

ESTA events

If you have missed out on any of the sessions reported on below, please do get in touch to request repeat sessions in your area. If you have ideas for sessions on different topics, or with different presenters, we want to hear from you!

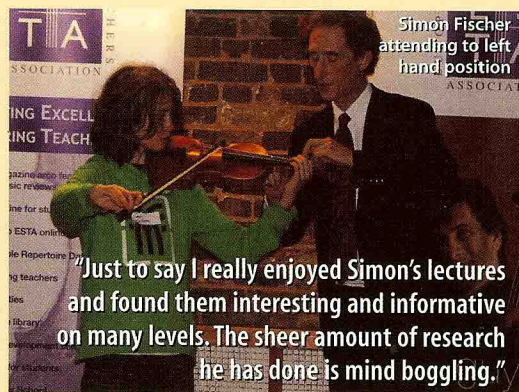
SIMON FISCHER DEMONSTRATION LESSONS

LONDON, JANUARY-MARCH

Snow and icy winds failed to deter the ESTA teachers and students who assembled at Primrose Hill Community Centre during the early weeks of the year. Numbers swelled with each session of Simon Fischer's demonstration lessons which set out to cover five main themes, left hand, right hand, tone production, intonation and vibrato. The shape of each afternoon's class emerged from the individual needs of the performing students, who ranged from 10 to 17 and were not current pupils of Simon's. The sessions attracted people from as far afield as Brighton, Cardiff, Nottingham and Devon along with Germany, Switzerland and Portugal.

Simon's textbooks on practice and basics need no introduction, but for this listener the riveting part of these workshops was seeing the ideas set out in those books put into practise with a diverse group of students. The sessions developed their own momentum - almost always finishing after the witching hour. Musical gems were shared ranging from Simon's experience as a pupil of Dorothy Delay in New York ("let your ears hang on the sound" - her words to encourage the highest quality of listening) or Manny Hurwitz on talent ("pain versus pleasure" - the good student strives for the beautiful sound almost as a gut response) or Bronstein vs Galamian on the placing of the index finger on the bow.

The key moments came when Simon demonstrated with the performing students how clear ideas and commands can bring remarkable and swift results. The session on tone production developed ideas set out in Simon's DVD *Secrets of Sound Production*. But it was fascinating to see how students were coaxed (sometimes bullied!) into refining their control of sound point/pressure and distance from the bridge. Clarity of thought was a recurring theme - a student must be able to articulate simply and accurately how they are playing, for instance how the RH fingers interact with the bow. Dorothy Delay had spoken to Simon of the Renaissance principle of proportion. This was developed in several



lessons to find the golden middle point between two extremes, for example in the height of the violin or the quality of sound. Throughout Simon urged his guinea-pigs to take responsibility for their playing and their instrument - how to preserve the varnish; how to tune accurately; how to cut finger nails! As teachers we were urged not to be shy of repeating ourselves and above all not to excuse sloppy playing with the notion that over time it will get better. Abandon excuses those who study the violin!

The atmosphere at these sessions was friendly but demanding. Often the student had to leap out of their comfort zone and try new ideas in front of a large group of teachers. Most rose to the challenge admirably, in particular one younger pupil who displayed exceptional poise as she mastered the new routines. During the ear tests she would think nothing of replying "Again!" - much to the amusement of her listeners. It was striking that Simon gained their trust and attention in so short a time and thanks to that trust we saw some remarkable progress made, especially in the session on tone production.

A big thank you to Jane Gillie, Simon Trentham and all who worked to make these sessions such a success. More please! JANE RAMSDEN

WORKSHOP AND

KINGS PLACE, LONDON
TASMIN LITTLE AND DA

As I walked along York and windy Saturday morning myself wondering what David le Page working might add to my teaching concert venue I joined their families, some looking pale and apprehensive team of helpers registered to the main concert everyone and outlined t

In the first session, string orchestra workshop on a piece he had composed minutes David had flexibility of the orchestra speed, point of contact, dynamics, David created around the hall. What was the auditorium was achieved with a minimum demonstration. The session paced, and the concert David's direction were teachers worked with time honoured way with fingering, frequently with experienced players.

I left the workshop to master class, and arrived student's performance. chosen challenging beginning with Bach and of Bartok. Tasmin quickly student's technique and passages from their points. Many of the issues Tasmin reminded player should always serve the importance of using piece to life, and emphasis music would give pleasure

As is often the case, resolved by a return to using a flatter bow on octaves as preparation