

## SPECIAL FEATURE on AUGUST THEODORE MÜLLER

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Birth: 27th September 1802 (Braunschweig, Germany)

Death: 20th October 1875 (Braunschweig, Germany)

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Nearly all that refers to August Theodor Müller is linked to his famous string quartet activity, although it is known that he also was a reputable teacher. The most interesting thing historically speaking was the family ties, which I will now explain!

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The Müller Brothers quartets (“Gebrüder Müller”) was the name of two noted German (Duchy of Brunswick) string quartets both composed of four brothers, of different generations. The elder brothers were the sons as well as pupils of the principal musician to the Duke of Brunswick, Ägidius Christoph Müller (1765-1841), and were all of them born in the city of Brunswick. Karl (Carl) Friedrich Müller (1797-1873) was first violin in the quartet and was also concertmaster to the Duke. Franz Ferdinand Georg Müller (1808-55) was the second violin, TheodorHeinrich Müller (1799-1855) was the viola player, and August Theodor Müller (1802-75) played the cello. They had a wonderful opportunity in that they were especially guided by their father for string quartet work, and in their maturity they were considered to have brought the art of string quartet playing to a degree of perfection previously unknown.

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August Theodor was a cellist of the Braunschweiger Hofkapelle. He took part as a soloist in the music performances on the occasion of the Klopstock secular celebration in Quedlinburg, where the musical direction was by C.M. von Weber.

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Back to the quartet though - and with such an artistic level of interpretation The Müller brothers were ambitious for greater fame than could be obtained solely within their own limited environment. With old-style bureaucracy and red-tape, their employer, the Duke of Brunswick, had insisted that none of his musicians should participate in any musical events outside that connected with his own activities (that is still sometimes the case in professional orchestras even today!!). So in 1830 they resigned 'en-bloc' their employment.

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Their first appearance outside Brunswick as 'free' artists was in Hamburg, where they met with outstanding success. They were invited to Berlin, where they were also received with great enthusiasm. An extended tour throughout Germany followed.

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In 1837 they first crossed the German borders and performed in Paris. This was followed by other tours (mentioned below) that made them well-known throughout the western world. They were a quartet of 'musical class'. They made their programmes almost entirely of the works of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, and as a result were also a very important influence in cultivating music appreciation. The most brilliant period of the quartet was therefore from 1831-1855. During this time the brothers Müller undertook journeys into Holland, Denmark, and Russia, which were always crowned with fame.

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August Theodor Müller - our cellist - played what was to become known as the 'Müller' Cello, made in 1710 by Matteo Goffriller. He is described as the 'very soul' of the Quartet Band! As a teacher, his most distinguished pupil was Robert Hausmann: Hausmann studied with him from 1861 to 1867, and it is said that Theodor Müller advanced him considerably! He also taught his nephew, William Müller, born in 1834 - after having his uncle Theodore as his master and a period working with his brothers in the Meiningen orchestra (as well as in Wiesbaden and Rostock), he entered the Berlin Court Kapelle as solo cellist, and also undertook the Cello instruction in the Royal High School for Music. After three years in these positions he went to America, and unfortunately no more is known of him. However he died in 1897.

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Just to confirm then, the so-called younger Müller quartet was formed in 1855 by four sons of Karl Friedrich Müller (the original first violinist). This quartet existed till 1873. The cellist was Wilhelm Müller, just mentioned above!

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‘documenting the cello’

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