

Cellists' Corner

Brief Career Details of Important Cellists

prepared by David Johnstone from public information

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HIDEO SAITO

By Celloheaven

Hideo Saito, cellist 1902-1974

Many famous Japanese cellists of our time were students of the illustrious master cellist Hideo Saito. He was born in Tokyo in 1902, to a large, wealthy, learned family (his father created the first complete English/Japanese dictionary). His first instrument was the piano. At the age of 18 he entered Sophia University to study modern languages, especially German. (He was fluent in Japanese, German, English, French and Chinese.) There, against his family's wishes, he began to study cello. He also studied with Montanagi Ono at the Tokyo University.

In the 1920's he visited Leipzig, Germany with a Japanese prince, and studied cello with Julius Klengel (Feuermann and Piatigorsky were fellow students!) He also spent two years in the 1930's in Germany, studying with Feuermann, who deeply impressed Saito.

Upon his return to Tokyo, Saito became principal cellist of the Tokyo Symphony, and was also a strong supporter of chamber music in Japan. In 1949 he was awarded the Mainichi Shimbun Music Prize. He studied conducting with Joseph Rosenstock, who had come to Tokyo to conduct the Symphony. Saito became a gifted conductor as well as cellist, and took over conducting the Tokyo Symphony after Rosenstock left Japan.

Hideo Saito in ChairHe founded the Toho-Gakuen Music School for children, where he taught conducting, cello and violin, as well as chamber music and directing the student orchestras. His school for young children eventually added high school and college divisions. Many of his students have since become internationally recognized cellists in their own right. For example: Yoritoyo Inoue, Tsuyoshi Tsutsumi, Ko Iwasaki and and Kenichiro Yasuda.

Margaret Campbell, writing in her book *The Great Cellists*, said of Saito:

"...a man whose European associations, allied to an extraordinary vision and integrity of character, changed the face of music in Japan...No musician who has emerged from Japan in the last 30 years is without Saito's influence."



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