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1234 Words

### **Meet Joe Yazbeck....**

*An Inside Look at the Man behind Heartbeat Productions*

*I went to my sister's introductory meeting with Joe Yazbeck and Heartbeat Productions only as peace of mind for her. This was her first meeting on the opposite side of town and other than his web site she had no idea who he really was. I had no inkling this meeting would change her life, no concept how it would positively impact my own.*

*As a graphic designer / copywriter, I work with and interview a lot of different people and personalities, but I have never met some who I was instantly inspired to write about because I felt so uplifted in his presence. Until now. Joe Yazbeck is that man and this is his story.*

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There is a keyboard and a microphone. He sits confidently at one. You stand nervously behind the other.

"Sing. Don't think. Just sing." His instruction will make sense by the end of this first lesson.

These five words will begin your career with man who prides himself on being part coach, advisor, confidante and friend. To watch Joe Yazbeck in action with his students of all ages- doing what he does best and loves most- is fascinating, but to sit down when the lesson ends and listen to him talk about his passion – to see the expression on his face - is nothing short of mesmerizing.

Yazbeck began Heartbeat Productions to fill a void. He offers a life-preserver in the shark-infested waters of the entertainment industry and provides something the industry often avoids: the truth. He won't string you along for the money and it's usually in your introductory phone call to him.

He will be the first to tell you he won't give compliments unless you have earned them. He will never criticize artists; he will correct. If you get past the telephone interview, have the opportunity to try-out and you receive praise for your audition, he has seen something in you that maybe you didn't even know you possess.

Sitting shoeless, in a button-down shirt and casual pants, Yazbeck looks more like someone's cool dad than someone who breathes life into stagnant careers or helps new artists take flight. But listen to him speak and you know you are presence of someone who eats, sleeps, and breathes creativity and truly understands the entertainment business and your place in it.

Yazbeck's company came from the idea of resuscitating a dormant career. "Giving it a heartbeat," says Yazbeck. And thus was born Heartbeat Productions with its multi-layers of artist assistance.

Whereas voice teachers typically *teach* singing, Yazbeck's approach is customized and personal. He is a *coach* of vocal performance, fundamental and advanced vocal techniques and stage presence. A perfectly held note can be much more than proper breathing and control; if done properly, it can enrapture an audience and hold them captive.

He will train you to be in positive control of your performance and your audience, not the opposite. *Never the opposite.* "Let the applause ride. Smile. Nod your head. Clasp your hands to your heart. But never interrupt your applause." And he will forewarn you that with each session, it will get tougher, that he will demand more and more of you, but in return you will get better as your confidence grows stronger.

"We offer all the essential talent development that goes into increasing the quality of a performer's skill," he explains. "This includes vocal and performance coaching, as well as stage presence; auditioning skills, techniques and workshops for actors and comediennees. "

Career Development is as it sounds: the development and planning of your career depending on whether you are a musician, singer, songwriter, or actor.

And as most artists don't completely understand the business end of the business, Yazbeck makes it simple by providing all the basis resources necessary: promotion and marketing, public relations, web site development, press releases, copywriting, photography; everything that you would need to successfully market the product which just happens to be you.

In addition, music and video production is another service provided to both singers and actors, anyone needing a CD or video in order to promote themselves.

"We have tremendous resources available," says Yazbeck. "We give our performing artists a plan that we can guide and advise them through. We offer our clients a program that encompasses everything they could possibly need. We help them to get up and get going so they can have the means and resources to be successful."

*"Frightened. Sad. Hopeless. Angry..."* Yazbeck drills the young woman at the microphone. She must reach inside of herself to sing the emotion. When she struggles to understand how to sing angry, he shows her and you can almost feel the room reverberate by his resounding powerful tone.

Yazbeck has talent, not just in his ability to create and cultivate working performers, but in his own right. He is classically trained in theatre from Kings College, a sister college of Notre Dame and when not working with his students, he helms Heart Dance Band as its lead vocalist singing rock and jazz to blues. His diverse musical influences range from George Gershwin, Frank Sinatra, Ray Charles, and Bob Dylan to the Beatles, Ella Fitzgerald, and Andre Boccelli. "They are each true to who they are," Yazbeck explains.

Being true to yourself is extremely important to Yazbeck. A performer needs a purpose, a career goal. “I look for the goodness of their (*potential students*) inherent character and personality. It is essential that I work with someone who has integrity, who stands for something. Talent is secondary. I look to see if this is an individual that I can work with.”

Family is also important to Yazbeck, but not simply his own family. He says that it is essential that his artists have a family network of support. “Having support, respect and love is a major ingredient in anyone’s success, but it is simply vital in the performing arts.”

Yazbeck credits first his parents and next his wife and children for being his greatest inspirations. “I’ve got awesome parents, an incredible and wise wife and amazing kids—what more can you ask for, for inspiration?”

And one of his amazing kids just happens to be Tony Yazbeck, a highly-talented actor and Broadway veteran who is currently starring as Tulsa in the Broadway revival of *Gypsy*. Three years ago, father and son teamed together to form Broadway Bootcamp, a nationwide series of workshops for musical theatre and dance for aspiring performers that also provides behind-the-scene facts about Broadway auditions and the business of making it to Broadway. “We strip away all the false information and demonstrate the technical standards. Our goal is to have our students walk away with a sense of true direction.”

Says Yazbeck, “I have a very strong interest in making what I do make a difference. I believe that what I do to educate, train and coach people and through my own performances that I uplift people. When I have the opportunity to help artists go out into the world and create works that also uplift, than I know I’ve made that difference in the world.”

Watching Yazbeck sitting at the keyboard guiding his newest artist through matching her voice to the scale of his piano keys, it is easy to see the indentation of the mark he is leaving on the world and those he has inspired.

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