

Teaching from the Balance Point by Ed Kreitman

Review by Jane Afia

I would like to start my own review of this book by sharing with you some of the wonderful recommendations that appear on the back cover of this book:

“This is a wise book and a major contribution to teachers, teacher trainers, parents and students. We are very much indebted to Ed Kreitman for sharing his experiences and insights with us” Daphne Hughes SAA registered teacher trainer.

“This book not only inspires the careful development of skills so necessary for success, it also offers a wealth of creative suggestions on how to proceed in an orderly fashion. It is a ‘must’ for every beginner’s packet and every teacher’s library.” Doris Preucil, SAA teacher trainer.

Ed himself wrote that his aim in writing the book was “to take what is known and make it clearer and easier to understand.”

He certainly achieves this aim!! For the last five years I have had the pleasure and privilege of observing Ed’s teaching first hand at the Bryanston music course in Dorset and every year I return to my studio a better teacher for doing so. This book, just like Ed’s teaching is excellently researched and thought out and is easy to read and refer to.

It is divided into twelve chapters and although some of them are devoted to violin specific instruction at least half of them are relevant to all areas of learning a musical instrument. Chapter headings such as ‘What is the Suzuki Method Anyway?’, ‘The Reality of Practise’, ‘What is Priority Teaching?’ ‘Rote versus Note’ ‘Listening’ and ‘Review’ may well be enough to entice you away from this article to pick up the phone to the BSI bookshop and order your own copy immediately!! (020 7471 6780)

Let’s take a closer look at the chapter titled “The Reality of Practice”. Much of the following passage in italics is taken directly from the book, and shows you how clearly Ed writes.

*Many adults believe that “practice makes perfect” but the truth is that practice makes **consistent**. Bad practice will make you an expert at playing something badly! Ed points out that the first and biggest problem is that many of us do not know the difference between playing our instrument and practising it.*

***Playing** our instrument is a very enjoyable pastime. We play through old pieces that we know and enjoy and we play together in group class or with friends who get together to make music.*

***Practice** is the “work” part of developing technique on an instrument, and acquiring skill. To Ed having skill means being able to do a task consistently and with ease. There are three steps involved in the development of skill. Ed calls these three steps the three C’s of developing skill.*

They are:

1. *Comprehension (understanding the task)*
2. *Cooperation (getting your physical body to cooperate with what your mind comprehends), and*
3. *Constructive repetition (repeating the task after you have achieved cooperation).*

The book then goes on to explain in more detail what each of these three 'C's means and by the end of the chapter you have a very clear idea of what it means to practise effectively, and you are also offered some excellent practical tips of how to achieve good practice results.

The entire book is written in an equally clear style, using different fonts, layouts and wonderful photographs to illustrate his thoughts more succinctly.

I totally agree with Doris Preucil who says that this book is a 'must' for everyone who seeks a deeper understanding of how to become a more proficient player, teacher, or home practiser, and have great pleasure in being able to review and recommend it so very highly.