



# **The Pursuit of High Culture: John Ella and Chamber Music in Victorian London (Music in Britain, 1600-1900)**

*Christina Bashford*

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This monograph investigates the promotion and consumption of high musical culture among leisured society in Victorian London, by focusing on the activities of the concert manager John Ella and his Musical Union (1845-81), an eminent, long-lived institution for chamber music, much fÃ¢ted across Europe in its day. It combines a biography of Ella with a social-economic history of the Musical Union, its players, repertoire and audiences, and sets them against the gradually shifting contexts for London concerts, chamber music and cultural life. Ella's extraordinary life story, which began in provincial, artisan-class obscurity and ended in the upper echelons of London society, shapes the narrative. Such themes as entrepreneurship, concert management, taste shaping, music appreciation and elite social networks are discussed throughout, as is the curious interplay between the desire to 'sacralize' chamber music, especially Beethoven's, on the one hand, and the need to survive amid the increasing commercial imperatives of London concert life on the other.

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