

# Rick's Place

## Notes, Thoughts, and Random Musings on the Online Experience

by Rick Hein, AMIS web master

Coraline's father stopped working and made them all dinner.  
Coraline was disgusted. 'Daddy,' she said, 'you've made a *recipe* again.'  
'It's leek and potato stew, with a tarragon garnish and melted Gruyère cheese,' he admitted.  
Coraline sighed. Then she went to the freezer and got out some microwave chips and a microwave mini-pizza.  
'You know I don't like recipes,' she told her father, while her dinner went round and round and the little red numbers on the microwave oven counted down to zero.  
'If you tried it, maybe you'd like it,' said Coraline's father, but she shook her head.

Neil Gaiman,  
"Coraline"

Welcome back! Happy new year!

By now, many of you are well and truly fully in the swing of school and some of you are just having your first full week. Welcome newcomers to the international scene and welcome back 'seasoned hands' who change countries as easily as they change a compact disc. I hope we are all on course for a happy and successful year.

Does the scenario at the top of the page sound familiar? Place yourself in the scene. In an effort to maximise quality time, father stops work early and goes to the market. He finds the freshest leeks; leeks that squeak as he slides his hands over the inviting green and white flesh. Then he turns and sees, no, smells potatoes. Potatoes at just that perfect size between new and baking. The rich soil that nurtured the potato through its life from seed to harvest still clings in places to the skin. These are good things, rich foods to feed a family with love. At the dairy he finds fresh milk and thick rich cream. The cheese merchant has a rich and Gruyère. Quick purchases, and now the the air fills with the heady scent of spices and fresh picked herbs. A few bay leaves, some peppercorns and - aha! tarragon! Father arrives in the kitchen and executes his planned meal, imbuing every morsel with all the love he can muster. Memories of special meals prepared by his mother, his grandmother, and those rare times that his father cooked for the family. Special moments uniting the past, present and now he carries the tradition into the future.

Cut to Coraline. Home from play, ready to eat and move on to the next item of business; more play. Sure, she'll see Mom and Dad, get refuelled, maybe with her favorite food and zoom on. She comes through the door, and her heart drops. Stinky cheese! She *has* do say something about this.

Father looks up from the steamy sink unawares, wrapped in his reverie, sees his beloved daughter and takes it square in the heart.

It is familiar, isn't it? Perhaps you delivered a culinary *coup de grace* in a similar manner. Or perhaps you received it. Not at the sink, but in the classroom. That's right. The classroom.

All the greatest love, clearest planning, finest literature, funnest activities won't work if they don't reach the student where they are at the time of that lesson. Without knowing you do it, you read the class as they walk in the door and instantly make the change from a heavy note bashing rehearsal to a problem solving sing through of all the nearly polished material with lighter corrections and a more cheerful environment. A salad buffet instead of a roast dinner. Or perhaps they get the same note bashing rehearsal, but the pace is quickened, more notes than usual are worked on and the repairs are made rapidly with positive reinforcement and students identifying the problem sections. Not the areas you would have chosen, but ones that they have identified as needing work. Same roast dinner but with with different starter, vegetables and pudding.

In both cases the students leave feeling better, you've helped them along the path towards expressing themselves through music and working as an ensemble. Tomorrow may be the time to bash those notes or perhaps the notes will have been bashed a little in the sing through; new problems identified and old problems solved.

Unlucky Coraline's father - lucky you - able to serve up differing menus at the drop of a hat, with recipes made from rich, fresh, and nourishing ingredients. During this year you'll have a chance to pick up some new recipes at festivals and workshops from other talented chefs - sorry - music teachers from around the world. Perhaps you'll also find a way of perking up that meat loaf you trot out at regular intervals so your diners get something a little different.

Here's to new year of keeping the classroom vibrant and the musical cupboard fully stocked with a rich variety of healthy, tasty, and exciting ingredients!