

Cellocourses newsletter #2

November 2006



I'm Catherine Black. I'm a cello teacher and I also create & organise courses for cellists and other instrumentalists. You can get much more information about me and my courses if you look at my website - www.cellocourses.com.

Here is my second newsletter. I intend that what appears here will be a mixture of articles and course news. Hopefully, we can develop the page to include your responses, ideas and thoughts on what appears.

This newsletter contains some of my thinking about creativity and some news about the 'Practice' workshop.

On Practice

Practice means what? ... Perfect, boring, not good enough... All negatives or restrictive ideas, but these are the kinds of things that can come to the fore when I ask students at the Practice Workshops what practice means to them.

We spend more time practising our cellos than we ever spend in lessons or playing with others. This is a very good reason to get clear about we are doing, what we aren't doing, what we can do, and to make sure that we have a good time while doing our work.

You could read the word Practice in a new way: what we do as musicians is not unlike the spiritual practice of a monk. We are and need to be habitual, but also creative and flexible. We are on a Path AND there is no point of arrival! We just keep growing.

Cellists are now returning to these classes a second time. This tells me that there is an awareness that Practice is such a vast area, that just as we study a piece that we will perform for some time, so we all need to continue to clarify and refine the ways we do and don't work, discover and learn more about how we can teach ourselves. After all, you are your teacher and need to be in charge of your learning outside your lesson.

Playing an instrument challenges all of us personally, musically, emotionally and intellectually at such deep levels, we owe it to ourselves to train up a bit in the art of practice since it is such an internal experience. It can also be quite lonely.

So maybe you could brood on this: are you too habitual? Habits can be good and are vital but also constraining at times. Keep renewing your ways of working. Get ideas from others.

How creative are you? Do you improvise or doodle at your cello? You can have been playing a month and do this.

How could you practise at midnight with a cello, but make no sound? How can you practise without a cello?

Do you do singing practice? If not, why not?

When you think about it, the possibilities for growth, variety and fulfilment are endless. Now...

Introduce three changes this week and three more next! Let me know what you've done.

Love your playing!

Catherine

Do email me with any thoughts at catherine.black@cellocourses.com

Coming soon...

Getting the Bigger Picture – Performance Workshop

Sunday December 3rd 2006

At : All Saints Centre, Friar's Walk, Lewes

From : 10.15 – 5pm

Joining Catherine are Theatre director and actor trainer, Pat O'Toole and pianist, Jonathan Zoob.

Why do I need this class? We all continue to need to look at performance in detail. We need to address our presentation skills and to get used to using a stage and facing an audience.

Internally we need to look at nerves; what they can do for us and how to deal with any technical problems they can create.

If you have an exam, audition or just want to learn more, book soon as we have limited places.

Music college applicants

There has been a special request for a class dedicated to music college auditions. This will be held on September 29th 2007 from 10.30 - 5 pm.

This will held at St Thomas's church hall, Cliffe High Street, Lewes.

Any string player may take part in this workshop.

Cellocourses Course News

Coming up in early 2007: Three editions of the 'Thinking aloud' Practice workshop for cellists of all ages and abilities.

We all need to re-think and refresh the ways we practice. Come and join us. Think aloud in a relaxed and enjoyable way and look at your methods of working. Take on board some new ideas that get you the results you want faster!

1) Sunday February 4th 2007 - 3 pm to 5 pm:

The Children's Practice Workshop

Cost: £25 per student includes refreshments.

At: St Thomas's Church Hall, Cliffe High Street, Lewes, East Sussex.

[St Thomas's is in the centre of town and there are several car parks very near to the hall.]

2) Sunday February 25th 2007 - 2.45 pm to 6.00 pm:

For: Long-term adult players and secondary school students.

Cost: £35 per student and this includes refreshments.

At: St Thomas's Church Hall, Cliffe High Street, Lewes, East Sussex

3) May 20th 2007 - 2.45pm to 6.00pm:

For: Adult Learners

Cost: £35 per student and this includes refreshments.

At: St Thomas's Church Hall, Cliffe High Street, Lewes, East Sussex

Check the Practice page of www.cellocourses.com for further details.

If you have any questions, do call me on 01273 470558 or, email me at catherine.black@cellocourses.com