REVIEWS OF SŁAWOMIR TOMASIK’S THE VIOLINIST’S COMPASS PART II

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How lucky we are to have Sławek Tomasik – violin fiend, man of great integrity and subtlety, extremely intelligent and creative teacher, friend of the children and, last but not least, talented writer and poet. For so many virtues were necessary to write a book which, like its author, has many dimensions, and no matter what name we call it by, we will never exhaust the subject.

For us folks, possessed as we are by four animal guts and a strand of hair from the horse’s tail, Mr Tomasik’s work is an adventure story. It entices us and leads us through familiar yet never completely understood meanders of knowledge of this mysterious instrument. It is a little encyclopaedia of teaching problems. It is the saying out loud of what every violinist and teacher silently feels a niggling need to dig into:

- how to teach,
- how to name problems,
- how to get to the truth about playing, music, taste, manners and methods of performance,
- how to practice effectively, sparingly and pleasantly!

Sławek Tomasik is not afraid to mention all these things, even if perhaps (to my liking) he is a bit too sure and convinced that his observations, advice and methods must lead to the expected results. But thanks to this certainty he is like a good friend whom we can always approach to ask for specific advice: how to skip with one’s bow, how to get into position well, how to memorise the music quickly, how to be both renderer and creator at one and the same time, how to dig into music (the excellent chapter “Super Mario and three goalposts”), how to play in order to reach the audience (the chapter “Speak and you will understand”).

The book is called The Violinist’s Compass but it is also a compass for the primary school teacher, the more advanced pedagogue (it has a lot to say about the errors and problems confronting secondary school students), and for the academic professor (because the Author shares many very interesting and personal discoveries with us, e.g., about how to practice, how to improve one’s vibration or how to cope with stage fright).

Sławomir Tomasik’s reflections may also serve as a compass for young teachers who are just beginning to teach because his language is simple and beautiful and his numerous allusions to nature make us smile affectionately and teach us how to talk with children. Finally, they are a compass for parents! When they read the book perhaps they will have more understanding of the immense difficulties their children have to overcome!

When I presented the Author at the beginning I mentioned his literary talent and his poetic inclinations. It is thanks to them that his difficult disquisitions flow so rapidly, so vividly, so lightly, “opening the doors of our imagination” and that all his “leaping, crawling and proudly striding” little animals reassure us that although it will not be easy to tame these four strings, the whole process is very natural and follows nature’s immemorial rules.

I hope I will not sound too grandiloquent if I say that contact with Sławomir Tomasik’s thoughts produces similar experiences to the ones we have when we commune with Father Twardowski’s poems. Here and there we find wisdom, here and there – a deep love of children, here and there – confidence in the power of nature...

Let us not waste the opportunity to make this lovely work the property of all and sunder.

Julia Jakimowicz-Jakowicz, Warsaw
Sławomir Tomasik’s book *The Violinist’s Compass*, Part II discusses nearly every problem which crops up when we play the violin and it is mainly addressed to teachers who teach children and adolescents. The author’s rich experience is evident not only in the excellent way in which he tackles and systematises problems but also in his great understanding of the child’s psychology. He makes wonderful use of phrases and comparisons which are typical for young violin adepts and hence he almost playfully introduces children to the difficult world of performance problems: imperceptibly, simply and efficiently. His last essay is particularly interesting: he constructs a genealogical tree and, as if by accident, smuggles in a lot of sound knowledge of the history of violin playing.

*The Violinist’s Compass* is a scholarly, excellently rendered book.

Magdalena Rezler-Niesiołowska, Freiburg

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Sławomir Tomasik’s *Violinist’s Compass* fits well into a long tradition of Polish reflection and work of our distinguished forebears, excellent violinists and professors, on the violin and learning to play it. Let me just mention Professors Eugenia Umińska, Irena Dubiska and Zenon Feliński or that exceptional personality, Professor Tadeusz Wroński.

Sławomir Tomasik’s book was born out of a need to share his experience, his fascination with the violin and his desire to infect everybody who loves the violin, the instrument with a soul, with his passion.

Krzysztof Jakowicz, Warsaw