

A NOTE FROM *Johnstone-Music*

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## SPECIAL FEATURE on FRANCOIS-AUGUSTE GEVAERT

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It is difficult to find much information on Francois-Auguste Gevaert, but although he is remembered principally as a musicologist he was very much associated with the cello world.

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He was born on 31st July, 1828 in Huyse, Belgium. The son of a baker, he enrolled at the Conservatory of Ghent at the age of 13 and at 18 he obtained a Prize from Rome (Belgian) which allowed him to travel to Italy, Spain and Germany before settling in Paris, where he achieved his first successes in composition for the stage. This opened the doors of the Opéra-Comique where his most ambitious work, *Quentin Durward*, was performed in 1858, which was re-released in Brussels in 1930. These works were followed by *Le Diable au Moulin* (1859), *Le Chateau trompette* (1860), *La Capitaine Henriot* (1864). In 1867 he was appointed director of music at the Paris Opera. In addition to operas, his work includes a cantata, *Jacob van Artevelde* (1864), choirs, a wind quartet, motets, masses and a *Te Deum*.

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I think at this point he couldn't decide to which aspect of music he should concentrate on - certainly a warning to people like myself! He edited ancient music, he wrote an organ method, harmony volumes, and a treatise on instrumentation. His composing work even included composing the national anthem for the Belgian Congo (commissioned by the King of the Belgians Leopold II, in the year of his death), apparently becoming very popular in its day and age!

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He became the director of the Brussels Conservatory from 1870 to 1907, where I suppose he lessened his compositional work to devote himself more to teaching. He edited the Haydn D-Major Cello Concerto in 1890; however it has quite understandably fallen into obscurity in these past few decades. Why? Because he did a 'butchering' job far greater than Fitzenhagen in the *Rococo Variations* in my opinion. He rewrote many passages, changing the number of bars, incorporating self-glorifying cadenzas which relate little thematically to the material of the movement (on today's standards at least) and he re-orchestrated the whole thing, and among other liberal revisions he used an enlarged orchestra even including, I believe, trombones (certainly

unusual for a cello concerto in Haydn's time, haha!). It is curious that in the same decade of the 1890s Grützmacher made another (a different but somewhat similar) adventure with the Boccherini Bb Major concerto (1895). Having retired in 1907 unfortunately he did not get to enjoying his life as a senior citizen - he died in Brussels on 28th December 28, 1908.

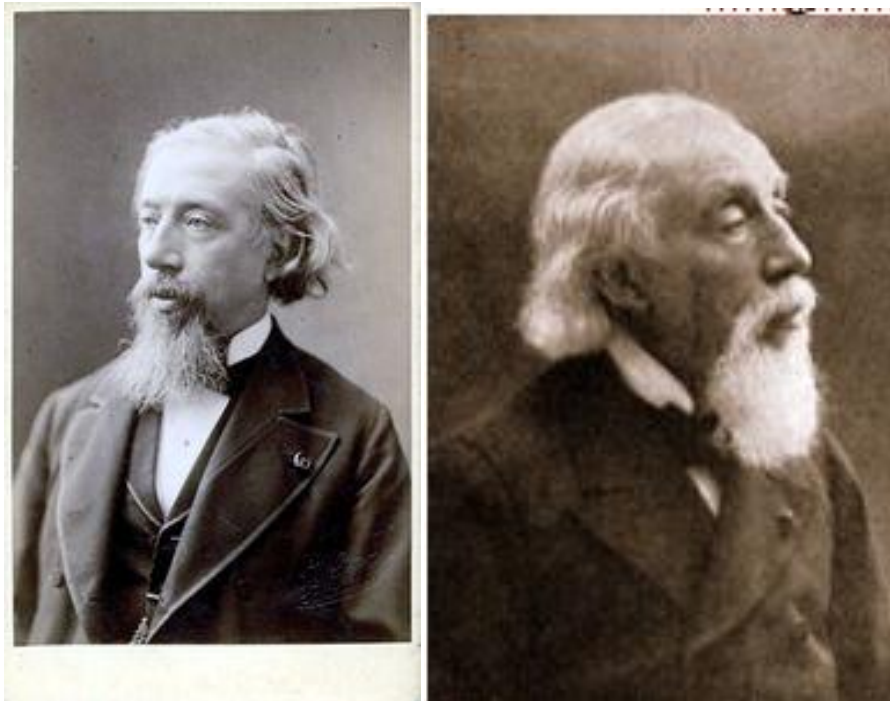
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GEVAERT and CASALS:

Grateful for the generosity of the Queen of Spain, Pablo Casals and his mother departed for Belgium, with a letter of introduction to the illustrious Francois Gevaert, director of the Brussels Conservatory of Music. Gevaert was impressed with Casal's talents as a composer and cellist, and asked Pablo to meet the following morning with the Conservatory's professor of cello, Eduard Jacobs, which Pablo was very willing to do. However, when they time came, Professor Jacobs spoke to young Pau in a rude and mocking mannner. After hearing him play he apologized for making fun of him, and pleaded with him to enroll at the Conservatory in his class. However, Casals was determined to have nothing to do with Jacobs and the Brussels Conservatory. So the problem was clearly with Jacobs, and not Gevaert, who had highly approved the original works that Pau Casals had presented to him to show his creativity: a mass, a symphonic poem and a string quartet.

I will relate the whole complete Jacobs-Casals story another day!!



Extract from the (non-Haydn!) Haydn Cello Concerto in D Major:

The first system of the musical score consists of six staves. The top two staves are for the cello, with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The bottom four staves are for the piano accompaniment, with a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp. The tempo is marked 'Allegro.' and the dynamics include 'pp' (pianissimo), 'cresc.' (crescendo), and 'più cresc.' (more crescendo). The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

V. A. 2298.

The second system of the musical score is titled 'Violoncello solo.' and is numbered '7'. It features a cello solo in the upper staff and piano accompaniment in the lower staff. The tempo is 'Allegro.' and the dynamics include 'f' (forte). The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

‘documenting the cello’

Please do see other original works for many different instruments and groupings, and also special transcriptions for cellists, and cellists with other instruments on the *Johnstone-Music* web page

Also both general musical and cello based articles, directories of famous historical cellists, and many other items of interest

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As far as *Johnstone-Music* is concerned you are welcome to publicly perform or record any work or piece found in the web; however you DO need to make mention of the name of the composer and the arranger on any printed information (hand programmes, disc covers etc.).

**FREE PUBLICITY** - If you care to inform us of any public performance (no matter how formal or informal the event is), recording or other uses of the original music or arrangements of David Johnstone or of other musical colleagues included in this web, we are happy to give your event free publicity on the *Johnstone-Music* web.

To take advantage of this, try to write to us three weeks or more in advance with any information. Last-minute entries are certainly better than not writing at all - however, understandably, once we have past the calendar month of the event it is not usually possible to add old items to the calendar. It is very interesting for the promoters of *Johnstone-Music* to have knowledge of your activity - and so in return for your information you will be entitled to a free gift of a work/s for every diary addition you tell us about. To find out more about this, please visit the “*Cello Club*” section in the web!