

MakeMusic!

Just because homeschool teachers are not accomplished musicians does not mean they cannot support their students in musical endeavors. The company, MakeMusic! has two products that are very powerful yet simple to use, *SmartMusic* and *Finale NotePad*. *SmartMusic*, which is written for all band and orchestra instruments as well as voice is available through an annual subscription at www.smartmusic.com. Using a microphone, the software is able to play along with the student at any tempo and even record with an accompaniment. The recordings provide instant feedback for self-evaluation, plus *SmartMusic* will show what is correct and what needs improvement. With a library of over 30,000 titles, *SmartMusic* can regularly provide students assignments all year long and the recordings can easily be used to make portfolios of each student's progress through the years. If your student decides they wish to continue music in college, the recordings can be used for entrance auditions. This helps makes it possible for even the non-musician parent to understand what their child is learning and encourage their advancement.

Finale NotePad is a smaller free download version of the professional music program *Finale* and can be found at www.finalemusic.com. It has all the basic operation of *Finale*, and students can use it to write and print their own music. There is a feature called *Finale Performance Assessment* where students can play along with the music they wrote just like in *SmartMusic*.

There are many advantages for the homeschool family. With the aid of a master teacher, homeschoolers can work in a cooperative music group and results can be emailed to the teacher. Using the microphone, *Finale* software can write out the music as it is played. All of the programs contain very handy "How To" videos that explain each aspect of the program. The *SmartMusic* system trains the student to hear accurate pitch with their chromatic tuner. A built in metronome keeps time with the music, and the ability to adjust the tempo allows students to practice at their own pace, something a CD or tape is unable to do. Also included is information about the composers, composition notes and a musical terms dictionary.

There is no software that can take the place of practice, perseverance, patience and quality instruction. However, with the aid of technology, even those who have concerns about teaching and learning music can successfully facilitate a music education at any level and age.

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