



Playing the Cello, 1780-1930

George Kennaway

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This innovative study of nineteenth-century cellists and cello playing shows how simple concepts of posture, technique and expression changed over time, while acknowledging that many different practices co-existed. By placing an awareness of this diversity at the centre of an historical narrative, George Kennaway has produced a unique cultural history of performance practices. In addition to drawing upon an unusually wide range of source materials - from instructional methods to poetry, novels and film - Kennaway acknowledges the instability and ambiguity of the data that supports historically informed performance. By examining nineteenth-century assumptions about the very nature of the cello itself, he demonstrates new ways of thinking about historical performance today. Kennaway's treatment of tone quality and projection, and of posture, bow-strokes and fingering, is informed by his practical insights as a professional cellist and teacher. Vibrato and portamento are examined in the context of an increasing divergence between theory and practice, as seen in printed sources and heard in early cello recordings. Kennaway also explores differing nineteenth-century views of the cello's gendered identity and the relevance of these cultural tropes to contemporary performance. By accepting the diversity and ambiguity of nineteenth-century sources, and by resisting oversimplified solutions, Kennaway has produced a nuanced performing history that will challenge and engage musicologists and performers alike.

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