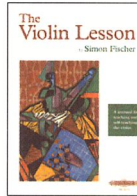


BOOKS

THE VIOLIN LESSON: A MANUAL FOR TEACHING AND SELF- TEACHING THE VIOLIN

Simon Fischer

342PP ISBN 9790577088969
PETERS EDITION £35



Simon Fischer must have ironclad mental discipline to have produced not only *Basics*, *Practice*, *Scales*

and his monthly articles in *The Strad*, but to have constructed this extraordinary volume. This is an enormous book, in number of pages, in references, in depth of knowledge, in aspiration and in realisation. The photographs of technical error and correction are models of their kind. Music examples are taken from the repertoire and supplemented by Fischer's own technical exercises and solutions. It is a book aimed at adults, but that's fine. So was Menuhin's small and valuable volume *Six Lessons with Yehudi Menuhin*.

Like Menuhin in his book, Fischer is concise (his concision just takes longer) and approaches the playing of the violin in breathtaking detail. I would suggest that no string teacher should be without this book. Fischer caters to adult learners, giving them a manual to iron out problems quickly. I'm not sure if an adult would be able to use the book without a teacher's input as it's so difficult to analyse one's own problems – that's why professionals still benefit from senior advice. However, no one is excluded and for me this is one of the book's main attractions: technical difficulties, no matter how small or basic, are treated seriously.

The book is divided into 12 lessons, starting with Lesson 1: tone production, and holding the violin and bow (Lesson 2), to setting up the bow arm (Lesson 5 – wonderfully helpful

photos here), to the 50 pages of avoiding aches and pains in Lesson 7 and the 40 pages of improving key bow strokes (Lesson 11). Each chapter contains prompting questions, such as, 'How can I improve my trills?', followed by music examples, references, more questions and answers, and possible solutions.

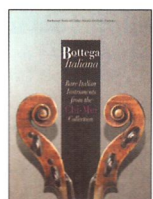
The index is a valuable resource and tabulated with the same helpful attention to detail. Have a problem? Just look it up. I turn to 'F' and at random can see 'fingers (left)' – probably 50 entries here – fingertip, flexibility, flow, forearm, Fournier and so on. The index also reveals Fischer's main influences, with long lists of references to Carl Flesch, Dorothy DeLay and Ivan Galamian.

My one quibble is the production of the volume by the publisher. My copy is already falling apart. This should be a once-in-a-lifetime purchase. I can't help thinking that spiral binding might have been a good idea. I know this would cost, but the author deserves this at least.

ANNE INGLIS

BOTTEGA ITALIANA: RARE ITALIAN INSTRUMENTS FROM THE CHI MEI COLLECTION Ed. Carlo Chiesa

172PP ISBN 9788890917905
FONDAZIONE MUSEO DEL VIOLINO
ANTONIO STRADIVARI €80



What a wonderful catalogue. The sort of thing that stirs the spirits. You can get indigestion from too many Strads and 'del Gesù' instruments, I'm sure. Now it's time for a refreshing tonic: the work of the other makers, the different, the underpublished and overlooked.



Instruments from the Chi Mei collection made up the Museo del Violino's inaugural temporary exhibition

This catalogue, accompanying the inaugural temporary exhibition at Cremona's new Museo del Violino, brings together some of the lesser-known treasures of the Chi Mei Culture Foundation's collection.

I must confess to having been wary of the foundation's ambitions in amassing the world's definitive collection of instruments, but its urge to communicate, publish and exhibit what it has acquired is admirable. The preface by director (and, in fact, sole mover of the entire project) Wen-Long Shi is touching and very heartening. This book has brought the best experts together, discussing fascinating work in fine and brilliantly up-to-date detail. The constant search for superlatives in describing Stradivari and Amati can lead to exhaustion, but here are the Modenese, the Milanese, the Mantuans, and all the other complex and intriguing schools of work that make Italian violin making as a whole the entrancingly varied and absorbing phenomenon that it is.

We will never tire of finding beautiful detail in the work of the oddest and most obscure of these craftsmen. There are still great mysteries lying behind the likes of Enrico Catenar and Fabrizio Senta in Turin, Giovanni Maria del Bussetto and Giacomo Gennaro in Cremona, or Lorenzini, Casini and Gobetti – still too many to mention, and all shown in this book, wonderfully photographed by Tucker Densley. Some of these are rare to the point

of singularity, and it is good to know that these reference examples are safely curated by the foundation, and best of all, made available for study and performance as far as is possible.

And the examples shown here are certainly fine ones, in a good state of conservation and characteristic as far as can be judged within, in some cases, a very limited number of known or attributed examples.

Others are not so rare: the works of Camilli, Landolfi and Balestrieri are regular features of auctions and in the hands of many musicians, but their makers' status as 'significant' and 'distinctive' entitles them to a place here.

This is an important and absorbing catalogue, both as a work of reference and as a treat for the eye of any lover of the violin. A full table of measurements is provided in a useful appendix that helpfully follows the same format as other catalogues published by the Fondazione Stradivari. It is impossible to single out any particular maker or even contributor in this volume, but suffice it to say the presence of Charles Beare, and of his son Peter, give an authority to the contents that really is not in any doubt. This is a great start to the work of the Museo del Violino.

JOHN DILWORTH

Find a wealth of books on stringed instruments, playing and teaching at The Strad Library
www.thestradlibrary.com