



A Little Bit of Bach

A couple of years ago in this A Story A Week series, I wrote about spending an afternoon at a musical soirée held at the home of one of the collectors of my work. The performer that day had been a pianist, and the concert had been enjoyable, but when that same collector called me up a few weeks ago to offer an invitation to another upcoming event - this one featuring a visiting international flutist - I had more mixed feelings.

Because of course, 'an international flutist' is exactly what my own career goal had been, back in my early twenties. Attending the previous recital had awakened some memories of the days when I myself performed in such afternoon concerts, but would going to a flute recital be so enjoyable for me? I was reminded of my own father's attitude towards attending music performances. He was a professional musician, playing saxophone and other woodwind instruments in dance orchestras and studios, but I have never, not once, ever seen him attend a concert for pleasure. The problem for him, is that he can never enjoy the music as a 'neutral' listener; it is impossible for him to turn off his critical faculties and just 'relax and enjoy the music', as my mother enjoys him to.

And so it is with me. Even though it is now well over twenty years since I held a flute in my hands, whenever I hear a flutist on the radio, it is impossible to fully enjoy the playing without at the same time 'analyzing' the performance. I end up shouting at the radio, "You're overblowing there - it's coming out sharp! ... or ... "Don't rush! Relax and let it flow ..."

But, remembering the pleasure of the previous recital at this lady's house, and encouraged by her enthusiastic description of what was in store, I accepted the invitation, and Sadako and I went along and took our places in the audience.

I needn't have worried at all. We both thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. I had been put at my ease at the moment we sat down and opened the program - I had never heard of a single one of the selections that we were about to hear! This was not to be a recital of 'old favourites' that I myself had played dozens of times, but of interesting new music. And it was interesting. But the main reason for our enjoyment was the performer; he both played well, and presented himself well. I wasn't completely able to put aside my own feeling of being a 'fellow flutist' while listening, but he played so well that there was no question of criticism; it was just a joy to listen to.

After the performance, we talked a bit backstage (in the kitchen, actually), and as it seemed he had some time available before leaving Japan, I invited him home. The next morning he came out to Ome for the day, and Sadako and I kept him busy with a river walk, lunch in a bit of a 'touristy' place, a printmaking session (!), and dinner.

We all had a pleasant day, and he left Japan a couple of days later to return to Europe. A short time later though, I had a bit of a surprise when I saw a note pop up on my computer screen, "You have a voicemail message," and when I listened to it, found that it was from my new flutist friend.

Just this evening, I returned his call (using computer telephone software) and we had a pleasant chat about the day he had spent here. But before he signed off, he had a surprise for me; he had his flute at hand, and

David Bull
Seseragi Studio
Nagabuchi 8-4-5 Ome City
Tokyo Japan 198-0052
<http://astoryaweek.com>

gave me a quick performance of a famous Bach Badinerie, a piece he knows that I too, must be very familiar with.

What a treat coming through my headphones - a live private performance from the other side of the world, from a fine player. I couldn't help but think to myself, "This is exactly what I could have been doing now, if my life had gone in just a bit of a different route."

Thank you sir, for your fine playing, and your fine company!

Of course, I can't just leave it there. This gentleman's name is Christian Plouvier, and he maintains a web site. Please visit, and listen to some of the samples of his playing!

<http://www.christian-plouvier.com/>

David Bull
Seseragi Studio
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Tokyo Japan 198-0052
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