

Cellists' Corner

Brief Career Details of Important Cellists

prepared by David Johnstone from public information

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SPECIAL FEATURE on THOMAS IGLOI

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BASIC DETAILS on THOMAS IGLOI

1947 - 1976

Hungary (later Britain)

Important Activity:

Cello soloist

Anecdotes:

* pupil of Maurice Eisenberg, Douglas Cameron, Pablo Casals and Pierre Fournier.

* Outstanding promise shown, but died very young ...

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FULLER BIOGRAPHICAL FEATURE

Birth: 17th January 1947 - Budapest, Hungary

Death: 17th April 1976 Croydon, London

Full name: Thomas George Igloi

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Thomas Igloi started playing the cello at the age of eight with Emöke Csáth-Vasváry. However, in June 1957, following the Hungarian uprising, he emigrated with his parents and his younger brother to Wolverhampton, England. Leslie Sutton, on the staff of the Birmingham School of Music, accepted him as a student and for nearly two years guided him during this formative period of his career.

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Following the family's move to Croydon, Surrey in 1959, he obtained a music scholarship to continue his secondary education at the Trinity School of John Whitgift. He pursued his cello studies at the International Cello Centre, London under Milly Stanfield and Maurice Eisenberg. He won prizes at music festivals and scored successes in music exams, eventually gaining the Silver Medal of the Associated board of the royal schools of music. As a member of the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain he became principal 'cellist and subsequently appeared as a soloist with the orchestra.

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British citizenship was granted in 1963, and the following year he entered the Royal Academy of Music on an 'Ada Lewis Scholarship' and his training continued there under the tutelage of Douglas Cameron. He was placed second in the Queen's Prize, one of this country's leading competitions for young professionals, and he further distinguished himself by winning all RAM 'cello and chamber music prizes for which he was eligible to compete. On leaving the Academy in 1967 he won the BBC Cello Competition with an absolutely "remarkable interpretation" of Dvorak's cello concerto, a performance of such quality that it brought him instant national recognition. He went on to be a prize-winner at the Geneva and Vienna International Competitions, and briefly further studied with Pablo Casals in Puerto Rico in 1967 and then final guidance from Pierre Fournier which was said to be of proved infinite benefit to his playing.

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The last competition in which he participated was the Gaspar Cassado International Competition which he won in Florence in 1971. He really didn't need them anymore because he soon became a regular name in the top British venues!

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Music critics were consistently acclaiming his performances. His London Wigmore Hall debut came in 1969 and The Times newspaper wrote: "He is a force to be reckoned with....". This was followed by an increasing number of prestigious individual engagements and two extensive tours of Italy. He made an impressive impact everywhere with his commanding performances of the Bach Suites for unaccompanied 'cello: one can cite his events in London (1972), at the Kennedy Centre, U.S.A. (1973), and Vienna (1974). He reaped many musical successes in his concerts and broadcasts in the UK as well as in many other countries - for example, in Germany, Italy, Norway, Sweden, Portugal, Switzerland, Greece, Austria and the U.S.A.

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For his Henry Wood Promenade Concert debut in 1974 he played the Elgar Cello Concerto, with Sir Charles Groves, and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. He appeared at numerous important Festivals, one which gave him particular pleasure was the Marlboro Festival, U.S., under the direction of Rudolf Serkin. At the Bath and English Bach Festivals he played chamber music with Alan Civil, Clifford Curzon, Leon Goossens, Heinz Holliger and Yehudi Menuhin.

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The recording of the Schubert String Quintet with the Albeni Quartet (CRD 1018) was nominated for a Grammy for best chamber music performance in 1976. The commercial recordings (playing his 1762 Joseph Gagliano instrument), with his regular pianist Clifford Benson of the two Faure sonatas (CRD 1016) and the Britten Cello Sonata for an Open University Project (A304OU16), offer rare reminders of his artistry. Thus, before he had reached the age of 30, Thomas Igloi had already made a significant contribution to the international musical life. He had well covered all the accepted criteria for an established British concert artist having played in the principal concert halls and with the leading conductors and orchestras.

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Also in 1976 he was appointed as a full member of the professorial staff of the Royal Academy of Music, London.

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His broad repertory included the most popular concertos, but also embraced pieces by Lennox Berkeley, Frank Bridge and Wilfred Josephs. In 1975 he gave the first performance of the cello concerto by Arnold Cooke with the BBC Symphony Orchestra under Sir Charles Groves at the 81st season of Proms.

Apparently in excellent health, he died of heart failure in his sleep at his home in Croydon on 17th April 1976. Several of his close associates performed tribute concerts during the following months. He was admired throughout the music profession – and not least by other cellists. At the time of his death Thomas Igloi was establishing himself as possibly the most outstanding cellist of his generation.

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Hear his such ‘clean’ playing:

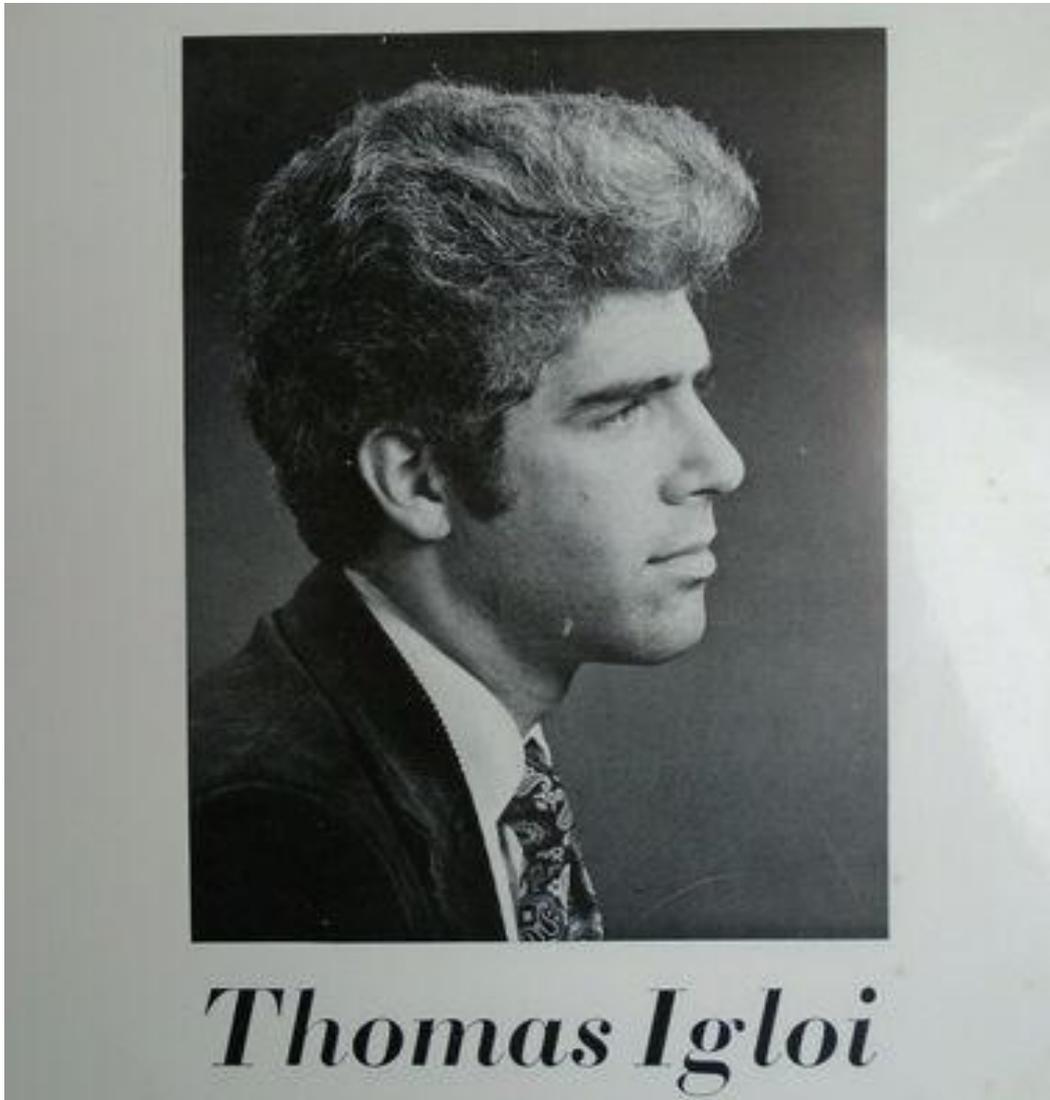
Gabriel Fauré - Sonata No. 1 in D Minor, Op. 109: I. Allegro

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-AsOZUg2nC0&t=8s>

Numerous BBC recordings have been archived in the British Library. There are many memorabilia of his career (such as cassette tapes and concert programmes) housed in the Trinity College of Music, London.

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Thomas Igloi

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