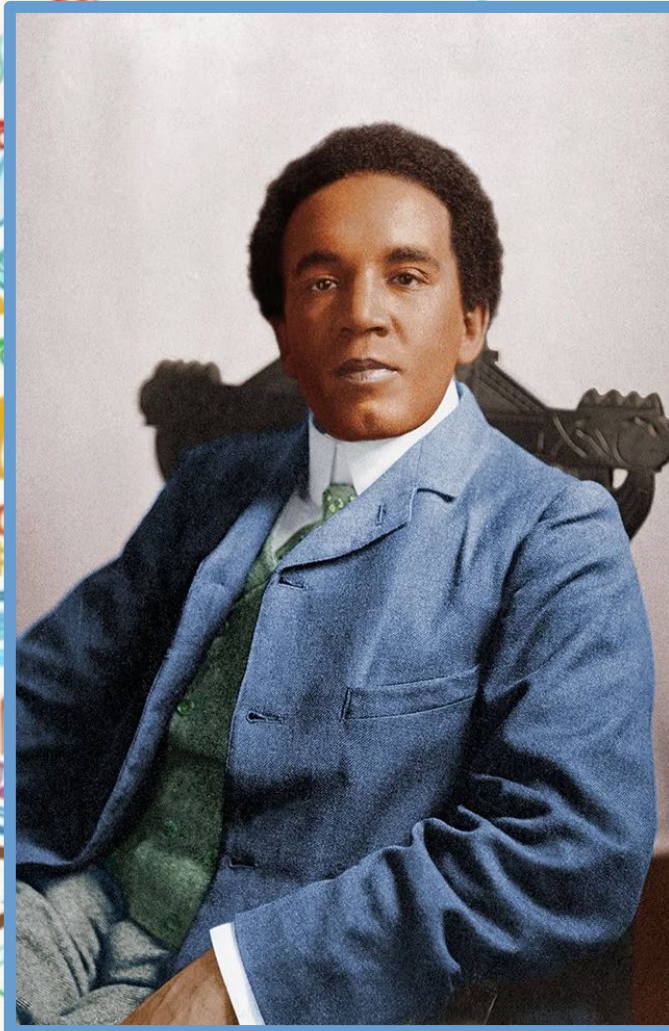




Samuel Coleridge-Taylor

Composer of the Week



**Samuel Coleridge-Taylor
(1875-1912)**





Born in Holborn, London
15th August 1875



Died in Croydon, Surrey
1st September 1912

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor was a British born composer who gained much popularity in the UK and US during his lifetime.

He was born in Holborn, central London.

His mother, Alice Hare Martin was an English woman and his father was Daniel Peter Hughes Taylor from Sierra Leone. They met when Samuel's father was studying medicine in London.

His father was unable to get a job in London, some think because of the colour of his skin, so he returned to Africa, not knowing that Alice was expecting a baby.

Samuel spent his early years living with his grandparents in Croydon. His grandfather played the violin and began teaching Samuel to play. It was obvious that the boy was talented so his grandfather paid for Violin lessons and Samuel entered the Royal College of Music at the age of 15.



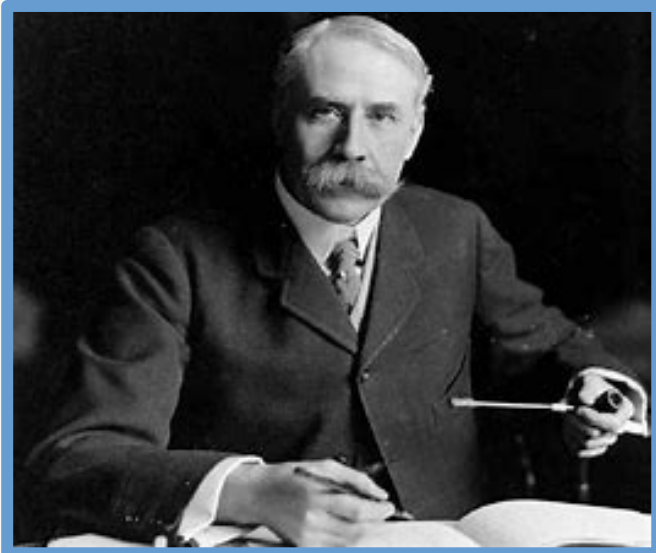
© Alamy

His house in South Norwood, Croydon, is still standing and it has a plaque on the front.



Samuel became a professional musician, professor of Music at the Crystal Palace School of Music and the conductor of an orchestra in Croydon.

He was encouraged by Edward Elgar and soon became a well-known composer.



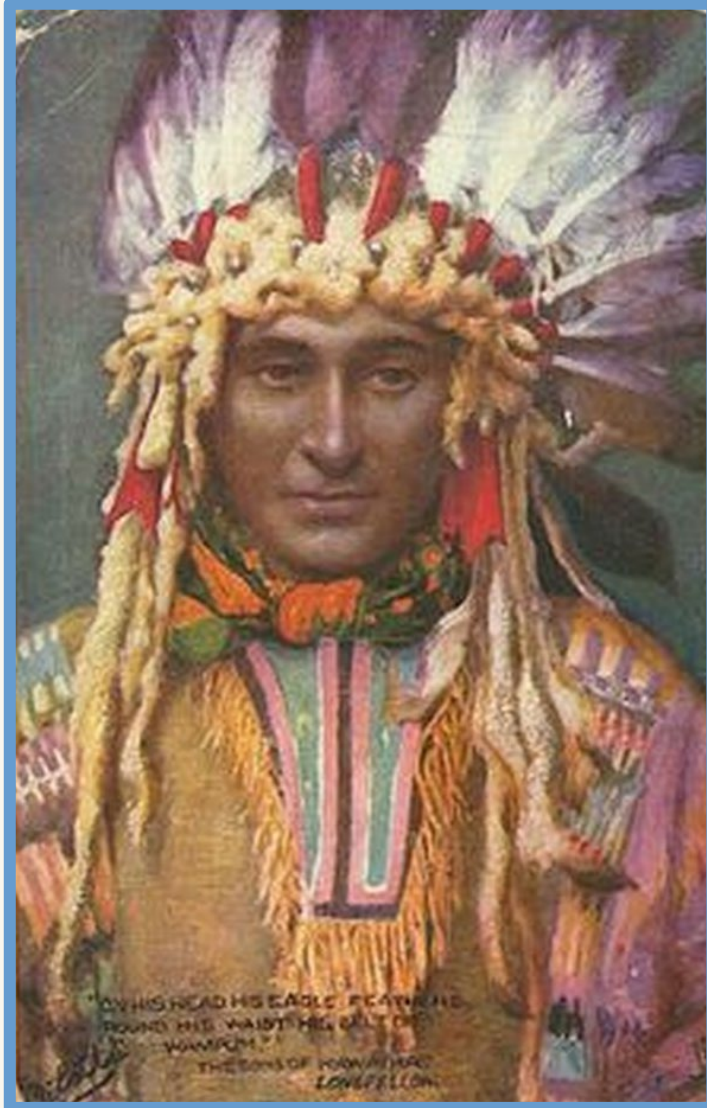
Sir Edward Elgar

In 1898 he composed **Hiawatha's Wedding Feast** – his most famous piece.

It is based on a poem by the American poet, **Henry Wadsworth Longfellow**, about the lives of Native Americans.

This work became so popular that, for some years, it was performed more than Handel's **Messiah**.

Coleridge-Taylor became very famous.



The poem is based on the true story of **Hiawatha**, The Native American Chief of the Mohawk tribe, who came to symbolise the concept of peace and unity.

He became the leader of many tribes because of his forgiveness.

He was able to forgive the man who killed his two daughters.

Hiawatha's Wampum Belt is comprised of 6,574 wampum beads. The purple represents the sky and the white represents the Good Mind (good thoughts, forgiveness, and understanding). At the centre is the Tree of Peace and the squares represent the different tribes that came together.



While he was at The Royal College of Music, Coleridge-Taylor studied with **Charles Villiers Stanford**, who encouraged all his students to look at their own heritage - **English Folk Songs**.

As a result, Samuel became interested in his own African heritage.

The success of **Hiawatha** meant that he was invited to America. He travelled there three times and became very interested in the culture and music of African Americans.

Samuel often used **Spirituals** as a basis for his compositions.

Do you remember what they are?

A **Spiritual** is a traditional song, composed by slaves and often sung in the fields. They speak of a better place (heaven), where the slaves longed to be, away from the difficult life they led on earth.

This **Spiritual** is called **Deep River**, and the words tell of crossing the River Jordan to get to a better place “where all is peace”.

This recording is by members of the **Kanneh-Mason** family from Nottingham.

Isata Kanneh-Mason (piano)

Braimah Kanneh-Mason (violin)

Sheku Kanneh-Mason (cello)

Imagine playing this wonderful music with your brothers and sisters.



Samuel died in 1912 at the age of 37.

His children were very young when he died and his wife needed money to look after them.

Even though **Hiawatha** was so successful, Samuel had sold the score to his publisher and did not make any money from its popularity.



King George V gave Jessie Coleridge-Taylor, the young widow, a pension of £100 a year because he admired the composer so much.

A concert was held at the Royal Albert Hall and over £1400 was collected for the composer's family.



Many musicians became concerned for Samuel's family and this led to the formation of the **Performing Rights Society**.

To this day, this ensures that composers receive a small payment every time one of their works is performed or broadcast.

This even happens for the songs and hymns we sing at school.

The logo for PRS for MUSIC is a red, teardrop-shaped graphic. Inside the red shape, the letters "PRS" are written in a large, bold, white sans-serif font. Below "PRS", the words "for MUSIC" are written in a smaller, white, lowercase sans-serif font. The background of the slide features a stylized tree with a brown trunk and branches, where the leaves are replaced by various colorful musical symbols like notes, clefs, and instruments such as a trumpet and a guitar.

PRS
for MUSIC