

MARCH

Riding high on the praise for his new violin, now finished, **STANLEY POTTS** rediscovers his enthusiasm for instrument making and even starts to plan his next project

I3 MONDAY

I've just spent the whole afternoon playing my new violin! I couldn't stop – it really has the most wonderful sound... very responsive with a lot of projection. The E string is particularly resonant.

It's always a bit worrying when you string up a new instrument for the first time... never quite know what to expect. But it seems like everything has fallen into place with this one.

I4 TUESDAY

Played my violin for Toby and he said it was 'absolutely amazing' (I'm not quite sure if he was referring to the sound or the fact that it was my violin producing it). I told him that's what comes with being completely in control of every stage of the making process. After all... I've been in this business for over 40 years so I should have learnt a thing or two.

Jack came in later and I got him to try it out – he played it beautifully. It always intrigues me the way viola players can pick up anything at all from a half-size violin to a Tertis-model viola and just play – most violinists seem to be completely put off if one measurement is out by just one sixteenth of an inch. Jack said it was definitely the best thing I'd ever made and he wouldn't mind having it himself (except it wasn't really his favourite varnish colour).

I'm just about ready to ring Beth Hurley – can't wait to see her face when I present it to her. There are just a few small details to finish off.

I6 THURSDAY

Perfect! Beth called me this morning and wants to drop around after school tomorrow afternoon – she mentioned that she has something to show me and I told her that I'd been wanting to see her as well.

I'm so enthused about violin making that I'm already planning my next instrument. It will be another Strad model of course, but I might do the Betts this time. I think I'll ask Toby if he wants to come in full-time now – he could take charge of the repair work while I spend more time on making.

I7 FRIDAY

When Beth arrived this afternoon I was surprised to see her carrying a strange violin case... and she was positively beaming. Before I could say a word she excitedly put the case on the bench, threw it open and said, 'Look at this!! I've got an Italian violin... a Pedrazzini! My teacher organised it for me!' She went on to explain that her teacher had applied to one of those instrument loan foundations (interfering busybodies!). They got Beth to do an audition and as soon as they'd heard her play, they arranged for her to have an instrument on permanent loan.

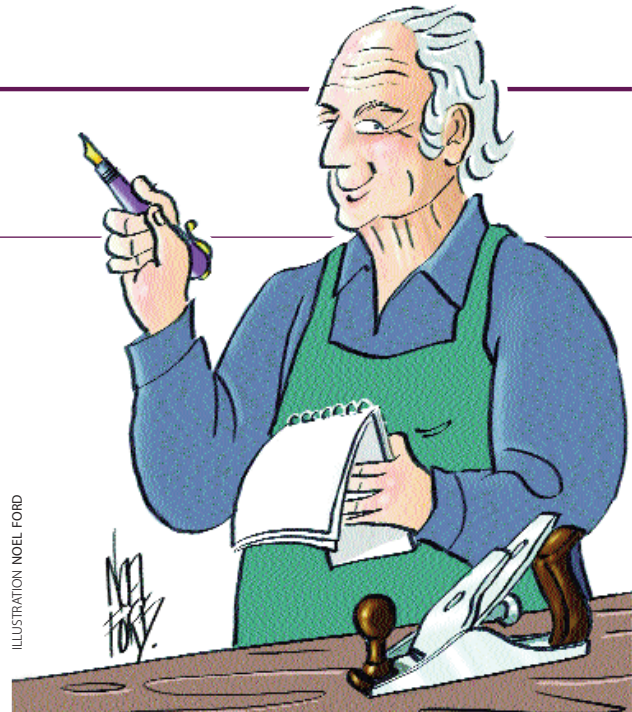


ILLUSTRATION NOEL FORD

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While she was getting it out Toby gave me a quizzical look but I just shook my head slightly. Beth could hardly stand still, she was so excited... she walked around the room playing it for us, jumping from one piece to the next. Eventually she stopped and asked me why I'd wanted to see her... I told her I was just going to let her know that she could keep on using the French bow I loaned her. In fact I congratulated her on having what every string player dreams of – an Italian violin and a French bow! She couldn't stay long – had to rush off home to practise. But before leaving she told me she wouldn't be able to visit the shop so much in the future. She has to take the violin to the repairer recommended by the loan institute.

When she'd gone I poured myself a large whisky and sat down at my bench and stared at the wall. Maybe Rose is right... perhaps it's time I started to think about retiring. I'm getting too old for this game. A move to Australia might not be such a bad idea.

After a while Toby said to me: 'You know, I thought your violin sounded much better than that Italian one... your E string was much more powerful and the Pedrazzini didn't project nearly as well.' (Good old Toby... he's a fine lad!)

I can't face any more work today. Toby suggested we close up early and head down to the Spotted Dog and that seemed like a good idea... I could do with a pint or two. And it will give me a chance to discuss things with Toby and see if he wants to take over the whole business.

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