


 reviews

BOOKS


Successful practising – a handbook for pupils, parents and music teachers
 Jenny Macmillan

www.jennymacmillan.co.uk, £15

Successful performance depends on successful practising. This book, aimed at parents, teachers and pupils, is beautifully written and presented. The first half of the book reminds us in general terms what practising is all about and its purpose. The second half then goes on to take the reader on a detailed and very helpful tour of how to maximise success.

In the section aimed at parents, a suitable learning environment is an early topic. Then discussion follows on the involvement – or not – of parents in a child's practising and the various factors which have a bearing on the key element of motivation. There are also lovely examples of how a parent can encourage their child along a good learning route. The section aimed at teachers, covers the "why and how" of practise. However much we all think we cover this with our own students, I can almost guarantee you will find something useful here! The section aimed at pupils, written in a friendly and clear manner, could be read profitably by pupils of secondary school age and above. There are also lovely comments aimed at the younger child.

In the second half of the book the author deals with specific and detailed strategies for practising. Warming up, accuracy, security, problem solving, the uses and misuses of repetition, how to approach learning new pieces,

memorising, developing performance skills, scales and sight-reading etc are covered and some lovely succinct reminders are included, my favourite one being "Practise fast, progress slowly, practise slowly, progress fast!" Whilst the author is a piano teacher, other than for nine pages the book is not piano-centric, as most of the ideas are common to all musicians. I highly recommend everyone buy a copy of this book to read and have on his or her bookshelf. VIVIENNE BLUMFIELD

VIOLIN


Sonatina
 Violin and piano
 William Alwyn

 Stainer and Bell, £8.50
 Approx grade: 7/8+

This 3-movement sonatina was premièred at the Royal Academy of Music by Elsie Owen and Harry Isaacs, and then lay unpublished for 75 years. The recent recording by Madeleine Mitchell and Andrew Ball has now brought it to wider notice.

Written in 1935, a few years before Alwyn's self-confessed change to a more romantic phase in his compositional output, it follows traditional form. The opening *Allegro e grazioso* is prelude-like in character, the following *Adagio*, often improvisatory in approach, examines a darker more introspective aspect, whilst the final *Vivace* is dance-inspired.

Lasting only about 12 minutes in all, its lush harmonies, repetitive expansion of phrases and rhythms and a certain fluency of direction conspire to an easy immediacy of appreciation, but the writing is knowledgeably instrument-

oriented, and given perspicacity on the part of the performers the character comes vividly to life.

A useful inclusion in lighter recital work, or as an introduction to sonata repertoire per se. BRIGID KIRKLAND-WILSON

Violin Concerto in D, op.61
 Ludwig von Beethoven

Barenreiter, £13.00

Approx grade: Music College and beyond

This publication is clearly part of Barenreiter's commitment to providing scholarly and accurate texts of Beethoven's string works. Jonathan Del Mar is the editor, as with the other works already available; his expertise and dedication to historical and stylistic matters is peerless.

The critical commentary at £45.50 (ouch!) provides exhaustive and fascinating detail about the earliest drafts and editions following the creation of this sublime masterpiece.

There are other editions which claim to be Urtext, and they have their merits, but this new Barenreiter has to take precedence. A clean text violin part is provided plus a performance violin part edited by Detlef Hahn. The performing guidance is expert and sensitive, totally respectful of the composer's instructions as realized by Del Mar. That the two, Urtext and performance text, are printed separately is to be very much welcomed. Established performers, teachers and students can now approach the work afresh, making their decisions knowing that the text is free from the carbuncles of previous generations of virtuosi and pedagogues (not necessarily to be dismissed) and, in the case of students who have to fend for themselves in matters of bowing and fingering the performance text is available to offer suggestions and guidance.

Considered as a separate publication this new Barenreiter production has to be essential for the study and preparation for performance of this concerto. Add the complementing publication of cadenzas