
Rick's Place

Notes, Thoughts, and Random Musings on the Online Experience

by Rick Hein, AMIS web master

The Cree Indian language has a special *that* [for] things just gone out of sight, while Ilocano, a tongue of the Philippines, has three words for *this* referring to a visible object, a fourth for things not in view and a fifth for things that no longer exist,

Mario Pei *The Story of Language*
quoted in *Mother Tongue*, Bill Bryson

And we believe English is complicated! As the sounds of AMIS International Honor Band and Choir are still whizzing around in my head, it is good to have a chance to reflect on the world and the word.

As in previous years festivals, over 200 students from all over the world, natively speaking a variety of tongues, were shaped by their individual teachers and brought together to form The AMIS International Honor Choir and the AMIS International Honor Band. All of the essential preparation for the Festival, from the audition to the final performance was accomplished in a mixture of languages and gesture that each of the participants could understand. This was a second or even a third language for everyone. This common language involved students with great minds from as distant a time as the Renaissance and as near as the man sitting in the middle of the auditorium, listening and smiling.

We often claim that "Music is Everyone's Language". We defend that claim well in not only our Festivals but in all our teaching. We sing and play songs from many lands, eras, and cultures. We educate our students in a language containing no one set of rules, but a variety of inflections, grammars, and suggestions. Some of the composers specify every dynamic and articulation, others suffice to write *cantabile* and leave the performer to get on with it.

Then there is that person at the front conducting. Every nuance and gesture defined and practiced to convey an interpretation in addition to that provided by the score. Having sung and played under many conductors from many lands, it is true that we spoke the same language. The music we made was all the better for having to approach that common tongue from different directions.

Without further research, I can only speculate on the Ilocano language. How would the Ilocano describe the event of the Festival? Would they say this Festival in the fourth sense, as it is a thing not in view? Certainly this Festival was a visible object. The smiles on the faces of the audience; the tears in the eyes were because of something that was visible as well as audible. Perhaps it was this Festival in the fifth sense, because as the applause stopped echoing in the auditorium, the camera flashes stopped and the performers walked off the stage, this Festival no longer existed.

Perhaps we can find a sixth sense of this Festival. Like all of our performances, it will never cease to exist in the hearts and souls of those who performed and those who heard the performance. Of course the pieces will trigger memories as will the E-mails, texts, and phone calls. There is one thing that will never leave the performers and will return every time they sing another song in a group or play an instrument in a band: the satisfaction of achieving as a group a goal that no individual can ever achieve.

Many of us in the auditorium at the joint rehearsal this year expressed a thought. What if all the presidents, prime ministers, kings, rulers, and generals were summoned not to debate or make war, but to sing and play together? Of course, there would have to be a conductor, but no doubt a suitable professional could be found to unify that (truly) powerful band and choir. Perhaps the lasting memory the leaders would carry with them after their performance is that while they were making music, the world was truly a better place.