

News from Janet Pazio. February 2019

A happy New Year to all you merry viola players. Looking back over last year I had such an exciting time with my music making and walking, even though I had the odd trauma such as losing but also finding my mobile phone. One regret I do have is not attending the IVC at Rotterdam. I see that Sue already has her beady eye on the conference in Poland this September. There is so much more to viola playing to simply playing the notes, as I'm increasingly finding out as I plod along with my lessons with the wonderful Lucy.

In the winter months I don't do quite so much walking so actually have time for viola practice. I went to my last lesson hoping that Lucy would be pleased with me as I felt that I'd worked hard but didn't get the response I would have liked. On playing a Kreuzer study, with which I must confess I was rather bored and which I thought I'd got it taped, Lucy said it sounded like I was doing housework. This set me to thinking about my relationship with the viola.

I can remember Louise telling me several years ago when I rather ambitiously played 'Harold in Italy' with our local symphony orchestra to make sure that every note was beautifully played. When I listen to somebody like Robin this comes across as he makes the most gorgeous sound. So where am I going wrong? I suspect it's something to do with attitude. Again, I can remember Lucy telling me (so many words of wisdom, why can't I take them on board?) not to simply have my schedule for practice and to tick it off to say 'I've done that' but to take care and listen even if I might not get through the repertoire as much as I would like. I think there's a saying less means more.

I've recently spent several days at St. Beuno's in the Clywdian hills on a silent retreat just spending time with my God and his/her creation, building on a relationship that gets squeezed out in our busy and noisy world. My eldest daughter, George, regularly goes on a Buddhist retreat to help with compassion and mindfulness, so that she is responsive to what others are really saying when she interacts with them. As she's a psychiatric nurse listening is a good and essential attribute to have, especially listening on a deeper level. Playing music is very like that, learning to dig down to the deeper levels of what the composer is saying and to bring that across to our audiences. Also, relationships take time to build. When I think of the friends I've had for years and of the depth of love and understanding which grows over time. But it can also be sacrificial looking at their needs not just our own. Again, coming back to the viola. Is it my friend or something to be beaten into

submission with gritted teeth. Do I really listen to the nuances of the instrument and what the music is asking of me or simply plough on regardless. Sadly, I suspect that it's the latter.

But less maundering. This Saturday (Feb 2nd) the NSSO is attempting an ambitious programme including Glazunov 'The Seasons'. One thing we are very good at is making the scratchy sound signifying ice in 'Winter'. But I'm not so sure about the more luscious bits. Our erratic intonation doesn't help and the fact that as amateurs we can't seem to get away from mf. But Juan has worked hard with us. So fingers crossed or maybe bows at the ready. Just off to do some more practice in the desperate hope I will get it right on the night.

Happy and sensitive viola playing

Janet Pazio