

Cellists' Corner

Brief Career Details of Important Cellists

prepared by David Johnstone from public information

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FEATURE ON
DEREK SIMPSON

cellist, orchestra principal cello, chamber musician & professor

Birth: 29th March 1928 - Worksop, Nottinghamshire, England

Death: 22nd June 2007

Derek Simpson was an English cellist, known primarily from his work with the Aeolian Quartet, and as the teacher of many contemporary cellists.

Derek (he always preferred that to Mr. Simpson!) was born to musician parents, and started playing the cello at 10 years old. At 19 he moved to London to study at the Royal Academy of Music. In 1952 he won the Suggia Prize, which gave him the chance to study in Paris for a year, with the famous cellist Pierre Fournier.

On his return to England, Simpson soon got work both for the Brighton Philharmonic, the London Chamber Orchestra, and occasionally as a solo performer.

In 1956 he received an offer to join the very prestigious Aeolian String Quartet. He remained with the quartet until it disbanded in 1981. The ensemble, among other things, made a complete recording of Haydn's string quartets - a project that took six years to complete. They also made fantastic recordings of all the late-Beethoven string quartets.

Simpson also had time for other projects, however, and his playing can be heard on The Beatles' singles 'Strawberry Fields Forever'.

He taught at the Royal Academy of Music, where several of his many pupils took part in memorial tribute concerts in January and February 2008. He was the teacher to important modern day cellists: Raphael Wallfisch, Angela East, Benedict Rogerson, Mary Pells, Justin Pearson, Hafliði Hallgrímsson, Robert Ibell, Susan Sheppard, Sebastian Comberti, Alasdair Strange, and David Johnstone!

Some of his students share an interest in historically informed performance.

Simpson was married three times; his last wife was his colleague in the Aeolian Quartet, Margaret Major. His first wife, Fiona Cameron, was the daughter of his teacher Douglas Cameron, and a concert pianist with whom he would occasionally perform. With Fiona he had two children. He also had a third son who died in a car accident in 1972.

The Aeolian Quartet was a highly reputed string quartet based in London, England – see here:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aeolian_Quartet

AUDIO – here Derek Simpson playing the third movement of Scchubert's Arpeggione Sonata:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LexENZ6gOaw>

Cello Quartet for Derek Simpson - YouTube

Derek Simpson tribute. Pearson, Hess, Potter and Bucknall pay tribute to their late teacher.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4YzZyni5qDg>

Derek always had a great sense of humour!

So see this:

Six Rules of Cello Playing

VLC03 - by Derek Simpson / in English

https://johnstone-music.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/vlc003-Six_Rules_of_Cello_Playing_j-m.pdf



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