

JUNE

STANLEY POTTS has no time for these early-music enthusiasts; meanwhile, Toby again seems to be in great demand

01 WEDNESDAY

This morning I had the Herman Z__ job out on my bench when Toby came in to work. He asked me about it, and I told him I'd been trying to find some time to get started on it (I didn't mention that I still hadn't quite decided where to start). He looked terribly enthused and asked me if he could take it on, so I said he might as well have a go. Next thing I knew he was making up jigs and moulds and clamping blocks – kept him completely absorbed for the rest of the day. He even ate his lunch at the bench and kept on working!

09 THURSDAY

Another phone call from one of those 'authentic historical' players – this one wanted a 15¾ varnished high-twist gut A string (but it had to be from a ram). I told them I didn't have anything in stock at the moment, but I could nip down to the local butcher to see what they had in the window. I really don't understand these people – we spent the last century developing strings that make a decent sound and now they all want to go back to the Dark Ages.

Toby still beaver away in his corner working on Herman's violin. I've been too busy to pay much attention, but it's certainly keeping him quiet.

14 TUESDAY

Mrs Hurley phoned to ask my advice. They are wondering whether Beth should try for a violin scholarship at music college – she'd get an excellent teacher and wouldn't even have to pay for lessons. I encouraged her to go for it and told her to send Beth in so I could get her instrument sounding as good as possible.

Also, someone I've never heard of phoned about a soundpost adjustment and asked to make an appointment to see TOBY!! When I asked why he had to see Toby in particular, he said that Peter K__ had highly recommended him! I really don't see what's so wonderful about Toby... I'm perfectly capable of moving a soundpost!

16 THURSDAY

Beth Hurley brought in her violin. I put on a new set of strings and we spent an hour or so adjusting the set-up. I thinned the bridge slightly and opened out the heart. Also let her try out a very nice French bow that I had here... it sounded so much better that I told her to keep it till after the audition. She really is an inspiring player – best talent I've heard in years. Didn't charge her. I do hope she gets that scholarship – the family has really been struggling since her father lost his job last year.

This afternoon Toby showed me the work he'd done on Herman's violin – I must say I was quite taken aback! He'd got all the pieces together perfectly and the extra wood he put in is an excellent match. He's still got the retouching to do, but that should be easy now – the ground colour of the new wood is just right.

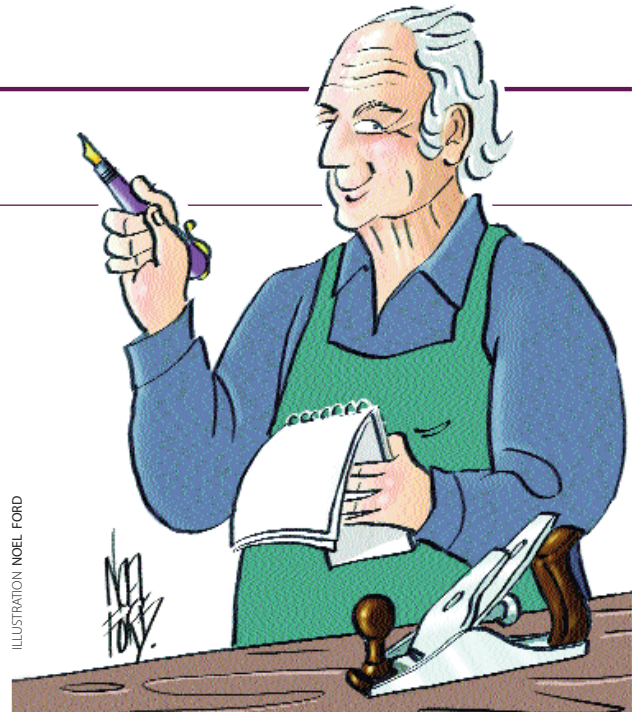


ILLUSTRATION NOEL FORD

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25 SATURDAY

Herman Z__ collected his fiddle today... he was terribly impressed. He couldn't stop raving about the repair.

I could hardly get a word in, so didn't get a chance to tell him that Toby had actually done the work – not that it matters really... it's a product of the Potts workshop and was done under my supervision.

Mrs Hurley called in with a large flagon of home-made elderberry wine for me. I tried to look pleased... perhaps Rose will like it.

29 WEDNESDAY

Arrived this morning to find an alarmed William S__ on the doorstep. He'd just noticed a small soundpost crack in the belly of his violin. I'm not at all surprised... he's one of those players who think that the essential items in any violin case are a bow, some rosin and a soundpost setter (and he's very heavy-handed with all three).

Had a slightly embarrassing incident later... Herman came back to pick up the mute that he left behind last Saturday. As soon as he was in the shop he started enthusing again about MY fantastic repair work and kept saying what a genius I am. The worst part is that as he was leaving he turned to Toby, winked and said: 'You've got a great teacher there son – you pay attention and I'm sure you'll learn a lot from him.' Toby rather quiet for the rest of the day.

To find out more about Stanley Potts and his world, visit stanleypotts.co.uk