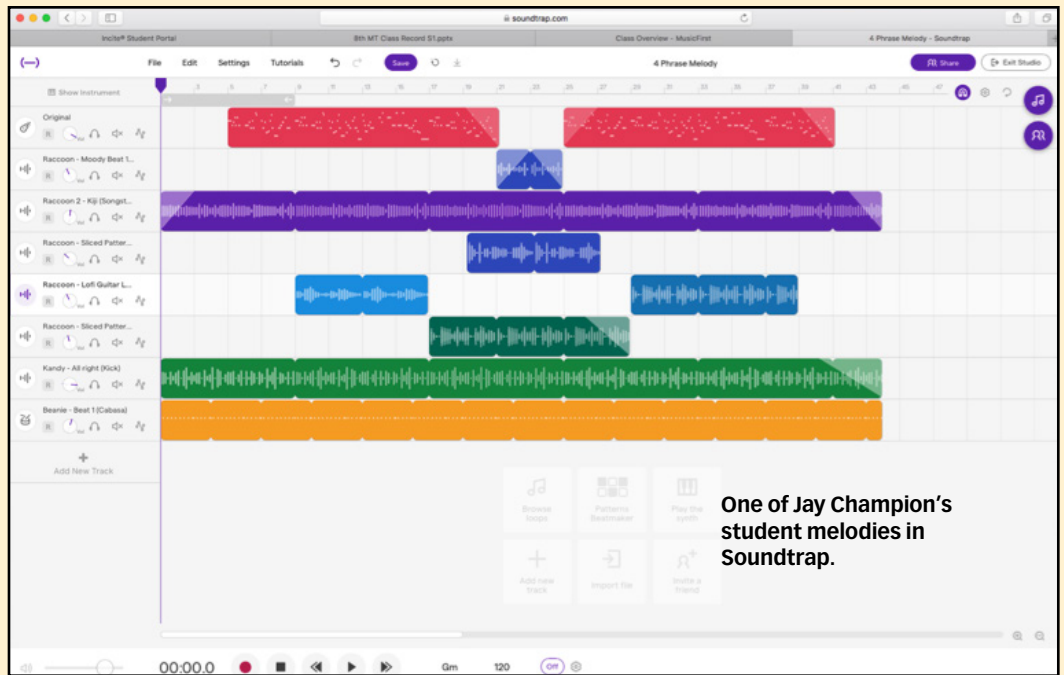
The same system supports Jay's music technology curriculum. Using integrated tools like [Soundtrap](#) and [Noteflight](#), students compose, record, and edit their work entirely within the platform.

One highlight of the program involves students scoring public-domain children's books by combining original composition, narration, and sound design. Because all projects are archived, Jay can compare early-semester work to later submissions to see clear evidence of improved melodic development and sound design.

A Unified Foundation

For Jay, MusicFirst Classroom isn't just an add-on; it is the foundation that organizes his entire program. It allows him to manage:

- **Class Organization:** Handling multiple sections and disciplines from a single dashboard.



One of Jay Champion's student melodies in Soundtrap.

- **Digital Portfolios:** Documenting creative progress over time to provide evidence of growth during evaluations.
- **Student Agency:** Making additional resources available for self-paced exploration, such as one student who built a library of 1,400 MIDI files for orchestration practice.

By leveraging this unified platform, Jay Champion ensures that individual growth remains possible within the practical realities of a demanding middle school schedule.

Experience what Jay has made available to all his students by registering [here](#). **T**



[Dr. Lee Whitmore](#) is a thought leader in music and audio technology and education. He is the global head of marketing and sales for MusicFirst, which includes Rising Software and Charanga. With a career spanning more than three decades, Lee is a vocal advocate for access to music and the related arts for all young people. His commitment to music, community, and education is evident in his active involvement in various organizations. He has recently served as a board member for We Make Noise and The MIDI Association, where he currently co-chairs the MIDI in Music Education (MiME) Special Interest Group.

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. How old was Charlie Puth when he began studying classical piano?

- a. 3
- b. 11
- c. 4
- d. 9

2. Which member of The Police was American?

- a. Drummer Stewart Copeland
- b. Vocalist/bassist Sting
- c. Guitarist Andy Summers
- d. All of the above

3. Which indie band creates songs in the Big Keyspace like "Spirit Ditties of No Tone?"

- a. Kings of Leon
- b. Deerhoof
- c. King Gizzard and the Lizard Wizard
- d. Turnstile

4. What was Greent Perez's birth name?

- a. Grant Perez
- b. David Gates
- c. Rory Anderson
- d. Greent Perez

5. Which foundational genre of American popular music pushes past and confounds the classically based notions of Western Harmony?

- a. Blues
- b. Bluegrass
- c. Country
- d. Barbershop

6. Which pioneer of early rock and roll did The Beatles frequently credit as an inspiration to their early sound?

- a. Little Richard
- b. Jelly Roll Morton
- c. Chuck Berry
- d. Sister Rosetta Tharpe

7. Who co-produced Charlie Puth's latest album *Whatever's Clever!*?

- a. Bloodpop
- b. AG Cook
- c. Jack Antonoff
- d. Metro Boomin

8. Which The Police album contained "Every Breath You Take?"

- a. Zenyatta Mondatta
- b. Synchronicity
- c. Outlandos d'Amour
- d. Regatta de Blanc

9. In which Australian city was Greent Perez born?

- a. Sydney
- b. Melbourne
- c. Perth
- d. Cairns

10. Charlie Puth's breakout single, "See You Again," was a tribute to which actor?

- a. Paul Walker
- b. Audrey Hepburn
- c. Charlie Chaplin
- d. Nicholas Cage

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