

Lionel Tertis: The First Great Virtuoso of the Viola

By John White

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Lionel Tertis [1876-1975] stands in the company of Ysaÿe, Kreisler, Casals, Thibaud and Rubinstein as one of the greatest instrumentalists - and arguably the greatest viola player - of all time. Many composers, including Bax, Holst and Vaughan Williams, wrote significant works for him; he was a member of a number of prominent string quartets; and he was later to design and promote his own 'Tertis model' viola. Tertis is virtually synonymous with the increasing importance of the viola as a solo and recital instrument alongside the violin and the cello.
This updated paperback edition tells how he rose from humble beginnings to become 'the father of the modern viola'. It explores in detail his long and distinguished career, persuading composers to write works for the viola, arranging existing works for the instrument, editing and performing, and teaching and coaching, notably at the Royal Academy of Music.

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Lionel Tertis: The First Great Virtuoso of the Viola By John White Bibliography

- Rank: #3512151 in Books
- Published on: 2012-12-20
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.20" h x 1.10" w x 6.10" l, 1.65 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 456 pages

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Editorial Review

Review
It was first published in 2006 by Boydell Press, reprinted the following year and is now in a paperback version, which testifies to its popularity and its quality. The biography is nothing if not comprehensive ... This is a wonderful book and an excellent example of the expertise necessary to produce a comprehensive and authoritative biography. I'm certain that no one else could possibly have done it anything like as well as John White. --Spirited Magazine

One could hardly ask for a more authoritative voice for the definitive account of the life of the great viola virtuoso. [...] White's biography is the last word on Tertis and no less than its iconic subject merits. --Gramophone

Reading this extremely well researched and written book I was left in no doubt of the debt that all lovers of string playing owe to Tertis, and of his relentless pursuit of perfection, both in playing technique and instrumental design. --Elgar Society Journal

About the Author
JOHN WHITE is a prominent viola teacher and performer. He was a founder member of the Alberni String Quartet and later played with the London Philharmonic Orchestra and the Stadler Trio and collaborated with composers Alan Bush, Lennox Berkeley and Alan Richardson in performances of their works. White was Professor of Viola at the Royal Academy of Music for over thirty years and has chaired four international viola congresses in the UK since 1978. In recognition of his outstanding contributions to the viola, he was awarded the Silver Alto Clef for 2010 by the International Viola Society.

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