

Cellists' Corner

Brief Career Details of Important Cellists

prepared by David Johnstone from public information

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SPECIAL FEATURE on DOUGLAS ('Dougie') CUMMINGS

Birth: 12th March 1944 (London)

Death: 17th May 2006 (London)

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His father Keith was a celebrated Australian viola player who helped to revive the London String Quartet. Douglas grew up in North London and went to the Royal Academy of Music where he studied the cello (under Douglas Cameron I believe...) and won most of the available prizes. He was later a student of Gregor Piatigorski, in California.

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On his return to the UK he worked with the London Mozart Players and English Chamber Orchestra. However, his big break was becoming the principal cellist with the London Symphony Orchestra; at just 22 years old was the youngest Principal the Orchestra had ever appointed to that moment. He remained with them for 24 years and served as a member of the Board of Directors. He was close to the Lindsay string Quartet, recording and performing with them. He also performed with the Lake Piano Trio. Douglas Cummings also premiered the Cello Concerto of Andre Previn with the LSO..

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After leaving the LSO in 1993 he held prominent teaching positions at London's Royal Academy of Music, the Royal Welsh College of Music and Oundle School. He was a founder member of the London Virtuosi Chamber Ensemble. Naturally he was the cellist of the Cummings String Quartet, together with his sister Diana Cummings.

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He passed away aged 67, but had been in very delicate health for many years previously. Following a brain haemorrhage in 1982, Dougie was the subject of one of a series of four TV programmes, 'Life of an Orchestra', which was broadcast on BBC1. He recovered up to a point, but it is fair to say that he was never the same again.

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He was made a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Music in 1977. The London Cello Society honoured him with Life Membership in 2010.

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Former LSO cellist and Managing Director Sir Clive Gillinson, now Executive and Artistic Director of Carnegie Hall, said;

“Dougie was an incredible, funny, astoundingly talented life force, and was such an amazing player and vital influence for good in the orchestra”.

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I knew him personally and he knew me, but I can't say I had the opportunity to be closely in touch. However he did seem happy with the few dates that I played as an 'extra' in the LSO cello section under his leadership, but some of you will surely have far more vivid memories

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