



COMPOSER BIOGRAPHY

**HENRI VIEUXTEMPS**

BORN: February 17, 1820

ERA/STYLE: Romantic

DIED: June 6, 1881

HOMETOWN: Verviers, Belgium

Henri Vieuxtemps was a Belgian composer and violinist. Over his lifetime, he wrote a total of seven violin concertos, three string quartets, two cello concertos, and a number of short pieces for the violin, and is still regarded as an important composer of music for the violin today.

Vieuxtemps received his first violin lessons from his father and a local teacher, and gave his first public performance at the age of 6. Soon he was giving performances in surrounding cities in Belgium, including Brussels and Liège. In Brussels he met the famous violinist Charles Auguste de Bériot, who became his teacher.

Bériot took young Henri to Paris in 1829 for another concert debut and to study for a year. After that, Vieuxtemps continued to work on improving his technique while also performing regularly. He met many famous composers and musicians on tour (including world-famous violinist Niccolò Paganini) and quickly developed a reputation for his virtuosity on the violin.

Dreams of becoming a composer led him to take a break from performing to study composition in 1835–1836. His First Violin Concerto was written around this time, when Henri was only a teenager! The concerto premiered in 1840 in St. Petersburg, Russia to high acclaim, leading to tours of Europe and the United States. But it was Russia who loved his music most—he lived there permanently from 1846–1851, as a musician of Tsar Nicholas I's court. There, he founded the violin school at the Saint Petersburg Conservatory and guided the formation of a "Russian school"-style of violin playing. He returned to Belgium in 1871 to accept a professorship at the Brussels Conservatory.

Only two years later, Vieuxtemps had a stroke which paralyzed his right arm, making it impossible for him to play. He gave up his position and moved to Paris, composing and playing violin when his health allowed. Another stroke ended his career as a violinist in 1879, but he continued to write music until his death in 1881.