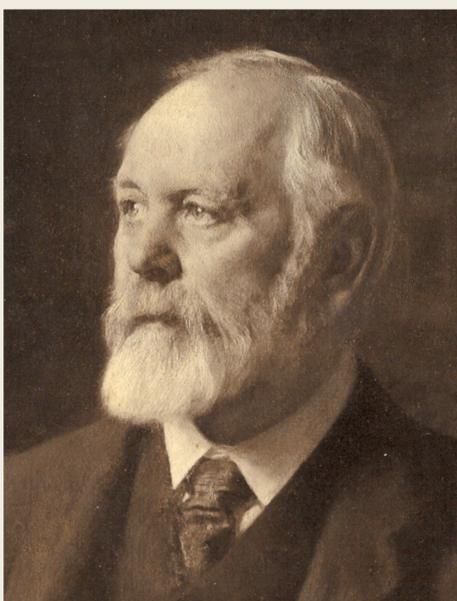


Paul David

Master of Music (Honoris Causa), Cantab.

Director of Music 1865-1908



The music teachers of Edward Thring's first decade at Uppingham worked wonders with the pupils, but their frequent replacement as they moved on to further their careers proved frustrating. Thus in 1865 Thring consulted England's foremost musician, William Sterndale Bennett, and asked him to find a suitable man for a permanent appointment when he next travelled to Leipzig. Sterndale Bennett regularly attended Mendelssohn's Conservatorium, where he enjoyed billiards with Mendelssohn, Schumann, and Ferdinand David. When he asked David, the principal violin teacher, if he could recommend anyone for the Uppingham position, David suggested his own son Paul, then aged 25.

How Sterndale Bennett persuaded Paul David to accept Thring's invitation is not known; what is certain is that David sacrificed personal renown in his own country to give Uppingham a distinction and excellence in music above any other English school in the nineteenth century. On the conclusion of his studies under his father, David had joined the violin section of the Karlsruhe orchestra, a post he held for two years. There he developed a warm friendship with Brahms, singing through early versions of his songs and playing in the A-major quartet prior to its publication.

David travelled to Uppingham accompanied by Josef Joachim, another of his father's pupils and soon to be Europe's leading violinist. Thring was obviously pleased with his catch for he declared 13th March 1865 "a half holiday in honour of Herr David's arrival".

Under David's direction, music was soon an essential part of school life: it became a timetabled subject in the 1870s and more than a third of the 300-strong School was learning an instrument. David and Georg Beisiegel did all the teaching for the first years, but by 1875 they had assistance from one and then two colleagues. All pupils had two lessons a week, and those who learned an instrument had two more: woodwind teaching was added to piano and strings in 1872. Thring and David collaborated on many songs, including a new School Song, *Ho! Boys, Ho!* written in 1873. Sterndale Bennett continued to be interested in David's work and he visited the School twice a year as an examiner. The performances by the pupils, especially the instrumentalists, never ceased to amaze him.

David's Leipzig friends kept in touch as he appointed mainly German musicians to meet the School's expanding needs; several made Uppingham their permanent home. Acting on Joachim's advice, choral and instrumental teaching were the priority. The standard of both rose steadily and by 1875 David had the confidence to invite Joachim back to hear what he had achieved. Better than that, Joachim agreed to play in a concert – the first of 16 spread over 30 years.

School concerts for the decade after 1875 comprised a first half of selections from oratorios, usually by Mendelssohn, followed by secular songs by soloists, small groups, and the 100-strong choir. The choir also sang at chapel services. March 1881 witnessed the first performance of a complete oratorio, Handel's *Messiah*, with the boys singing alongside soloists and a small orchestra of masters, former pupils, and friends of the School. The first performance by an instrumental ensemble of boys was in April 1883: a violin octet played Charles Dancla's *Moderato Cantabile*. Joachim returned to Uppingham in 1878, 1882, and 1884 to play in the School's spring concerts, bringing friends with him.

Another 10 years on and the focus moved to orchestral playing; of the 108 boys learning in 1889, 25 played the violin, five the cello, four woodwind, and the rest were pianists. The spring term concert of 1886 included the probable first orchestral performance: six boys joined their masters in the *andante* from a Haydn symphony. In April 1890, a larger orchestra performed an overture by Handel, and Mendelssohn's *The Hebrides* overture. The orchestra played its first complete symphony, Haydn's No. 7 in C major, in December 1891, followed by Beethoven's Symphony No. 1 in C major and Haydn's Symphony No. 5 in A major in succeeding years. Another milestone was reached in April 1894 when two boys each played a movement from a violin concerto. Joachim returned eight more times between 1885 and 1895, bringing many renowned musicians with him.

Uppingham music reached a high plateau of attainment in David's fourth and final decade. He now had a team of six full-time assistants, including his daughter Charlotte. Each of the four parts of the chapel choir had two 45-minute sectional practices each week and a combined two-hour session every Saturday. The orchestra also had sectional lessons during the week, a full rehearsal each Saturday evening, and a combined rehearsal with the concert choir every Sunday. All pupils were allowed to listen to the Sunday rehearsals. Many did so and David was thrilled to hear some whistle airs from symphonies as they walked about the School. Four concerts were given each year: one each term with an oratorio, a symphony, a concerto, shorter items, and ending with a School Song; and a miscellany of lighter music for each summer's Speech Day. Now in his sixties, Joachim reduced his Uppingham visits to just three: in 1898 he brought the celebrated Joachim Quartette. His final visit to the School was on 23rd May 1905, to celebrate Paul David's achievements over 40 years and to inaugurate the David Concert Room.

Paul David continued working for two more years, then, after missing most of the spring of 1908 through illness, he decided to retire that summer. His farewell concert was on 27th July. Among the many tributes he received, the University of Cambridge awarded him the first honorary degree of its type. The citation read: "In the enthusiastic and successful teaching of the art of music in the schools of today no-one has set a more auspicious example for a longer time than Mr Paul David, our first Master of Music." David retired to Oxford; he died aged 91 on 21st January 1932.

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