

Cellists' Corner

Brief Career Details of Important Cellists

prepared by David Johnstone from public information

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SPECIAL FEATURE on WILLIAM EDWARD WHITEHOUSE

Born: 1859, 20th May (London)

Died: 1935

WILLIAM EDWARD WHITEHOUSE was born in London, and started music at eleven years of age learning the violin from Adolphe Griesbach. This was no uncommon thing at that time; for example, Lindley had followed the same path, as did his German contemporary Hugo Becker. However, at thirteen he clearly preferred the violoncello, and so was placed for four years of tuition under Walter Pettit. In 1877 he entered the Royal Academy of Music and studied under Piatti and Alessandro Pezze (another Italian, born in 1835 in Milan) for the violoncello and Banister for harmony. On various occasions he gained prizes and medals there. William Whitehouse (1859-1935) is considered to be Piatti's favourite pupil, even though he only studied formerly with Piatti for one year there.

The rapport between the two was immediate, and Whitehouse soon started to deputize for Piatti – in the traditional British ‘free-lance’ world an orchestral player who had another (more important) engagement the night of a performance or rehearsal could send a suitable deputy to take his place. It should be pointed out that this practice was difficult to understand in many other parts of Europe; there were both occasional musical disasters and many ‘more-or-less’ performances, and a growing number of conductors and soloists were not at all happy with the British orchestral scene. For example, Bruch, at the height of his reputation as composer/conductor spent three seasons as artistic director of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Society (1880 - 1883), but he simply did not get along with the players, who had rather lax standards in his opinion. Bruch was much more content when he became director of the Breslau (now Wroclaw, Poland) Orchesterverein, from 1883 to 1890. However, of the undoubted raw ability of the young Whitehouse there could have been few complaints!

In 1882, aged just 23 years old, Whitehouse was appointed Assistant-Professor at the Academy where just a while previously he had been studying, and the following year made a full Professor of the Royal Academy of Music. In 1883 he was elected Associate of the same Institution and, in 1884, member of the Royal Society of Musicians. This must have been as a consequence of his high regard within London musical society.

He was introduced to some of the finest players in the world. He played with the already famous violinist Joseph Joachim, and toured widely as a member of "The London Trio" with Simonetti and the pianist Amina Goodwin between the years 1889 and 1904. He was for many years connected with Josef Ludwig's annual series of chamber concerts.

He was especially renowned as an important teacher for in later life. Apart from his involvement in the Royal Academy, he also became Professor at Cambridge University, of the Royal College of Music (London), of King's College (London), and at the Manchester New College of Music under Sir Charles Halle. His students are easily recognizable names of the early twentieth century: Salmond, Withers, Evans, Kate Ould, Beatrice Evelyn, and Beatrice Harrison.

He died in 1935, with a truly glorious reputation behind him.

William Whitehouse was highly regarded for both his solo and chamber performances, though reports as to his actual sound are difficult to come by. We know that he often deputized at first for Piatti (under the deputy system afore mentioned,). The instrument on which Whitehouse played was one of the finest specimens of Francisco Ruggierius.



His own compositions were primarily for his own instrument, but do not appear to be in print today. They bore titles such as:

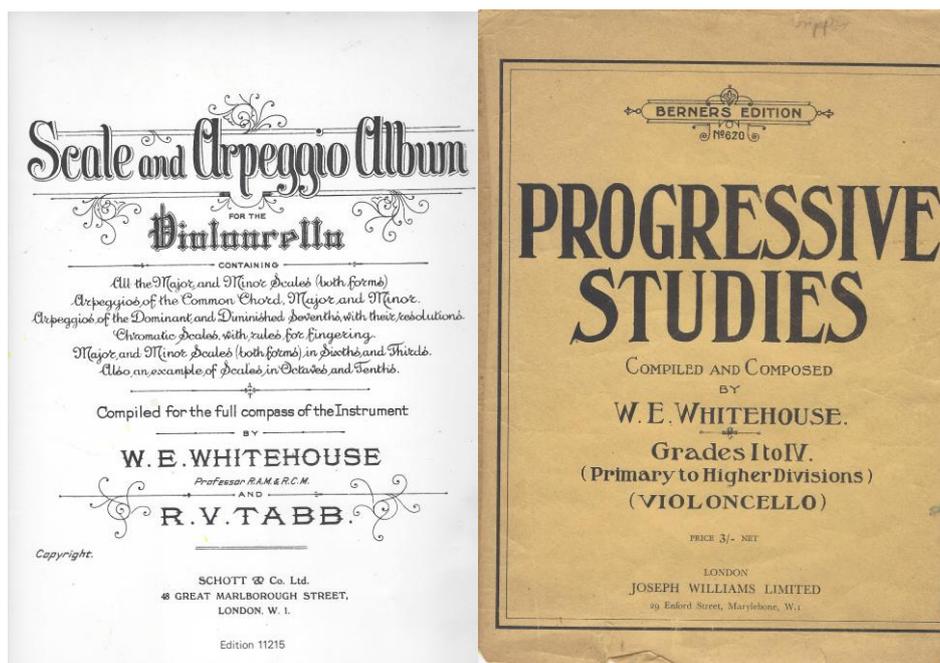
Introduction and Allegro Perpetuo // Remembrance, Ballade in G (1916) // Gedanken, // Melody in D // Serenade // Caprice

He published a major Scale-book, with all the normal major and minor scales (3 and 4 octaves), plus chromatic scales, arpeggios, dominant and diminished seventh arpeggios, thirds, sixths and octaves. It was probably the most complete scale-book of its time, and printed on large size paper. This is still a benchmark today!!

In 1916 he published the 'Half Minute Violoncello Studies', these perhaps lasting more than 30 seconds each, but which incorporated some novel exercises to maintain the interest of the cello student within an academic climate. Some of his ideas would not be so out-of-date in today's musical climate. I have them and they are great!

He edited Piatti's Caprices, with most exact, and interesting suggestions as to how his former teacher preferred them to be played. In addition, he edited numerous other works for cello, mainly by baroque composers.

He also wrote at the end of his life, in 1930, 'Recollections of a Violoncellist'. This is a very interesting autobiography, just full of anecdotes, with over one hundred small pages making up this!



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