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# Rick's Place

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

by Rick Hein, AMIS web master

102.2 smooth fm is giving you the chance to win BIG cash prizes with the 'smooth Secret Song'!

Every weekday, every hour from 9 am to 5 pm we're giving you the chance to identify our Secret Song and win the cash. If the answers incorrect then we'll add another £102 to the prize fund!

We've had our first winner who bagged £1612! The Secret Song was: Players Association - Turn the Music Up

The prize fund started again at £1000 from 2 pm on Wednesday 23rd November. These are some of the wrong guesses so far:

Al Green - I cant get next to you

Al Green - For the good times

Al Green - Lets stay together...

Whispers - Out of the box

Will Young - Your game

Wilson Pickett - Midnight hour

Secret Song Competition

Smooth FM

It is the sort of thing we musicians take as read - listen to this piece and tell me what it is, who composed it, when it was composed. A feature o the final exam in *Stravinsky - Dramatic Works* with Dr. Cardamone was a "drop the needle" exercise. Singers, you've all done it. "Who's this singing *The Queen of the Night*? Don't look away, jazzers: "Oh man, you can tell that that's Zoot Sims a mile off!"

As a result of that style of training, I would wager most of you never had any problem with *Name That Tune* either. Especially when they basically had told you in the hints who the composer was and what the background of the song and the famous performer or performers. "I can name that tune in no notes!" you'd proudly shout. The band would then start up and nine times out of ten you'd be mostly right. "Good ear!"

This competition is different. There are no clues. There is only the "secret song" and the announcer. following the lead of *Who Wants to be a Millionaire* playing the tension card for all it is worth. The brief is that the song is a well known song in the popular music range that would fit the bill smooth jazz and rhythm and blues.

I can hear you all chiming in "How hard can this be?" They add £102 every time there is a wrong guess. The current prize as I write is £51,400. I thought, "Certainly you can tell during the introduction, let alone if they play any meaningful part of them." In the words of that fellow from Stratford upon Avon, "Aye, there's the rub." The secret song is precisely one beat long. Not only is it one beat long, the beat that they have chosen to reproduce is a single solo snare drum hit.

I said to myself - there's a big hint there. Since the snare hit is a solo with no cymbals, no hi-hat, no strings or anything else, there can't be that many songs. Think for a moment about drum patterns in popular music. Drummers - two hands, two feet, lots of layered simultaneous sounds. You hear cymbals along with the bass and snare patterns as well, right? I did a quick mental check of the most popular songs I knew that featured a drum intro or a drum solo fill. Aha - Stevie Wonder - *Superstition*! I got ready to call to take my chances to get a call back, then as I picked up the phone I thought; Wilson Pickett - *Midnight Hour*. Oh - this could be a problem. So I listened again the next time the competition came around - another wrong guess. This time I noticed that the snare hit has a bit of a ring, a good midrange buzz and perhaps a slight gate. Stravinsky, I must admit, didn't call for that precise snare technique in the dramatic works. I had to rely on other listening experiences and performing situations to be able to make that call. Then my spirits fell even more when I remembered the 1968 release of Marvin Gaye's performance of *I Heard It Through The Grapevine*. The Wurlitzer riff working against the single note bass ostinato and bass drum and closed hi-hat intro is easy to remember, but that one beat snare intro stuck in my mind. I went back and listened to the piece and realised immediately that it wasn't even close. The snare is pitched higher and there's a flam on the hit. Checking the Smooth FM web site, I found many more "Good - but wrong!" answers. Who would have thought that a snare drum could be played with such variety?

It can. I just hadn't imagined it could in this style. So there's yet another type of listening skill to add to the repertoire of skills that we teach and practise daily. We probably need to use this every day as we are choosing instruments for a composition or coaching or conducting an ensemble in performance. I was further taken, literally, down this road when I saw and heard the latest Honda commercial where a journey by car is performed by a mixed choir all the way from the starting of the engine through accelerating, going through tunnels, rain windscreen wipers on and into the distance.

Out of all the pitched and unpitched sounds that make up the sonic picture we will present to the audience we must always ask "How do they fit together? - Are all of the dynamics, attacks, releases and timbres appropriate for this piece? How can I reimagine the sound of my ensemble to make this more musical?" We are so lucky because the instruments making up our ensembles can produce so many sounds that even without the aid of electronics we can literally create not only any sound that can be imagined, but those that can only be imagined.

Rick Hein  
rahein@mac.com

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