
Rick's Place

Notes, Thoughts, and Random Musings on the Online Experience

by Rick Hein, AMIS web master

Music is your own experience, your own thoughts, your wisdom. If you don't live it, it won't come out of your horn. They teach you there's a boundary line to music. But, man, there's no boundary line to art.

Charlie Parker, quoted in *Children of Albion: Poetry of the Underground in Britain*, "Afterwords," sct. 3, ed. Michael Horovitz (1969).

Here we are again at the end of another year. Many of our goals have been met, others remain, tantalizingly outside our grasp. How have you done? I'm sure that, like me, you find it all too easy to find the areas where not enough has been done. The challenge you set was too easy or too difficult, the music too hard or too easy.

I have been privileged this year to hear your efforts three times - Honor Choir Auditions, Solo and Ensemble Festival, and Honor Jazz Band auditions. I have been more than impressed with the abilities of both you and your students. You have made them reach for places that, I am sure, previously they didn't know existed. I am sure that you have made them aware of the boundary lines that are portrayed on the page; the tempo, the notes, the rhythms. We can go on with all of the constraints that can be found on the printed page in the rigours of the audition process. But their performances didn't stop on the page.

You have encouraged your students to make that leap beyond the boundaries of the page, to explore the realm of music. You have challenged them to make the boundaries meaningless: to use them as pathways into their own experiences and make the music their own. You challenged them to make the vocalise a piece of music, not an exercise. To bring a sense of line, dynamics, shape and phrase to what could be a seemingly endless stream of notes. The measures were numbered, the metronome ran, the comment sheets were filled in. All of your efforts were made to guide your students away from the limitations set by the teacher of the opening quote.

When you taught a song and a child smiled when they sang it back, you changed a life. If you guided a child through the audition process, you made a difference in a life. When your group performed for an audience, you changed many lives. When you weren't satisfied with the blend, a rhythm or articulation or a vowel sound, you asked students to make the effort to live a life that responds to challenges. With each day's teaching, you have asked students to make choices that have moved them towards the boundary and then beyond it.

As you reflect on the year, remember the successes. Remember the pride in the faces of the performers as they finished their performance. Remember the joy and happiness the music brought to the lives of those who performed them, and those who heard them. Remember how you felt when, after take fifteen, they said, "I'll get it next time - just you see!" - and they did! Remember the effort that everyone, from the school custodian to the parents driving students to the extra rehearsals, put in to make the performance a success.

We all find it too easy to remember the ones who didn't make it on the next take, who tried the hardest and still couldn't make the pitch match, who kept missing the 2-3 combination on the way down, who couldn't perform the exercise at the correct tempo. We will remember the growth they made in the process of singing or playing with us, in striving to reach even for that line at the edge of the page. But this we can be sure of: they will be the ones who, when they do burst that boundary line, will make the music that fills our lives and the lives of everyone around them with beauty beyond our wildest dreams.

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