

Rick's Place

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

There's a certain level of emotional intelligence that people need to play good jazz. You've got to be able to let go of the ego, to be exactly what you can be in that moment and learn as much as you can from the people you're interacting with. The way this translates into business is that you can simultaneously lead and support.

Michael Gold, quoted in "Hear Your Muse"
Kevin Carroll, *How: Design Ideas at Work*

Michael Gold was a gigging musician in New York and led the Vassar College jazz program when he founded a company, *Jazz Impact*, which now demonstrates the value of improvisation and collaboration in otherwise rigid corporate structures. As a teacher, with a background in music and probably theatre, you have seen your hours of rehearsal and structure take a new shape in the white heat of performance. Yes, you have taught them the piece, they have rehearsed it under your direction, but in the performance there is that change that comes in that moment.

As a performer, you have experienced this feeling. The line seemed to take a life of its own; the difficult section was over before it began; the penultimate cadence slowed just enough to build the tension to just the right level so the coda's flurry of scales and trills created a thrilling release that culminated in the last chord held exactly for the right length and released with a flourish. As a listener you have your favorite pieces performed live and felt that tingle of the hairs at the back of your neck. Admit it, it even happens when you listen to a recording.

He espouses some interesting ideas- emotional intelligence - let go of the ego - be what you can be in the moment - learn as much as you can from the people you are interacting with. Sounds like a good definition of a conductor, doesn't it? Think of the best conductors you have observed or performed with. Certainly every conductor needs an ego just to stand before a group. It is the conductors who honestly approach the group as their leader into a collaborative experience where everyone has a role to play who have the greatest success. They have learned that merely beating time and giving entrances doesn't make that person the conductor. Those whose integrity and mission of communicating the essence of the music shine out.

They have the emotional intelligence to involve and invite the performers into creating that experience which is greater than the combined abilities of the group - in that moment, a new collaborative experience exists for the performers. According to experts, emotional intelligence involves self-awareness, managing emotions, motivating oneself, empathy and handling relationships. Once again, characteristics of a good teacher and conductor.

Learning from the people with whom they interact is what separates the great conductor from the good conductor. The great conductor is aware that they are also a member of the ensemble and must learn from the people with whom they are interacting how they need to be led into that performance state. The great conductor knows when they need to be reached in a different way and how to best utilize that heightened state of awareness or being. Many times in performance you will have reminded your performers of the rehearsed moments and restored their confidence. What did you do to bring them back to the path the group set out on at the first rehearsal? What was the sign that they needed that reminder?

In the next months the program of festivals will give us a chance to observe some great conductors both in rehearsal and in performance. Take the time to observe these fine musicians working with the students and watch them as they weave that blend of emotionally intelligent leadership that will result in a satisfying final performance for all of the performers in the group and, no doubt, some tearful, back-of-the-neck tingling responses from the audience. Be assured, the biggest neck tingles will probably be coming from us - the teachers who really began the rehearsal process when we worked with our students teaching the notes, rhythms and pronunciations.

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