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## Playing the Cello, 1780–1930

*By George Kennaway*



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### Playing the Cello, 1780–1930 By George Kennaway

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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### **Review**

'In sum, the book is an excellent resource for any cellist interested in exploring the changes and the variety in performance practices of the long nineteenth century through a wealth of materials taken from treatises and method books, comments of listeners (informed or not) of the period, iconography, and early twentieth-century recordings ... Kennaway's volume should definitely be on every cellist's bookshelf, whether or not he or she is interested in HIP'. Music and Letters

### **About the Author**

George Kennaway is a cellist, conductor, teacher and musicologist. He studied at the universities of Newcastle and Oxford, the Salzburg Mozarteum and the Guildhall School of Music. He has appeared as a soloist throughout the north of England, on modern, nineteenth-century and baroque cello - recent solo appearances have ranged from eighteenth-century concertos to contemporary Russian repertoire. From 1980 to 2008 he was co-principal cello in the Orchestra of Opera North. He left the orchestra to take up full-time research in the Leeds University School of Music, working on an AHRC project to create a database of nineteenth-century annotated editions of string chamber music. He is a member of the Ferdinand David Quartet which specializes in the application of theories of historical performance to the German nineteenth-century repertoire. As a conductor, he has worked with orchestras in the UK, Russia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Italy and Lithuania, and he is also active as a cello teacher and chamber music coach. He is currently Visiting Research Fellow at the University of Leeds, and Visiting Research Fellow at the University of Huddersfield Centre for Performance Research.

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