

*The Value of a broken bowl*

As we approach the end of this academic year, I am reminded of a gift which I received some months ago now, just at the point when a few classes were allowed to return to school for the first time since the start of the pandemic lockdown in March 2020. It is a gift which has profoundly changed the way I look at the world, in ways I could not ever have imagined.

Like origami, lacquerware is a longstanding tradition in Japanese culture. The legend tells of a mighty shogun warrior who broke his favourite tea bowl and sent it away for repairs. When he received it back, it was held together with metal staples, and clearly no longer the thing of beauty he had formerly so admired. He asked a craftsman to find a more elegant solution. Instead of disguising the cracks, the craftsman chose to highlight them, mending them with a lacquer resin mixed with gold. This method of repair became known as *kintsugi*. The term roughly translates as 'golden joinery', where imperfections become intrinsically linked with all that makes an object precious.

At a time when the whole world feels under such extreme pressure, and where the patterns of life and living as we know them, have been shattered and upturned, the message of *kintsugi* is one of exceptional opportunity; an opportunity to shape a new and beautiful future, whilst still taking with us every experience of the past.



Each one of us becomes the artisan who will carefully and painstakingly join the broken pieces together, tracing the breakages with threads of gold. This is surely creativity at its best; a unique and wonderful way to look at the world and our experiences in it, and to better understand that imperfections are where we learn so much about ourselves and our resilience, and have such relevance in shaping our story, both as individuals and as part of a world community. It's all to do with how beautifully we can fashion the repairs that need to be made.

It was Ernest Hemingway who said this:

*The world breaks everyone, and afterward many are strong at the broken places.*

As we started the new year in January 2021, still facing so many challenges in terms of Zoom learning, bubbles and ongoing restrictions in the delivery

of a co-curriculum, the spirit of *kintsugi* would afford to us all an opportunity for finding real magic; for hope and optimism, for kindness and humility; a vision of a stunned and shattered world brought together with threads of gold.

*Yvette Day*

*Head and Master over the Choristers*