

1778
Poland

Great news - Ann has given birth to my first son! We have named him George Augustus Polgreen Bridgetower. I vow that he will not pass his life in slavery.

Yours,
John Frederick Bridgetower



1783
Poland

My young son George is a bright, intelligent boy who already has a great gift for music. I wonder if I can make use of my position as servant to Prince Esterházy of Hungary to help my son?

Yours,
John Frederick Bridgetower



1785
Poland

I can see a way out of our terrible poverty! My seven-year old son George shows an extraordinary talent for the violin. I must ensure that his talents are heard by as many people as possible.

Yours,
John Frederick Bridgetower



1787
Paris

I have just watched the debut performance of a young prodigy, George Augustus Polgreen Bridgetower. His playing is perfect, with a clear good tone, spirit, pathos and good taste. And he is only nine years old! He will surely go far.

A Courtier



1789
Bath

'The young African Prince, whose musical talents have been so much celebrated, had a more crowded and splendid concert on Sunday morning than has ever been known in this place. There were upwards of 550 persons present, and they were gratified by such skills on the violin as created general astonishment, as well as pleasure from the boy wonder. The father was in the gallery, and so affected by the applause bestowed on his son, that tears of pleasure and gratitude flowed in profusion.'

The Bath Morning Post

1791
Brighton

After years of hearing about the talents of George Bridgetower, I have finally taken him into my patronage. He will live in my Royal Pavilion in Brighton, teaching me music theory and playing in my personal band. This will mean taking the boy away from his parents, but I am sure he will understand the benefits of this; after all, who would turn down the fame and fortune of being the Prince Regent's favourite? I will pay the father £25 to take over the care of his son.

Yours truly,
The Prince Regent



1802
Dresden, Germany

How wonderful to see my boy again, and how big he's grown. Quite the grand young gentleman too! He has been so in demand during his visit that I have barely snatched a few moments with him, but I could not be more proud. I am only sad that he must return again to England.

With love,
Ann Bridgetower



1803
Vienna

I have just performed with a startling new talent George Bridgetower. A very capable virtuoso who has a complete command of his instrument. I must say, I feel so inspired by his skill that I may write some music especially for him.

Yours,
Beethoven



1803
Vienna

My Sonata for Pianoforte and Violin in A, dedicated to George Bridgetower, is a success. I had barely finished it by the first performance, though, and so George had to read his part over my shoulder as I played at the piano. He even changed some parts, which I gratefully admit he improved. I have presented him with a gift – a tuning fork – as a token of my admiration.

Yours,
Beethoven



1804
Vienna

That Bridgetower has no manners! At 26 a young man should know his place! He has dared to insult a woman with whom he knows I am in love. I will never speak to him again and I have already re-named his sonata after another great violinist, Rudolphe Kreutzer.

Yours,
Beethoven

1807
London

We have the pleasure of electing a new member to our ranks: George Augustus Polgreen Bridgetower. At 28 he is young, but incredibly talented and has more experience in teaching and performance than most men twice his age. He is also recently married, and is highly respectable.

The Royal Society of Musicians



1811
Cambridge

Extraordinary! I have just marked George Bridgetower's examination paper for his Bachelor of Arts Degree. The anthem that was composed during the exam is highly accomplished. I have never seen the like! I will make sure that it is performed by an orchestra.

Master of Music



1813
London

What an honour! Our esteemed piano teacher, Mr Bridgetower, has dedicated his new composition, Diatonica Armonica, to us. We are truly blessed to have such a distinguished tutor.

A music student



1817
London

George Bridgetower is one of our greatest musical assets. He is approaching 40 now, and is adored by his pupils, highly respected amongst other musicians, and continues to play the violin and piano beautifully. We recommend that he is allowed permanent membership of the Philharmonic Society.

Secretary of the Philharmonic Society



1860
Peckham

I have just buried a certain George Augustus Polgreen Bridgetower, aged 81, in Kensal Green Cemetery. I knew him a little. He lived a quiet life in Peckham, but had the manners of a gentleman. Rumour has it that he was once a famous violinist, performing for the Prince Regent, and counting Beethoven as a close friend. I find that hard to believe; he seemed almost penniless, although he left £1000 to his sister-in-law.

Mr Mort
Undertaker