

TODAY'S MUSIC EDUCATION RESOURCE

# MUSIC ALIVE!

It's Instrumental:  
**THE TUBA**

The Music of  
**MAME**

**WHEN WORDS AND  
MUSIC MARRY**

**LISTENING  
GUIDE**

"Virtual Insanity"  
by Jamiroquai

On The Road With...

# LAUREN SPENCER-SMITH

**SAYWHAT?**

The meanings and origins  
of musical sayings

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## FROM THE EDITOR

THIS MONTH'S MUSIC ALIVE INCLUDES as diverse an array of content about music as ever. Our stories range from an epistle about songwriting, to a profile of the tuba, to a review of the musical production of *Mame*, to an analysis of the Jamiroquai song "Virtual Insanity." The story of 22-year-old singer/songwriter Lauren Spencer-Smith's rise to fame graces our cover.

Then there's Robby Good's career, discussed in a column about his parallel paths in the visual arts and music worlds – ultimately fusing, in satisfaction of his interests in both. There's also our customary collection of vignettes in Music Notes that could appeal to any number of student curiosities. We top it all off with a ditty about the phrase "clean as a whistle."

There's a lot here, with lessons that should fit within most band, orchestra, chorus or general music classes. We hope that you and your students will enjoy the issue and follow us down our own path as we chronicle music's new and noteworthy, the tried and true, and everything in between throughout this school year.

## HEAR THE MUSIC

"Fingers Crossed"  
by Lauren Spencer-Smith  
"Virtual Insanity" by Jamiroquai  
"Tuba Concerto  
in F Minor: I. Prelude"  
"Tuba Fats" by Rebirth Brass Band  
"I Feel It Coming" by The Weeknd  
"Every Day is a Winding Road"  
by Sheryl Crow  
"Yesterday" by The Beatles  
"Every Breath You Take"  
by The Police

**From *Mame*:**  
"It's Today"  
"Open a New Window"  
"The Man in the Moon"  
"We Need a Little Christmas"  
"Mame"  
"My Best Girl"  
"Bosom Buddies"  
"If He Walked Into My Life"

# A Summary of the National Core Arts Standards

As you use this Teacher's Guide, refer to this summary  
of the 11 NCCAS anchor standards

## **Cr1**

Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work

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## **Cr2**

Organize and develop artistic ideas and work

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## **Cr3**

Refine and complete artistic ideas and work

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## **Pr4**

Analyze, interpret, and select artistic work for presentation

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## **Pr5**

Develop and refine artistic work for presentation

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## **Pr6**

Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work

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## **Re7**

Perceive and analyze artistic work

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## **Re8**

Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work

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## **Re9**

Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work

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## **Cn10**

Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal  
experiences to make art

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## **Cn11**

Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical  
context to deepen understanding

## WHEN WORDS AND MUSIC MARRY National Standards: Pr4, Re7-9

Ask ten songwriters the best way to write a song, and you'll get ten different answers. The truth of the matter is this: there is no right or wrong in songwriting. To help aspiring tunesmiths get off the starting block, it's important to highlight the varied processes of the greats and get an overview of their approaches. Ultimately, the only way to know what works for an individual is trial and error, but a good index of others' methods can provide enough direction to start. Share this resource with your class!

### Prepare

By a show of hands, ask if anyone in class is interested in writing songs. Next, ask if anyone in class has actually written a song before. The number of raised hands will likely drop significantly. If so, ask the class why there is such a difference in those numbers. What obstacles are stopping them from trying? What questions do they have about the process?

Next, ask the class if they have any favorite songwriters. Have they ever researched those artists' songwriting processes? What do students think goes into writing songs? After discussing, read the article.

### *Key points in the article:*

- The vocal styles of Barbershop and Jubilee Quartets formed the foundation of Doo Wop. Like the previously mentioned styles, Doo Wop often featured ensembles made up of a bass, baritone, and two lead tenors (with an occasional falsetto singer thrown in).

- The decline of the Big Band era of the late 40's made way for Doo Wop's ascendance. The genre's soulful, jazz-inflected harmonies and clever arrangements of pop tunes became incredibly popular. Doo Wop groups were especially prominent in larger cities, since musicians in poorer urban neighborhoods often couldn't afford instruments.

- Doo Wop provided a platform for the daring (at the time) concept of interracial music groups. Though far less common, there were also prominent girl groups in the genre. Though Doo Wop went out of fashion immediately after the British Invasion, its influence extends to modern soul, R&B, and K-Pop.

### Begin

*Review Vocabulary words from the article below:*

- **Aspiring:** hoping and trying to be successful at a particular job or activity
- **Interchangeable:** able to be exchanged with each other without making any difference or without being noticed
- **Compelling:** evoking interest, attention, or admiration in a powerfully irresistible way
- **Framework:** a basic structure underlying a system, concept, or text
- **Restrictive:** limiting or controlling someone or something

### Discuss

After reading the article, allow students to ask questions to assess their understanding. Be sure to clarify any misunderstandings related to song forms (strophic, through-composed, etc), the difference between songs and records, and any other technical terms.

Next, ask students if they learned anything that surprised them about the songwriting process. Were their perceptions of songwriting changed by what they read? For students who have written songs before (or at least attempted- that counts!), did their process match with any artists listed in the article? For those who have never tried, which method seems like the best fit for them? Now that they have these reference points, are they more likely to take the first step and try to write a song?

### Expand

To assess student understanding, assign the "All About the Article" worksheet located at [www.musicalive.com/worksheets](http://www.musicalive.com/worksheets).

As an additional assignment, have students research the songwriting process of an artist they like, noting the genre of music they make and when the artist started their career. Compare the selected artist's process to the examples in the article. Do they line up with any of the listed examples, or do they have a completely different way of writing? What might explain that difference? Does it have anything to do with the style of music they make? Does it have anything to do with the technology available to them?

Have students share their findings with the class, either as a presentation or casual classroom conversation. Compare the processes of each artist selected by the class. What patterns do they notice? Do newer artists write differently than older artists? Do hip hop artists write differently than folk singers? Do their selected artists write by themselves or with cowriters?

## MUSIC OF MUSICAL THEATER: *MAME*

National Standards: Pr4, Re7-9

When it comes to uplifting stories with unforgettable protagonists, few musicals can match the classic *Mame*. The story of a free-spirited socialite who faces adversity with cheer, charm, and grace, *Mame* has thrilled audiences on both Broadway and the silver screen. With a soundtrack full of showstopping numbers, including a perennial Christmastime favorite, *Mame* is sure to live on in the hearts of musical lovers for generations. Learn about this classic with your class today.

### Prepare

By a show of hands, ask if anyone in class has seen *Mame* or heard any songs from the musical. While students might be unfamiliar with the play by name, the song “We Need A Little Christmas” will likely ring a bell. Play an excerpt for the class to see if they recognize it, and inform the class of its Broadway origins. Next, play the video linked in the “Learn More” section of the 1974 film adaptation of *Mame* starring Lucille Ball. Then, read the article as a class.

*Key points in the article:*

- Based on the 1955 novel *Auntie Mame* by Patrick Dennis, *Mame* made its Broadway debut in 1966 and charmed its way into the hearts of musical lovers immediately. The relatability of the titular character navigating notable periods of American history (including the Great Depression and two world wars) gave the musical an enduring appeal.

- The central conflict of the show lies in the relationship between Mame and her nephew, of whom she takes custody after his parents’ untimely death. Countering his conservative upbringing and elitist values, Mame shows him a world of free-spirited living and unconditional love.

- As is often the case, the *Mame*’s soundtrack is the foundation of its continued popularity. Running the gamut from energetic and uplifting (“It’s Today,” “Open a New Window”) to intimate and emotional (“My Best Girl,” “If He Walked Into My Life”), the show takes viewers on a wonderfully moving journey.

### Begin

*Review Vocabulary words from the article below:*

- **Eccentric:** strange or unusual, sometimes in a humorous way
- **Socialite:** a person who is well known in fashionable society and is fond of social activities and entertainment
- **Trustee:** a person, often one of a group, who controls property and/or money for another person or an organization
- **Elitist:** relating to or supporting the view that a society or system should be led by an elite; not caring about the interests or values of ordinary people
- **Self-deprecating:** modest about or critical of oneself, especially humorously so

### Discuss

Select 2-3 songs from the list of Key Songs in the article and play them for the class (all are available for streaming via the Hear The Music playlist at [www.musicalive.com](http://www.musicalive.com)). As a critical listening exercise, play each song twice and have students analyze them from the following angles, stopping after each listen to discuss:

**1<sup>st</sup> listen-** Character analysis and plot movement

- What do we learn about Mame and the other characters through the lyrics of the song? How does the song move the plot forward? What feelings does the song evoke?

**2<sup>nd</sup> listen-** Musical analysis

- What instruments do students hear in the song? Is the tempo fast, slow, or moderate? Is the music loud, soft, or both? How does the music support the lyrics and feelings of the song?

### Expand

After discussing, have students complete the “All About the Article” worksheet located at [www.musicalive.com/worksheets](http://www.musicalive.com/worksheets).

For a class project, form students into groups and assign each group one of the Key Songs from *Mame* that were not discussed previously in class. Have each group listen to their assigned song and analyze it together through the same framework (character analysis and plot development/musical analysis). At the end of the class period, have each group present their song and analysis. Allow other groups to ask questions or add their own thoughts after each presentation.

## IT'S INSTRUMENTAL: THE TUBA

National Standards: Re7-9, Cn11

We've all felt it before - that wonderful rumble in every marching band or orchestra, anchoring the sonic spectrum and providing a thunderous foundation for the rest of the ensemble. That glorious sound comes from the tuba, a brass instrument like no other. Trace this indispensable instrument from its 19<sup>th</sup> century Germanic origins up to its many modern incarnations with your class. Learning the history of the instrument will give them an all-new appreciation for the oomph!

### Prepare

To start, ask if anyone in class plays the tuba. If not, are they familiar with the sound of the instrument? Ask students if they can describe the sound of a tuba. What role does the tuba play in a band? Where do you hear them most often? After this brief introductory discussion, have students read the article.

*Key points in the article:*

- In the early 1800s, all brass instruments were referred to as tubas (the Latin word for "tube"). That is why German inventors Wilhelm Friedrich Wieprecht and Johann Gottfried Moritz named their new low-pitched brass instrument the "basstuba." The powerful sound of the instrument immediately became popular for its ability to boom over noisy crowds.

- The biggest technical improvement of the tuba came in the late 1800s with the addition of valves. This technology drastically improved the range and playability of the instrument, allowing players to execute expressive melodies without the tricky lip techniques it previously required.

- In the modern age, the tuba has found a home in a wide range of genres, including classical, Dixieland jazz, mariachi, rock, and experimental music. Titans of the tuba like Howard Johnson and Bob Stewart demonstrated the versatility of the tuba to the world with their dynamic range and daring improvisations.

### Begin

*Review Vocabulary words from the article below:*

- **Valves:** a cylindrical mechanism in a brass instrument that, when depressed or turned, admits air into different sections of tubing and so extends the range of available notes
- **Elite:** a select group that is superior in terms of ability or qualities to the rest of a group or society
- **Pivot:** to turn or rotate, like a hinge
- **Expressive:** effectively conveying feelings or thought
- **Flexibility:** able to comfortably adjust and fit into different positions or situations

### Discuss

After reading the article, listen to the following tracks from the Hear the Music playlist at [www.musicalive.com](http://www.musicalive.com):

- "Tuba Concerto in F Minor: I. Prelude"
- "Tuba Fats" by Rebirth Brass Band

After listening to the examples, discuss the tuba performances heard in each song. What words would students use to describe the tuba parts in each song? What role does the tuba play in each piece? Does the tuba play a spotlight or background role in these examples? How are the approaches different from song to song?

The "Music Review Journal" found at [www.musicalive.com/worksheets](http://www.musicalive.com/worksheets) can also be used to assess students' understanding of each song

### Expand

To assess student understanding, assign the "All About the Article" worksheet located at [www.musicalive.com/worksheets](http://www.musicalive.com/worksheets).

As a supplement to the lesson, assign a research project about the tuba in modern music. Have students identify a modern artist in any genre that uses a tuba or Sousaphone in their music. Prominent examples include The Roots (students can find any number of examples of their Sousaphone usage from clips of The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon), St. Vincent, Snarky Puppy, The Black Keys, and many more. Have students select a song by the artist which features tuba and write a short report on how it is used in the song, using similar analysis to the questions from the 'Discuss' section of this lesson plan.

## LISTENING GUIDE: “VIRTUAL INSANITY” by Jamiroquai

National Standards: Pr4, Re7-9, Cn11

A great song with a timeless message can make a big impact. Add an unforgettable music video to the equation, and you’ve got a recipe for a generational hit. Jamiroquai’s 1996 anthem “Virtual Insanity” combines harmonic elegance, a ruthlessly funky groove, and an iconic vocal with lyrics that feel just as relevant today as they did upon their release. Who knew it was possible to critique consumerism while dancing the night away? Dig into the music, lyrics, and visuals of “Virtual Insanity” with your class today!

### Prepare

Before listening to the song, ask the class if anyone is familiar with the song. Briefly introduce the cultural significance of “Virtual Insanity” and the jazz-funk stylings of Jamiroquai. Play the music video for “Virtual Insanity” and encourage students to listen for lyrical themes and musical elements while they enjoy the entertaining visuals. Then, read the article as a class.

*Key points in the article:*

- “Virtual Insanity” captures the essential elements of Jamiroquai’s musical identity- slick chords and arrangements, infinitely danceable beats, and incisive social commentary delivered in unforgettable vocal hooks. The video was equally groundbreaking, earning the band plenty of airtime on MTV back in the day.

- The lyrics of the song were reportedly inspired by frontman Jay Kay’s trip to an underground city in Japan. The stark contrast between the bright underground world and the desolate terrain above it was a striking image, further cementing Kay’s fear of a dystopian future.

- Beyond the stellar performances from each band member, “Virtual Insanity” is elevated by clever samples and production choices. The elegant arrangement features swelling strings to highlight important passages of the song alongside an unsettlingly sampled sound from the movie “Alien.”

### Begin

*Review Vocabulary words from the article below:*

- **Incisive:** intelligently analytical and clear-thinking
- **Precient:** having or showing knowledge of events before they take place
- **Consumerism:** the social and economic ideology that encourages the acquisition of goods and services in ever-increasing amounts
- **Resurgence:** an increase or revival after a period of little activity, popularity, or occurrence
- **Touchstone:** something that is used to make judgments about the quality of other things

### Discuss

After reading the article, play “Virtual Insanity” for the class again. This time, only play the audio and encourage students to listen actively as they read along with the listening guide. Tell the class to listen for each instrument listed in the guide and notice when they come in and drop out. At relevant points, pause the recording and talk to students about what just occurred in the song. Ask questions like “How does it feel when the strings come in on the chorus?” or “How does the use of vocal improvisation help move the song forward?” After listening to the full song, ask students to identify their favorite part of the song. What instruments are most important in different sections of the song? How does the energy of the song build?

### Expand

After completing the listening guide and understanding the technical elements of the song, ask students why they think the song resonated so strongly with audiences in 1996. Consider the lyrics, performance, and musical culture of the time. Were there any historical events that might have enhanced the impact of the song?

To assess student understanding, assign the “All About the Article” worksheet located at [www.musicalive.com/worksheets](http://www.musicalive.com/worksheets).

## SONG OF THE MONTH: “FINGERS CROSSED”

by Lauren Spencer-Smith *National Standards: Re7-9*

While singing competition shows and viral TikToks launch plenty of artists into the spotlight, capitalizing on that exposure to build a full-fledged music career can be a huge challenge. While many flash-in-the-pan contemporaries fade away, Lauren Spencer-Smith has leveraged her appearance on Season 18 of American Idol and TikTok fame into an ever-growing fanbase and Billboard hits. By staying true to her identity and always placing her unforgettable voice at the forefront, Spencer-Smith is climbing her way to pop stardom. Share her story with your class today!

### Prepare

By a show of hands, ask if anyone in class is familiar with Lauren Spencer-Smith and her music. If so, ask how they first encountered her. Even before releasing her first hit singles, the young artist had cast a wide net. Fans of American Idol will recognize her from season 18, while prolific Tiktok users may have encountered the early clips of her singing “Fingers Crossed.” Play a short excerpt of “Fingers Crossed” for the class to see if anyone has heard the song without realizing it. Then, read the article individually or as a class.

*Key points in the article:*

- Spencer-Smith’s path to fame followed a now-standard formula for pop vocalists. By posting covers to YouTube, performing on a reality singing competition, and building a following on TikTok, the singer songwriter gained enough online attention to land a record deal with Warner Chapell Music in 2022

- After her first singles, “Fingers Crossed” and “Flowers,” landed on the Billboard charts and launched Spencer-Smith into the spotlight, she continued the momentum with her first full-length album, *Mirror*, in 2023. The intimate songs and vocal-first production choices on the album resonated deeply with fans and built huge anticipation for a follow-up album.

- Now in the critical sophomore-album phase of her career, Spencer-Smith is riding high off the release of *The Art of Being A Mess* and kicking off a world tour. Though she has added a new level of depth and grit to her sound, the core of her style is still the same: vocally impressive earworms ranging from vulnerable to empowering, sometimes all in the same song.

### Begin

*Review Vocabulary words from the article below:*

- **Inevitable:** certain to happen; unavoidable
- **Vulnerability:** capable of being physically or emotionally wounded
- **Belting:** To sing loudly and powerfully in chest voice above the vocal break or “passaggio”
- **Palette:** the range of colors used by an artist; the range or variety of tonal or instrumental color in a musical piece
- **Pan-continental:** across all continents

### Discuss

Play “Fingers Crossed” for the class and encourage active listening (or even note-taking!). After listening to the full song, ask the class to identify fundamental elements of the song and use their responses as a gateway to deeper exploration. For instance, ask about instruments they hear, the tempo, and the style/genre of the record.

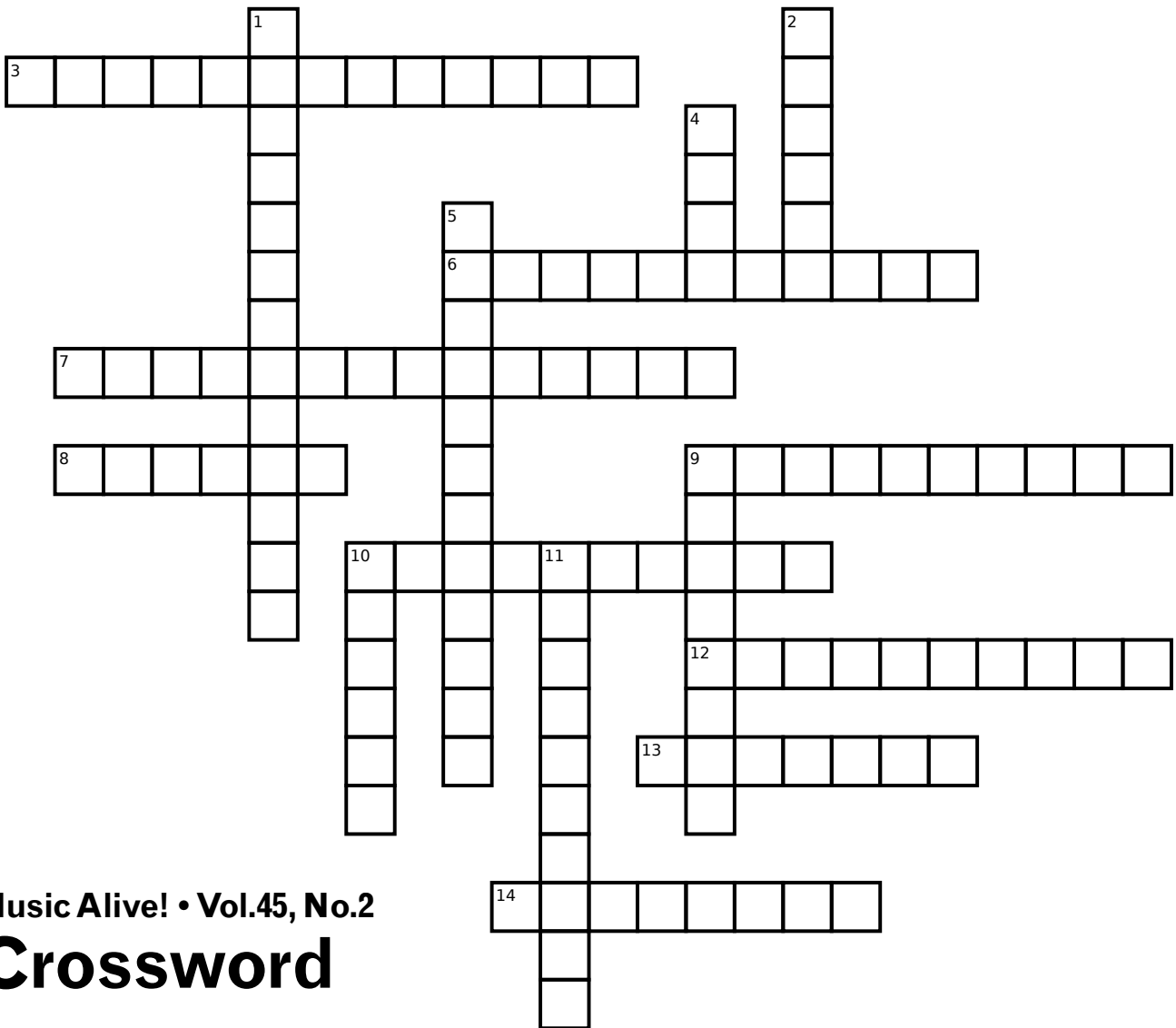
Next, explore the lyrical themes of the song. Do they resonate with the class? Are there any lines that stand out? How does Spencer-Smith illuminate the experience of heartbreak and regret?

Next, encourage more abstract analysis. How do the sounds of the instruments fit together? What atmosphere or mood does the music create? How does this complement the vocals? What feelings do they get from the song? How would students describe Spencer-Smith’s voice, and why do they think it resonates with so many listeners?

### Expand

After analyzing “Fingers Crossed” together, ask the class to think of other songs with a similar lyrical theme. There are countless songs that take a confessional, intimate approach to analyzing heartbreak. At the end of class, have students write down suggestions for another song exploring similar lyrical themes. Select one for analysis. Next class period, follow the same steps outlined in this lesson plan (establish familiarity with the artist, listen to the song and analyze individually, discuss as a class) with the new song. Afterwards, compare and contrast the new song with “Fingers Crossed” and discuss the similarities and differences. How do the two artists take unique angles on the same subject matter, both lyrically and musically?

After discussing, have students complete the “All About the Article” worksheet located at [www.musicalive.com/worksheets](http://www.musicalive.com/worksheets).



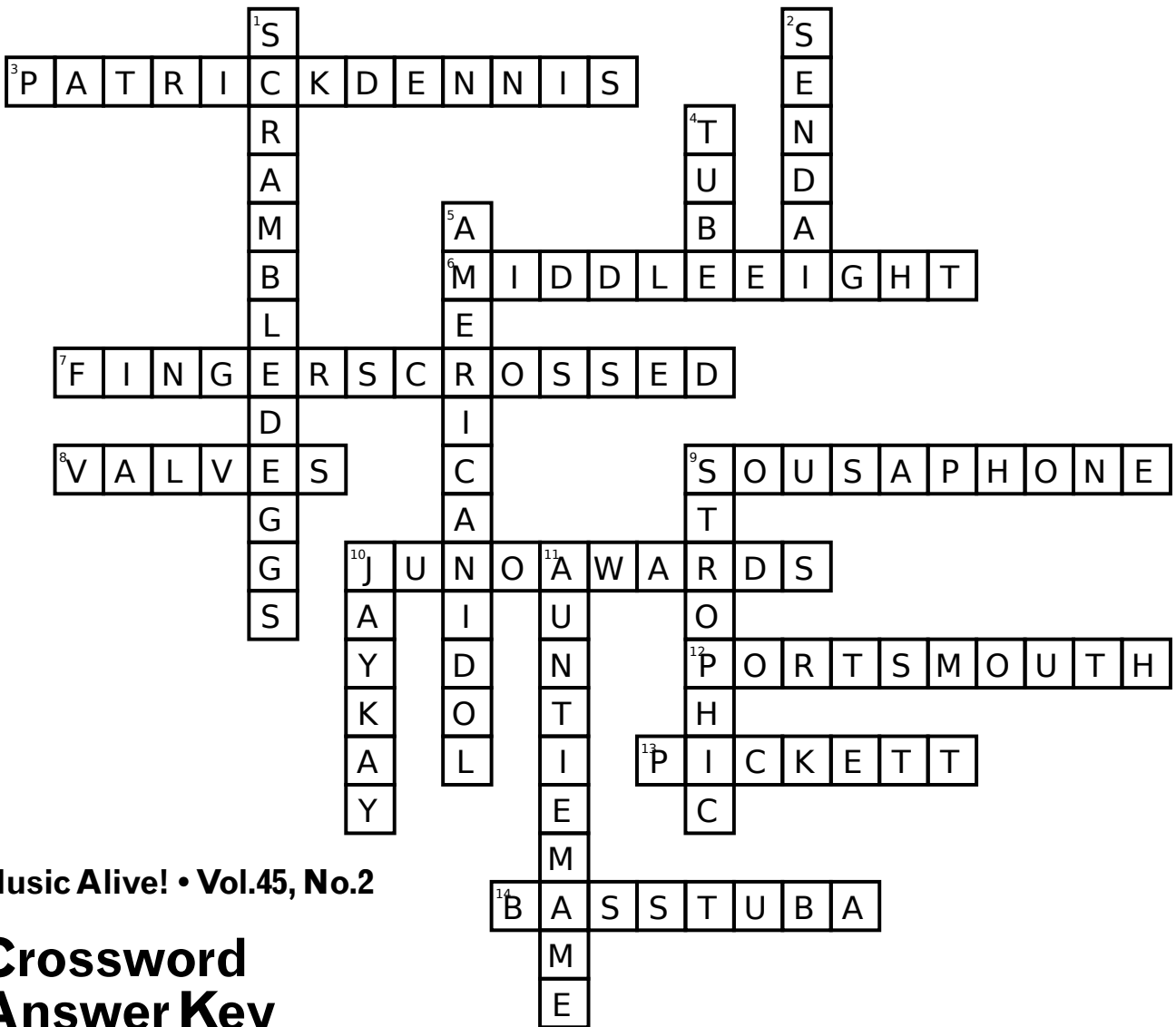
**Music Alive! • Vol.45, No.2**  
**Crossword**

**Down:**

1. The nonsense phrase Paul McCartney used while writing "Yesterday"
2. The city in Japan that inspired "Virtual Insanity"
4. Tuba is the Latin word for \_\_\_\_\_.
5. The singing competition where Lauren Spencer-Smith placed in the Top 20
9. The main song form besides through-composed
10. Lead singer of Jamiroquai
11. The book that Broadway show Mame was based on

**Across:**

3. The name of Mame's nephew
6. How British people refer to the bridge in an AABA song
7. The name of Lauren Spencer-Smith's breakout hit
8. The devices that allow the tuba to easily play a wider range of notes
9. The version of the tuba invented for marching
10. Famous Canadian music awards show
12. The city in the UK where Lauren Spencer-Smith was born
13. Mame's wealthy Southern husband was named Beauregard Jackson \_\_\_\_\_ Burnside
14. The original name of the tuba



**Music Alive! • Vol.45, No.2**

**Crossword Answer Key**

**Down:**

1. The nonsense phrase Paul McCartney used while writing "Yesterday"
2. The city in Japan that inspired "Virtual Insanity"
4. Tuba is the Latin word for \_\_\_\_\_.
5. The singing competition where Lauren Spencer-Smith placed in the Top 20
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12. The city in the UK where Lauren Spencer-Smith was born
13. Mame's wealthy Southern husband was named Beauregard Jackson \_\_\_\_\_ Burnside
14. The original name of the tuba

# Word Find

F G J A M I R O Q U A I Q L B  
M I S S U I G S S G B M J T F  
B I N C G A H M E E A Y U P B  
A T D G R B A A N V L R N O R  
C M W D E A P M D W L E O R O  
C O E S L R M E A G A C A T A  
H D N R O E S B I D D O W S D  
S I B S I U E C L Y R R A M W  
T X V A U C S I R E Y D R O A  
R I A Y S M A A G O D P D U Y  
O E L D N S E N P H S E S T L  
P L V Z C R T R I H T S G H W  
H A E I V D M U I D O L E G U  
I N S B M N Y T B S O N V D S  
C D U Z M M X R Q A M L E I P

Fingers Crossed	scrambled eggs	American Idol
middle eight	Portsmouth	Sousaphone
Jamiroquai	Dixieland	strophic
Basstuba	Broadway	Juno Awards
Consumerism	Balladry	valves
record	Sendai	Mame

# Word Find Answer Key



- |                 |                |               |
|-----------------|----------------|---------------|
| Fingers Crossed | scrambled eggs | American Idol |
| middle eight    | Portsmouth     | Sousaphone    |
| Jamiroquai      | Dixieland      | strophic      |
| Basstuba        | Broadway       | Juno Awards   |
| Consumerism     | Balladry       | valves        |
| record          | Sendai         | Mame          |

# LINKS

## *Cover Artist*

Watch Lauren discuss her musical origins and journey to fame:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5vkTHf8jqRw>

## *Song of the Month*

Watch the official “Fingers Crossed” music video:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mzwwg5Ldkt5Q&list=RDmzwwg5Ldkt5Q&start\\_radio=1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mzwwg5Ldkt5Q&list=RDmzwwg5Ldkt5Q&start_radio=1)

## *Mame*

Watch the titular song from the 1974 film adaptation starring Lucille Ball:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ijbtm\\_ocn8Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ijbtm_ocn8Q)

## *It’s Instrumental*

Watch the Wessex Tubas manufacturing process from start to finish:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kc7AxeVgrMA>

See Filipe Queirós perform a solo tuba version of Bach’s “Cello Suite 2: Sarabande”:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OTWpW5pz\\_mU&list=RDOTWpW5pz\\_mU&start\\_radio=1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OTWpW5pz_mU&list=RDOTWpW5pz_mU&start_radio=1)

## *Listening Guide*

See the mind-bending music video:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4JkIs37a2JE&list=RD4JkIs37a2JE&start\\_radio=1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4JkIs37a2JE&list=RD4JkIs37a2JE&start_radio=1)

## *Songwriting*

Watch Bernie Taupin and Elton John discuss their songwriting partnership:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fELDV1evtxo>