

SPECIAL FEATURE on CHARLES LUCAS

The modern English Violoncello school can be said to start with ROBERT LINDLEY, born in 1775 (Rotherham, England) and died in 1855 (London), and who may be considered the first truly great English cellist. Amongst Robert Lindley's pupils, perhaps CHARLES LUCAS (born 1808 in Salisbury), was perhaps the most notable.

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Lucas was born in Salisbury, the son of a music-seller. After receiving a musical education as a chorister at Salisbury Cathedral between 1815 and 1823 he attended the newly formed Royal Academy of Music (RAM) in London. Apart from Lindley as professor on cello, he studied composition under the then principal, William Crotch.

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After leaving the academy in 1830 Lucas was appointed to Queen Adelaide's private band, and became a music tutor to Prince George (later Duke) of Cambridge and the princes of Saxe-Weimar. He was a most competent orchestral player - indeed on due course he took the place of his master, Lindley, as first violoncellist of the Italian Opera. In 1839 he also became organist at the Hanover Chapel, Regent Street, London.

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He was above all devoted to chamber music though opportunities were not so numerous, but he participated in the British premieres of chamber works including Beethoven's late string quartets. This love of chamber music is demonstrated by the fact that he also ran subscription chamber music concerts at his home from 1845 until about 1854, the idea being much more social than economic - the fore-runner of our present day "house concerts"!

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He was very committed to the Royal Academy of Music (RAM). He became the orchestral conductor there, and succeeded Cipriani Potter as the Principal (director) in 1859, only the third appointment in the institution's history. At the RAM he certainly developed his conducting capacities. Two performances of Beethoven's Symphony No 9 in 1835 and 1836 were lavishly praised by 'The Times', hoping that the academy's efforts would spur the Philharmonic Society into presenting the same work at its own concerts. Lucas later conducted for this society and other concert promoters, and served as a director of the Philharmonic Society from 1856 to the end of his life. It was ill health that led Lucas to retire from the RAM in 1866. He died three years later at his home in Wandsworth, London, at the age of 60. His son Stanley Lucas (b London, 1834; d London, 24 July 1903) served as secretary of the Royal Society of Musicians (1862-1903) and succeeded him in the Philharmonic Society (1866-80).

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Lucas's compositions included three symphonies (these were student works with Haydn/Schubert influences), overtures, string quartets (including the esteemed String Quartet in G major, 1827), anthems and songs. He also wrote an opera, *The Regicide*, to a libretto by Metastasio translated by Thomas Oliphant, the overture to which *The Times* described as "a spirited composition, very noisy and without any great originality". Not long before the composer's death an overture, *Rosenwald*, was performed by the Philharmonic Society at the Hanover Square Rooms in London on 8 June 1868. As editor Lucas prepared a performing version of *Esther* for the Handel Society.

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It can hardly be said that he became a celebrated name in the following generations, and in the course of further time he largely became forgotten. But he IS an important name for being the 'British' historical bridge between Lindley and Piatti/Whitehouse and therefore holds a just place in the development of the British Cello School.



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