

Rick's Place

Notes, Thoughts, and Random Musings on the Online Experience

by Rick Hein, AMIS web master

Benchley's Law of Distinction:

There are two kinds of people in this world: those who believe the world can be divided into two kinds of people, and those who don't.

Robert Benchley

Quoted in *1,001 Logical Laws, Accurate Axioms, Profound Principles, Trusty Truisms, Homey Homilies, Colourful Corollaries, Quotable Quotes And Rambunctious Ruminations For All Walks Of Life...*

Some thoughts just stick in your mind. They are just like little tunes that stay in the darkest corners of your mind and just when you are relaxing - there it is again. As a colleague said to me when we were discussing the sorts of things you do at the end of a long day - "I'm always glad to put the radio on when I don't want to have to make the music myself."

You get into a piece you are teaching or performing and there it is in the middle of reading the newspaper or walking down the street. Just as you successfully drive it out of your inner ear another one crops up to take its place. A song you sang in choir or played in band. The music from the restaurant where you ate dinner on your anniversary. It is a little more hazardous if you listen to popular music. The shorter songs inherent need a stronger 'hook' to attract you to the song.

As you listen to music, you are probably the type of person who analyses the music that is playing. If you're not that type, you probably had a tougher time with aural skills in music theory. Being a bass player, a tuba player, a keyboard player and a vocalist means that you cross over into many styles of learning. Sight singing is fairly easy as I have a choice of physical models of the arrangement of pitch with corresponding physical stimuli. Can't help it. Three physical models of a Bb major scale, not counting the string variations for starting on various fingers on various strings.

It has always been dangerous for me to listen to the radio. Even though I'm not making the music internally, the analytical ear jumps to life and starts saying - chord progression, *bossa nova*, what's that melody; ah! that's it, who's singing; sounds like her mother, how is that orchestrated, ooh - cool substitution for the dominant into the new key for a tasty sax solo - that's unusual that I'd like that solo. (Some of you may have recognised Bebel Gilberto and Kenny Gee's *Girl from Ipanema* in that little stream of consciousness.

At the recent AMIS International Honor Band and Choir Festival, I listened to two colleagues give great presentations on subjects that they love. Jon Hodge gave a practical demonstration of recording a vocal audition. I was inspired by his ease in handling the equipment and making clear many of the abstract terms and concepts that prevent us from presenting our students best results.

Pete Lutkoski shared with us his classroom experiences with SmartMusic. A computer system that organises practice, listens, records and accompanies students. Makes practice a bit more fun and gives a clear record of progress and achievement as a part of an effective assessment of progress. A truly musical use for technology and very easy to use.

All the time you are listening to the music you make, your inner ear is listening and trying to find the best alignment for the gears; the right amount of energy and focus; the right conditions for making the air move just so. You encourage your students to be aware of their world and the conditions that create their performance. My suggestion in my session was that you should take that last step and share your talents as an arranger or composer with your students. You know their strengths, you know their weaknesses. You can write great arrangements that contain all the teaching moments you have been looking for. The technology is there in Sibelius, Smart Music, or Finale. With today's computers, programs and MIDI keyboards you can now truly orchestrate, arrange and record in a professional recording studio in your home or class room..

By now you've recognised yourself in one or the other of the various pairs of groups presented. I know that you're all in the group that loves what they do and wants to inspire others to join you in the musical experience. Take the extra step and use technology to add a new station on that journey.

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