

Rick's Place

Notes, Thoughts, and Random Musings on the Online Experience
by Rick Hein, AMIS web master

What do you look for in a new artist? What would make you want to sign a new artist?

You have to hit me in the heart. That's what it's all about for me.

Arif Mardin, Producer

answering questions from Howard Massey in *Home Recording*

Salutary words to guide our reflection at this, the end of another interesting year in the international schools community. We have seen wars, bombings, and departures at short notice. We have striven to create beauty, peace, harmony and co-operation. Our students have sung and played together in places that many of them could not even imagine existed last year at this time. Congratulations team, we have done it again!

What have you done? How have you done it? Why did you teach there? Where will these efforts take you next year? Who will return - who will arrive? There is some of the meat for our summer meditation and re-creation. We will all find our ways of answering these questions - by finding new music, by totally divorcing ourselves from the professional world and reconnecting with our personal world and some by doing what they do best - living happily surrounded by those they love and those who love them.

If you do not immediately recognise Arif Mardin and know of his work, here are a few of the artists he has produced: Aretha Franklin, The Bee Gees, Bette Midler, Chaka Khan, Phil Collins, Jewel, The Young Rascals, and Norah Jones. His home was Atlantic Records for many years and he now is at EMI. What do all of these artists have in common? What can they teach us?

They are artists who have touched us. Their music communicates love in an honest manner - they sing and play to our hearts. The same criteria apply to the classical artists and composers we know and love. It is Mozart's music that speaks to us, not just the interpretation of the performer. Many of the above popular artists are not song writers. They interpret the works of others through their lives and experiences, just like you do.

Yes, you are in the same category as these famous performers. You open your heart to the performers you teach and share with them they joy and love you find in music. Your Brahms has been shaped by your visits to various places in Europe, other performances of his music you have heard, other interpretations. Nonetheless, they remain a gesture of your heart and your students respond to that gesture with a response that can be overwhelming.

Take some time this summer to reflect and renew. Build your heart and fill it with love. If you want to open your ears to perhaps some new ideas, look at the Jazz listening selections. Do a little research and find some work that Arif Mardin has produced. Look towards a non-academic genre and find what Faith Hill, Emmylou Harris and Alison Krause are doing. Watch *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* and be touched by the honesty and simplicity of the music and its underscoring of a depression Odyssey. Then seek out "Down From the Mountain" the DVD of the concert at the Ryman Auditorium by the performers of the music for that film hosted by the late John Hartford and feel the electricity of the love and faith of Ralph Stanley's chilling performance of "O Death!" and the joyous finale "Angel Band" which is, in the words of Jay Orr, "...a cry from the soul, promising an immortal home, a place of rest in the timeless, eternal music".

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Jazz Listening selections can be found at

<http://www.amis-online.org.uk/jazz/>