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Public Chamber-Music Concerts in London, 1835-50:
Aspects of History, Repertory and Reception

Christina Margaret Bashford

Volume One

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Requirements for the Degree of
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ABSTRACT

Following their successful introduction to London in 1835, concerts of instrumental chamber music rapidly took root and by 1850 had become an established part of the London concert scene. In the course of these 15 seasons many chamber works by Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn and others were brought before a group of concertgoers who were eager to sample their intellectual riches. Although chamber-music concerts per se were a new phenomenon for London concertgoers, and much of the chamber repertory had never been played in England, string quartets, quintets and other genres had been included in mixed orchestral concerts since the late 18th century, and from 1813 had featured prominently in the programmes of the Philharmonic Society’s concerts.

Based on a thorough examination of concert reports in early 19th-century newspapers and journals, extant concert programmes and hitherto unconsulted archival materials, this thesis first examines the vogue for chamber music in early 19th-century London. It then documents and assesses the development of chamber-music concerts in the 15 seasons from 1835 to 1850, thereby establishing a social and musical context for the best-known chamber-music societies of the period, the Musical Union and the Beethoven Quartet Society (both founded 1845). The study also analyses the evolution of the chamber-music repertory during the period and evaluates the emerging canonicity of the chamber music of Beethoven, Haydn and Mozart. It concludes with a detailed
discussion of the reception of Beethoven’s ‘late’ string quartets, which were given their first English performances during the late 1830s. The thesis is in two volumes: the first presents the discussion and the bibliography; the second (appendices) provides detailed tables of repertory, an almanac of concerts, and transcriptions of the newspaper reviews of the London premières of Beethoven’s ‘late’ quartets.
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EDITORIAL NOTE

The following editorial principles are followed in this thesis:

(i) General editorial and bibliographic style (including forms of proper names) is based closely on that of *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan Publishers, 1980). In particular, the abbreviations ‘2/’, ‘3/’ (etc.) - where followed by a date in bibliographic citations - identify second, third (etc.) editions of a work.

(ii) Years of birth and death, where known, are given for all performers and other personnel associated with musical life in London on the first appearance in the text of the person in question, and are not given in subsequent references. Years of birth and death of composers, however, are not generally provided.

(iii) For the convenience of the reader, where literary and musical sources are cited in footnotes, a full citation is given on their first occurrence in each chapter. Thereafter, short forms are used for the remainder of that chapter.

(iv) Victorian London used pre-decimal British currency, and where amounts of money
are noted they are transcribed in pounds, shillings and pence. Readers familiar with modern currency only should note that one pound equalled 240 old pence, or 20 shillings of 12 pence each. One guinea equalled 21 shillings.

(v) A large number of daily newspapers published during the period under discussion were not printed with page numbers; several consisted only of a printed sheet folded once to make four pages, and pagination was presumably deemed unnecessary. References to daily newspapers in the thesis therefore give issue dates only.

(vi) The volume numbering of the Musical World, a key source, is worth noting here. Volumes i-vii covered the period from March 1836 to December 1837. Between January 1838 and December 1841 the journal was issued under two numbering systems: one continuing the volume numbering of the first series, the other introducing a ‘new series’ of volume numbers, designated i-ix. The old style numbering was exclusively resumed with vol.xvii (1842), which was also the first volume to cover a whole calendar year. The old style numbering is used throughout this thesis.
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My interest in chamber music in 19th-century London stemmed initially from an enthusiasm for the Classical quartet repertory and an understanding of the musical rewards that playing and performing chamber music could bring, as well as a growing fascination for 19th-century musical culture and its manifestation in London. Although warned by many of the bibliographic perils of dealing with 19th-century sources, I quickly became convinced that this was a subject that needed exploring in depth and thus embarked upon the current project.

My research took me into new and unexpected areas, the most significant of which appeared when I started to look at 19th-century newspapers. While the large amount of hitherto untapped information that they appeared to offer was exciting, limited bibliographic control and the seemingly intransigent problems of interpreting the material in a balanced way presented formidable challenges. I was especially fortunate, in these early days, to have benefitted from the advice and guidance of Leanne Langley, whose dissertation *The English Musical Journal in the Early Nineteenth Century* (1983) has become a vital tool for all scholars dealing with the period. I am most grateful to her for the practical help and constructive criticism she gave me.

In the later stages of the preparation of this study I was helped immensely by Professor Cyril Ehrlich, who gave freely and generously of his time, knowledge and
wisdom. His practical interest in my work, along with his insights into the social and economic background of English musical life in the early 19th century, were both encouraging and stimulating. In addition, several other scholars have made helpful suggestions or facilitated research in other ways; many of these are reflected in the pages of this dissertation. In particular I should like to acknowledge the contributions of Stanley Sadie, Simon McVeigh, William Meredith, Richard Macnutt, George Biddlecombe, Brian Trowell and Peter Ward Jones.

For his close interest in the topic of my research, and for allowing me access to the Ella Collection and permission to reproduce some of its materials, I am indebted to John Ravell. I am also grateful to the staff of the following libraries for their help and assistance during the past 10 years: in Oxford, the Bodleian Library and the Music Faculty Library; in London, the Royal Academy of Music Library, the Royal College of Music Library, the British Library, the British Library Newspaper Library, and the University of London Library; and in Edinburgh, the Reid Music Library.

Final, special thanks go to my supervisor, Curtis Price, for his advice and helpful criticisms throughout the project; to Sharon Owen for inputting data at crucial stages; to Dai Griffiths and my colleagues in the Music Department at Oxford Brookes University for practical assistance and encouragement; and to my husband John Wagstaff, whose help, support and incisive criticisms were central at every stage.

Oxford, December 1995
INTRODUCTION

In recent years a number of scholars have begun to treat English musical life in the 19th century in a serious, historical manner; as a result our knowledge of the period has been broadened and our understanding decidedly deepened. There have been important studies of the piano industry, the music profession, music publishing, journalism, and specific concert institutions, to name just a few; but chamber music concerts - which, with some justification, may be considered a minority, almost intellectual, musical interest, both then and now - have remained on the periphery of such investigations.

This dissertation aims to provide a detailed study of the way in which chamber-music concerts developed in London from their inception in 1835 until 1850, and to establish a context for the two best-known concert institutions of the period, the Musical Union and the Beethoven Quartet Society. In addition, the study considers questions of repertory (what music was played) and reception (what people thought of it). Introduced to London somewhat later than to other European capitals, chamber concerts quickly took root and during the 1840s were multiplying vigorously. For example, after an initial outburst of concert giving (at least 26 concerts in the first season), the number of concerts given each season settled down to approximately 15 by 1840; ten years later the figure had more than quadrupled. Although the vigour and rate of this growth is fascinating in itself, there have hitherto been few attempts to draw a detailed picture of
the concert scene. Nicholas Temperley’s 1959 dissertation *Instrumental Music in England 1800-50* contains, to date, the only serious attempt to survey the rise and development of chamber concerts and to place them in a wider context. Although to modern eyes this aspect of Temperley’s doctoral work may seem to rely too heavily on unreliable and unrepresentative sources, most notably the *Musical World* and *The Times*, his investigations have for many years provided the only overview of chamber-music activity on which others could depend. In the past 20 years the only contributions to the subject have been specific studies, most notably William Weber’s provocative consideration of the social status of Musical Union audiences in his book *Music and the Middle Class* (1975) and David B. Levy’s profile of Thomas Alsager and the Beethoven Quartet Society in an article published in *19th Century Music* (1985-6).

This dissertation looks at the development of chamber concerts from three aspects: their history, musical repertory and the reception of specific works. Historical concerns include general patterns and principles of concert giving in London before 1835, which are discussed in Chapter I, and the extent to which chamber music was cultivated in London before 1835 - both in private and as occasional items within public orchestral concerts - which is scrutinized in Chapters II and III. In Chapters IV and V, I chart the development of the new type of chamber concert from 1835 to 1850 and attempt to determine a number of things: who was responsible for putting on the new concerts, where and when they were held, who performed in them, who attended them, what music was played, how the number of concerts increased, and so on. A more detailed examination of programmes and repertory forms the focus of Chapter VI, and the dissertation ends with a case-study of the reception of Beethoven’s late string quartets (Chapter VII). The dissertation is supported by a number of appendices. The first
(Appendix A) is a listing of chamber music in Philharmonic Society concerts, 1813-35. Appendices B and D chronicle the chamber repertory of 1835-50 (both instrumental music and vocal items) by concert, while Appendices C and E index the same repertory by composer and work(s). An almanac of concerts, into which information about concert reports is integrated, is provided in Appendix F, while Appendix G comprises transcriptions of press reports of the first London performances of Beethoven's 'late' quartets.

Definitions and scope

The current study is largely confined to London in the 1830s and 40s. The reasons for this may be self-evident, though they are probably worth stating clearly at the outset. For a start, chamber concerts developed vigorously in London long before they reached other English urban centres; this was no accident, for at this period, of all English cities, only London offered a viable marketplace in which such specialized concerts could thrive. Secondly, although the timespan under discussion may seem slender, covering as it does only the first 15 seasons in which chamber concerts were mounted, it will come as no surprise to those who have undertaken detailed work in this area that the scope of my study is ultimately limited by features arising from the material itself: that is, the increase in the number of chamber concerts in the late 1840s, and the expansion in the number of newspapers and journals in circulation and the amount of musical coverage they offer. At the same time, the period falls before the real explosion of 19th-century concert life, and the development of 'music for the masses', which took place on a significant scale only after 1850. The range of years under discussion here nevertheless takes in a number of important developments, including several experiments with concerts and
programming, the successful establishment of the Musical Union and other serious-minded concert organizations, and - perhaps most importantly - the introduction and assimilation of much of the modern corpus of Classical chamber music, including Beethoven's late string quartets, into the London repertory. Indeed, detailed documentation and analysis of even such a relatively short period as this can reveal important patterns and trends. Moreover, the need to discover why chamber concerts took off in such an emphatic way as soon as they were introduced in 1835 led me to consider traditions of concert giving and domestic music-making back as far as the late 18th century, and this helps provide historical perspective on what at first sight may seem a short timespan.

Definitions of what constituted a public chamber-music concert also require some explanation. In modern usage the term 'chamber-music concert' generally denotes a performance of instrumental music written for small ensemble (involving between two and ten performers), intimate and serious in character, normally in a small concert room or hall; theoretically this definition embraces music from all periods, although it is commonly restricted to music from the Classical period onwards. In England during the 1830s and 40s the term was used fairly loosely, and there were a host of varying types of entertainment which called themselves 'chamber concerts'. In effect a chamber concert could include any combination of the following: (i) ensemble works by the Viennese masters and those who emulated their styles and techniques; (ii) ensemble pieces in a more virtuosic tradition (quatuors brillants or concertante chamber works); (iii) ensemble works by Baroque composers; (iv) solo pieces, both serious and lightweight (e.g. piano sonatas and miniatures; instrumental fantasias and studies); and even (v) solo concertos accompanied by small orchestras.
The sheer number of concerts that sprang up in the late 1840s calls for the establishment of principles for inclusion and exclusion. While it would be impossible and undesirable to sort concerts in accordance with modern notions of what does or does not constitute chamber music, it is clear that during the period concerts began to fall into two distinct types, based around the style of music included in their programmes. Some concert-givers veered increasingly towards programmes built around music written for technical display or pieces normally associated with the ‘salon’, while others maintained a loftier raison d’être and generally presented only serious types of chamber music, more in keeping with modern notions of a chamber recital. Concerts conceived in this latter vein reflected an increasing intellectual appreciation of music on the part of the concert-givers and their audiences, and are the focus of this research. Thus, concerts comprising serious works for solo instrument (usually piano sonatas, studies etc.) fall within the scope of the study, whereas the solo virtuoso recital does not. It should be stressed, however, that lines of demarcation between serious and lightweight chamber concerts are inevitably fuzzy, since even the most ‘serious’ concert series occasionally included lightweight pieces in their programmes, and many otherwise earnest concert organizations were sometimes forced to hold one-off benefit programmes in which the music selected was much less cerebrally demanding. My guiding principle has been to include in the discussion concerts and concert series in which the overall choice of music and purpose of the occasion was ‘serious’, regardless of whether music of a virtuosic character may occasionally have been performed.

Virtually all the concerts under discussion were given to paying audiences. Many concert-givers operated expensive subscription systems which gave them exclusive clientèles, while others held concerts only for the edification of the (paying) members of
their chamber-music club. These were 'public' concerts in the sense that they operated on a commercial basis with tickets, advertising, fees to players and (usually) free admission to the press to ensure coverage and publicity in print, but the social exclusivity and limited size of their audiences meant that many were often closer in spirit to private soirées than to popular entertainments open to people from a wide social sphere. Indeed, these concerts were far removed from what would be widely understood by the term 'public concert' today. It should also be stressed that, although this dissertation is mainly concerned with what were technically termed public concerts (rather than private, essentially domestic events), the distinction between the two types of concert was often blurred, making meaningful separations impractical and undesirable; hence, where the narrative demands it and information survives, concerts which lean more towards private events than public ones (such as the concerts given by the Queen Square Select Society, or Ella's réunions) are included in the discussion.

Sources

One of the principal reasons for the previous neglect and patchy treatment of chamber-music concerts in London relates to a perceived lack of documentary evidence. With the exception of the Musical Union and Beethoven Quartet Society concerts there are few surviving programmes or archival materials, and references to chamber concerts are scattered very thinly in memoirs and biographies of contemporary figures. What is more, as suggested above, the principal music periodical of the time, the Musical World, is a not wholly reliable tool for documenting musical life. Not only did the journal suffer from prolonged periods of editorial bias (in particular during J. W. Davison's editorship, 1843-85), but many of its concert reports were editorial confections based on advance
notices, rather than on first-hand opinion and documentation. A large part of this
dissertation leans heavily on a body of hitherto untapped newspaper and general
periodical sources, whose advertisements, concert reports and feature articles were vital
sources for my research. The difficulties involved in using the press as an historical tool
are notorious, as papers are frequently bedevilled by bias, plagiarism or inaccuracy and,
furthermore, bibliographic control of the 19th-century press is difficult to establish;
nevertheless a wealth of fresh information was waiting to be discovered here. As a rule,
the general press revealed a greater quantity of information and a higher standard of
critical writing than its specialist musical counterpart, suggesting that at this period
general periodicals and newspapers attracted the best writers and probably the most
musically literate readership. The Morning Chronicle, the Morning Herald, the Morning
Post and the Daily News were especially fruitful dailies; The Athenaeum, The Atlas, and
the Sunday Times were among the most useful weeklies. The Musical World, the Musical
Examiner and the Dramatic and Musical Review, while undoubtedly useful at times in
respect of details, were nevertheless often partisan, misleading and parochial.

In the chapters that follow, extensive use is made of all these press sources. In
Chapters IV and V they underpin the discussion of the development of chamber-music
concerts, while in Chapter VII the critical opinions embodied in a number of concert
reviews are assessed and the possible identities of individual writers examined.
Programmes have been reconstructed (Appendices B and D) and the repertory analysed
(Appendices C and E) using the large quantities of information collated from newspaper
sources; without this material the discussion in Chapter VI ('Establishing the Repertory')
would have been far less rigorous. Quotations from the press have normally been used
in the general narrative only where they were felt to be factually correct or representative
of general journalistic opinion; where necessary authorial bias and idiosyncrasies have been explained.

As well as consulting newspapers and periodicals I made use of several types of manuscript and other documentary materials, which complemented the press in an effective manner. Probably the most fascinating of these sources is a cache of documents formerly belonging to John Ella (1802-88), the founder of the Musical Union, which are now housed in a private collection in London. The documents, which came into the possession of the current owner in the 1970s, comprise letters, diaries, scrapbooks, account books, memoranda, photographs and other miscellanea relating to Ella’s career as violinist, writer and impresario. Much of the material relates to the latter part of his life (1860s onwards), but the scrapbooks and the diaries in particular have been a rich source of information for this study. Other valuable manuscript materials include the Mendelssohn documents in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, the Ayrton Papers (which contain important sources relating to the Beethoven Quartet Society), the archive of the Philharmonic Society, and letters to and from Domenico Dragonetti (1763-1846) and other London musicians in the Department of Manuscripts at the British Library, London.

Concert programmes or handbills are a further important source of documentation, although they require careful appraisal. Musical items were frequently changed from what was indicated on the printed programme, and the contents of most programmes need verification by other sources. Furthermore, relatively few programmes survive for the majority of the chamber-music concerts in question. The Department of Printed Books at the British Library houses a virtually complete set of programmes, formerly in the possession of F. G. Sutherland Edwards (1853-1909), for the Quartett Concerts (1836-59); it also holds the official programmes for the Beethoven Quartet Society (published
1846) and the Record of the Musical Union (1845-80). Concert programmes in the Portraits Collection of the Royal College of Music provide a limited amount of additional documentation.

All these sources play an important role in Chapters IV, V and VII, and are integral to the exploration in Chapters II and III of the precursors of the chamber-music concert. The Ella materials, in particular, have been fundamental to gaining an understanding of chamber music in the domestic environment. For a list of primary and secondary sources the reader should turn to the Bibliography.

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My work aims to present a comprehensive picture of a fascinating period in the cultural life of mid-19th-century London. Given the nature of the material, more questions may ultimately be raised than answered here. It is hoped, however, that the discussion in the dissertation and the appendices that follow it will stimulate others further to investigate aspects of this interesting subject.
PART 1: A CONTEXT FOR CHAMBER-MUSIC CONCERTS BEFORE 1835
CHAPTER I: LONDON AS A CENTRE FOR CONCERTS

Public concerts of chamber music were introduced to London in autumn 1835 and quickly became a permanent part of the concert scene there. For specialist concerts to have made such a confident entrance into London musical life demanded the fulfilment of a number of conditions: in particular there needed to be sufficient local demand, in the form of enough people with a special interest in chamber music and with enough wealth to support their concertgoing; and there needed to be an adequate supply of musicians capable of putting on concerts for them. The number of concerts (and, one may suppose, demand for concerts) in London had been expanding steadily since the 1820s, and by the mid-1830s London, more so than any other English city, offered a viable commercial environment in which large numbers of concert-givers could operate.

This chapter attempts to show why conditions in London were ripe for the presentation of specialist concerts in 1835. In the two chapters that follow, I shall consider the ways in which potential concertgoers were able to develop an interest in chamber music by that time.

1. Demography, topography

The increased number of concerts being given in London in the 1830s and 40s - what
William Weber calls a 'real cultural explosion' 1 - roughly coincided with the increase in its population, for during the first half of the 19th century London underwent substantial demographic change. Simply put, there appear to have been more potential concertgoers with the requisite amount of wealth and leisure in the 1830s and 40s than there had been at the turn of the century. In 1801 the population of London stood at just under one million; in the ensuing years it grew at about 20 per cent per decade until by 1851 it had more than doubled. 2 The national death rate had been declining, thanks to improvements in medicine, sanitation and health care, since the mid-18th century; and this, allied to a rising birth rate and increasing immigration from other areas of England (most notably the southeast), Wales, Scotland, Ireland and the Continent, produced dramatic population growth. By the middle of the century London had about six times the population of Liverpool, seven times that of Manchester, and ten times that of Birmingham. Comparisons with European cities are also instructive: London had roughly twice the number of inhabitants of Paris, four times that of Vienna and four times that of Berlin. 3 The British capital had long been an international centre of finance and commerce, and by the time of the Great Exhibition in 1851 its size and reputation had swollen greatly; alongside developments in trade and industry it saw (among other things)

1 William Weber, Music and the Middle Class: the Social Structure of Concert Life in London, Paris and Vienna (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishing, 1975), 16. Weber calculates that between the seasons of 1826-7 and 1845-6 the number of formal public concerts increased from 125 to 381, a growth of 305%.

2 In 1801 the population was 959,310; by 1851 it had reached 2,363,341; see Ben Weinreb and Christopher Hibbert, eds., The London Encyclopaedia (London: Macmillan London, 1983), 613-14. Figures relate to the area later administered by the London County Council.

advances in the arts and sciences, improvements in living conditions and the beginnings of a transport revolution that would eventually bring radical changes to many spheres of life.

The map of London also changed dramatically in the early 19th century, and by 1850 the shape of the modern metropolitan area had begun to emerge. At the end of the 18th century the built-up area of London was relatively small, being bordered roughly by Park Lane to the west, New (later Marylebone) Road to the north, the edge of the City of London to the east, and encompassing Southwark on the south side of the Thames.

By 1830 suburban development had pushed the boundaries outwards, most especially to the west and south of the capital (the east side was predominantly industrial and mercantile, and the marshy area around the river Lea created a barrier to expansion).

Many existing village settlements (e.g. Hampstead) were engulfed by the metropolis, and in the outer suburbs (e.g. Denmark Hill, Tulse Hill) fashionable detached villas with large gardens were built. With the introduction of the railways from the 1830s onwards London grew still further, and by the late 19th century the city sprawled in all directions.

The centuries-old social division of London into the fashionable West End (with

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5 For a map of London at this period see Sheppard, London 1808-1870, plate 8 [reproduction of Froggett’s ‘Survey of the Country Thirty Miles Round London’ (c1833)]. The rate of urban development was irregular: see ibid, 83-116. For a discussion of the social character of the new areas see Roy Porter, London: a Social History (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1994), 205-38.

its royal palaces) and the commercial East End (with its ports and trade) was a potent factor in the growth of the city. Architectural developments on the west side of London clearly reflected the area’s strong association with fashionable living: for example, the building of Regent Street and Regent’s Park, the construction of Belgravia and the terraces and squares of Brompton and South Kensington. The most fashionable concert venues were traditionally located in the West End - the Hanover Square Rooms, Willis’s (also known as Almack’s) Rooms and the Argyll Rooms being among the most important. In the City, which had its own long-established musical traditions, music was found mainly in taverns and clubs. The concert room at Crosby Hall in Bishopsgate (opened in 1842) became an important City venue in the mid-19th century.

2. The growth of concert-giving

(i) Survey

Patterns of concert life in London had been defined during the 18th century, when concerts became established as important leisure events for fashionable society. In the second half of the 18th century there was an upsurge of concert activity, and in about 1790 what many writers of the time referred to as a ‘rage for music’ gripped the city,

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8 Music in the City had long been supported by the local wealthy bourgeoisie: see Simon McVeigh, Concert Life in London from Mozart to Haydn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 3-4, 32-5. For a discussion of one of the principal City concert venues see Alec Hyatt King, ‘The London Tavern: a Forgotten Concert Hall’, Musical Times, cxxvii (1986), 382-5.

9 For a detailed study of 18th-century concert life see McVeigh, Concert Life, passim.
and an enormous number of musical entertainments became available. This rate of activity was not sustained, however, and after the outbreak of the Napoleonic Wars in 1793 concert life apparently declined, remaining on a plateau during the decade from 1800, when the Concerts of Ancient Music, the so-called Lenten oratorios and benefit concerts were seemingly the most notable West End musical entertainments. A number of commentators have chosen to view this phase of concert life as a 'dark age', a description that is potentially misleading; further research is clearly needed, as in the City, for example, the Harmonic Society was certainly active, performing Beethoven's symphonies nos.3 and 4 there in 1807.

Nevertheless, the pace of development quickened from 1813 with the establishment by a group of London musicians of the Philharmonic Society, and during the 1820s and early 30s opportunities for concert-giving were seized by many, and concert life in London renewed itself and flourished. The Società Armonica, which gave small-scale orchestral concerts, was formed in 1830; the Sacred Harmonic Society came into existence in 1832 and from 1836 held concerts of sacred choral music at Exeter Hall (capacity 3000); that same year the Vocal Society's concerts were inaugurated. Concerts by the newly founded Society of British Musicians began in 1834, as did those of many other fledgling organizations. Benefit concerts, in particular, rose to a height of

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10 McVeigh, Concert Life, 1-2 and passim.


12 For an account of the origins of the Philharmonic Society see Ehrlich, First Philharmonic, 1-19.

13 For an overview of musical life in London in the early 19th century see Joel Sachs, 'London: the Professionalization of Music', The Early Romantic Era: Between
popularity in the 1820s and 30s. Exact numbers are elusive, but the American scholar Joel Sachs, working from the Lord Chamberlain’s records, has proposed that there were up to 70 benefits per season in the 1830s.¹⁴ This broadly concurs with Fétis’ remarks in June 1829 that:

Each one thinks himself entitled to give his benefit concert ... Within two months, more than eighty concerts of various kinds have been given, sometimes four in one day.¹⁵

Certain established concert organizations, such as the Lenten oratorios (which had become pretexts for concert entertainments during Holy Week) and the Concerts of Ancient Music (which were highly favoured by the aristocracy) continued to operate during the 1830s, though eventually they fell by the wayside. By 1843 Lenten closing had become a thing of the past, while the Ancient Concerts, increasingly blighted by falling attendance, staggered on until 1848.¹⁶

The organization of musical performances during the season (which lasted from spring until early summer) was closely monitored by the Lord Chamberlain’s office, which had sole authority to license public concerts, and effectively operated as a clearing


¹⁵ Extract from his letter of 12 June, trans. in The Harmonicon, vii (1829), 244-5, esp.245 [The Harmonicon was issued in two parts, of which the second comprised music, and the first text; unless otherwise stated, references in this dissertation are to part 1]. For further information on Fétis see Vincent Duckles, ‘A French Critic’s Views on the State of Music in London’, Modern Musical Scholarship, ed. Edward Olleson (Stocksfield: Oriel Press, 1980), 223-37.

house for benefit concerts. In the 1830s opera nights at the King's (from 1837 Her Majesty's) Theatre were Tuesdays and Saturdays (plus occasional Thursdays), beginning in March and terminating in early August. The main events of the concert season took place from March onwards, when the Philharmonic Society and the Concerts of Ancient Music each gave a series of eight performances, held at fortnightly intervals on Mondays and Wednesdays respectively. Società Armonica concerts were scheduled for alternate Mondays, and the occasional performances by the Sacred Harmonic Society were normally held on Thursdays. Entertainments were not allowed on Sundays. During May, June and July benefit concerts and benefit opera performances abounded, and in the late summer months instrumentalists and singers toured the provincial festivals. Concerts by the glut of new organizations founded in the 1830s - for example the Society of British Musicians, the Vocal Society and, as we shall see, the chamber-music societies - were initially placed before the main musical season, in January and February.

(ii) Audiences

Although it is tempting to explain the growth in concert life in the early 19th century in terms of increased middle-class demand, such generalizations should be avoided. Clearly there was generally a greater demand for concerts, but the days of a mass middle-class market for music were still some way off, and at this period concert audiences had more in common with those of the late 18th century than those of the late 19th. In other words, most commercial concerts continued to owe more to the patronage of the aristocracy and wealthy bourgeoisie (often City bankers, merchants etc.) than to the support of the majority of people belonging to the broad social band of the middle

classes. Definitions of who did or did not belong to the middle classes are many and varied, and have been discussed by historians at length. What concerns us here is that middle-class incomes and occupations ranged wide, from (roughly) as little as £150 per annum for some shopkeepers and tradesmen to £1000 or even more for some civil servants, bankers and members of the liberal professions, and that since tickets were generally expensive (10s 6d was the standard price for a fashionable West End concert), only the most affluent people could afford regular concertgoing. According to Weber, families on the threshold of the upper middle class (with annual incomes of about £1000) could afford to spend about 2% of their annual incomes on entertainment, lower middle-class families only 1%. The regular purchase of tickets costing 10s 6d was thus a realistic proposition only for those earning roughly more than £600 annually, which would have provided admissions to a maximum of 20 concerts (assuming each admission cost 10s 6d). Systems of subscription and non- (or limited) transferability also ensured a high degree of social control.

In addition, music was an established leisure interest for the wealthy. Music-making loomed large in domestic life, and singing, playing the piano or (for gentlemen only) stringed instruments were respectable leisure pursuits; among those known to have

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20 Weber, Music and the Middle Class, 23.

21 For a detailed discussion of the middle classes and their incomes see Harrison, Early Victorian Britain, 103-12; and for a discussion of ticket prices and middle-class consumption of music see Weber, Music and the Middle Class, passim.
enjoyed participating in music-making in private were Lord Saltoun (1785-1853), the Duke of Leinster (1791-1874) and the Duke of Cambridge (1774-1850). Furthermore there were the rounds of private musical parties at the homes of the aristocracy, at which famous singers from the Italian Opera and other chosen musicians performed. At the same time, a number of private gentlemen’s clubs which had been formed in the 18th century for the part-singing of glee’s, catches and madrigals survived well into the 19th century: among them were the Madrigal Society (established 1740), the Catch Club (1762) and the Cecilian Society (1785). To these were added the Melodists’ Club (1825), the Purcell Club (1836) and many others. The most prestigious concerts continued to be held during the ‘season’ only, i.e. in the period in spring and early summer when high society was traditionally in town for the Parliamentary session, and London enjoyed a high concentration of power and money. Many aristocrats divided their time between their country mansions (often in the north, for grouse shooting in the late summer months) and their West End town houses.22

The social make-up of concert audiences is a complex and controversial issue. Although the wealthiest members of the middle classes penetrated high society and concert-going circles (forming what Weber calls the ‘high-status’ musical public), the extent of this penetration is difficult to determine.22 It is clear, however, that wealth was a critical factor governing social mobility, and that in the early decades of the 19th century only the most affluent members of London society could normally gain access to West End concerts. (There were some exceptions: journalists, for example, were...

22 For a socio-historical overview of the lives of the wealthy classes see Harrison, *Early Victorian Britain*, 91-122.

usually admitted free of charge.) In addition, early 19th-century sources often refer to this concertgoing public as 'amateurs'. The term requires some explanation, as its precise meanings are difficult to determine. Although often used to connote music-lovers who were non-practitioners, it was also employed to describe those who played instruments for pleasure rather than financial gain; it did not necessarily imply poor standards of skill and execution, although in practice many amateur performers were technically and musically unaccomplished.

A further complex issue concerns the breadth or narrowness of concertgoers' tastes, as London audiences had a great variety of musical entertainments available to them. Audiences appear to have been drawn to certain types of concert out of preference for a certain musical repertory, though it should be emphasized at the outset that other factors - such as the social cachet attached to particular entertainments and affordability of tickets - must also have played a significant part. The Concerts of Ancient Music, which traditionally attracted aristocratic audiences, favoured 'old' music, namely works by composers from preceding generations - 'ancient music' in 19th-century terminology. In practice these concerts presented operatic and sacred music by 17th- and 18th-century composers - Handel in particular - as well as glees and madrigals of the 16th and 17th centuries; music less than 20 years old was automatically excluded. Benefit concerts, by comparison, were the main repository for a certain type of 'modern' music, offering solo instrumental music of an exhibitionist nature, as well as arias from popular operas. Much of this sort of music was essentially lightweight and virtuosic. Indeed, the cult of the virtuoso (especially the virtuoso-composer) was strong at this period, and the

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multifarious benefit concerts presented strings of concertos, display pieces and arias. Paganini’s benefits of 1831-2 are a case in point: such a degree of public interest in a ‘star’ performer was hitherto unknown in London.25 A further category of ‘modern’ music can be discerned in early 19th-century concert programmes: ‘serious’ instrumental music, often by Austro-German composers. Overtures, symphonies, sonatas, quartets and quintets by Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Weber, Hummel, Spohr and others belonged to this category, which constituted the core of the Philharmonic Society’s programmes and, in due course, those of the chamber-music concerts. Although there is some evidence that the term ‘classical’ was used by contemporary writers to distinguish this type of composition, there was by no means a universal application of the term, which seems to have taken on a number of meanings by the 1830s.26 Moreover, in musical notices in early 19th-century newspapers and periodicals, the terms ‘modern’ and ‘classical’ are not consistently used with such precise meanings: ‘modern’ can mean serious items as well as display pieces; ‘classical’ can refer to ‘old’ music as well as ‘new’.

It would also be a mistake to assume that all concert programmes comprised music exclusively in one style, or that audiences kept only to one type of concert or style of music. The Vocal Society, for example, gave both ‘ancient’ music and serious modern works in its programmes; concertos and arias were slipped into the otherwise serious diet of the Philharmonic from 1815; and benefit concerts might well have included an ‘ancient’ glee or a piece of modern chamber music as well as the more customary display


26 See ‘What is the Meaning of the Word "Classical" in a Musical Sense?’, Musical Library Monthly Supplement, no.25 (April 1836), 64-5 [English translation of an essay by Carl Barromäus von Miltitz]. For further discussion of the term see Chapter VI, pp.268-70 below.
items. For instance, among the several display pieces in the benefit concert held at the Hanover Square Rooms for the pianist W. H. Holmes (1812-85) on 11 June 1835 were the canzonet ‘Love in thine eyes’ by William Jackson; a fantasia and variations for piano on the march from Auber’s *Fra Diavolo*, which had been specially composed for Holmes by Paganini; Weber’s overture to *Der Freischütz*; and orchestral music by William Sterndale Bennett (1816-75) and J. W. Davison (1813-85).²⁷ In addition, although evidence suggests that certain types of concert tended to attract discrete groups of concertgoers - even contemporary writers divided music-lovers into ‘antient’, ‘modern’ and ‘classical’ factions²⁸ - there was certainly social crossover between audiences. Some members of the aristocracy appear to have happily frequented the Concerts of Ancient Music, fashionable benefits and the Philharmonic. Holmes’s benefit, for example, was patronized by Sir Andrew Barnard (1773-1855) and Lord Saltoun, both of whom also subscribed to the Ancient Music and Philharmonic concerts.

(iii) Performers

Although it may appear that by the mid-1830s there was a clearly discernable demand in London for concerts, the notion of demand cannot in reality be divorced from that of supply: ‘In the simplest sense supply creates a demand: the taste for music is both slaked and stimulated by its availability’.²⁹ During the season London offered more

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²⁷ See the handbill for this concert in the Portraits Collection, Royal College of Music, London.

²⁸ Sachs, ‘London’, 202-3; Sachs’s observation is based on readings from *The Harmonicon* and the Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review.

opportunities for making a decent musical living than any other English city, and consequently boasted a high concentration of ‘professional’ musicians. The term ‘professional musician’ did not then connote high social and vocational status, and was used mainly to distinguish between people whose occupation was music and people who indulged in music purely as a pastime. In the context of this discussion it normally means those musicians who earned their living principally by playing one (occasionally more than one) instrument, backed up by a practice of teaching. By the early 1830s a reasonably large group of freelance professional orchestral players was operating in London. Among them were a number of talented players, such as the violinist Nicholas Mori (1797-1839), the double-bass player Domenico Dragonetti, the cellist Robert Lindley (1776-1855), the trumpeter Thomas Harper (1786-1853), the flautist Charles Nicholson (1795-1837), and the clarinettist Thomas Willman (1784-1840), who occupied the principal chairs in orchestras and commanded higher fees than the rank and file; their employment rounds included playing in the Opera, at the Philharmonic Society and the Ancient Concerts, in oratorios, benefit concerts and in many small-scale enterprises.30 Almost all their work involved participating in ad hoc ensembles, and an ability to sight-read fluently was essential for all of them. After 1835 many of them were to be found performing in chamber concerts.

Foreign musicians - or musicians with foreign familial connections - formed a large part of this freelance group, as London had for centuries been a favourite refuge for immigrant musicians, many of whom took up residence in the metropolis. The presence of foreigners stirred xenophobic feelings in many, especially those English

30 For further discussion of the freelance circuit see Ehrlich, The Music Profession, 46-50.
musicians who saw them as unwelcome competition in the marketplace, and the longstanding debate about the vogue for European musicians continued to rumble on for many years. Foreign musicians were favoured by the aristocracy, many of whom engaged them for private concerts and parties. This form of employment provided many musicians (especially singers) with supplementary incomes and/or the possibility of forging new connections; professional musicians were also sometimes called upon to augment an amateur musical gathering or to provide a formal private concert.

The freelance lifestyle brought healthy financial rewards to only a small number of musicians. At this stage in its evolution the music profession had relatively low social and economic status. Apart from a few 'star' performers such as instrumental virtuosos and famous singers, most musicians active in London pieced together a living. Concert work, limited as it was by the short London season, was only part of the equation, and many musicians sought jobs in the provinces during the slack months of the year. Few escaped destitution at some point in their lives, and the profession itself was tarred with an image of drunkenness, illiteracy and rakish behaviour. The Royal Society of Musicians, founded in 1738 to provide modest pension resources for elderly or ailing musicians, and its offshoot the Royal Society for Female Musicians (established 1839), were able to help only a few, as membership fees were high and payouts limited to cases of absolute destitution. Professional training was also virtually non-existent. After

31 For a full discussion of music-making in the domestic environment see Chapter II below.

32 For stimulating discussions of the musical profession at this period see Deborah Adams Rohr, A Profession of Artisans: the Careers and Social Status of British Musicians, 1750-1850 (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1983) and Ehrlich, The Music Profession.

33 For further discussion see Rohr, A Profession of Artisans, 334-45.
years of campaigning for a national music conservatory, the Royal Academy of Music was founded in 1822 and opened its doors in 1823. But the institution was plagued in its early years by scandal, insufficient funding, and poor standards of teaching, and it was compared unfavourably with national music institutions in other European countries, in particular the Paris Conservatoire. As a result, relatively few of the first generation of students gained positions in the principal London orchestras, and the majority of professional musicians continued to learn their trade through other means: the family, apprenticeship, lessons abroad, and so on.

By the 1830s it was becoming increasingly common for concert series to be organized and managed by musicians, with the Philharmonic Society (which had been established by a small group of professional players in 1813) providing the basic model. It is therefore not surprising that most of the chamber concerts that became the rage in the late 1830s and 40s were set up by the players themselves. As we shall see, opportunities for this new form of concert-giving were to prove attractive to many.

3. Other aspects of musical life

The expansion in the types and numbers of concerts in the early 19th century was of course only a symptom of an increasingly vigorous musical life, and deserves to be set in a wider context. For example, by the end of the 18th century London had become an important centre for music publishing and had quickly established a reputation for the manufacture of pianos. Some firms, for example Cramer and Chappell, combined piano making and selling with music publishing. During the 19th century the market for domestic music (songs and piano pieces in particular) increased further, due in part to the

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34 For further discussion see Ehrlich, *The Music Profession*, 79-99.
advent of pianos in the home, and London publishers produced vast quantities of salon music: quadrilles, arrangements of operatic airs, etc. The increasing number of concerts also had an impact on the publishing industry, as pieces (or arrangements of pieces) that had become familiar in the concert hall were ideal wares for the publishers’ marketplace.

The late 18th and early 19th centuries also saw significant advances in printing technology, including the invention of lithography, which were welcomed by all sections of the publishing industry. These technological improvements, allied to the reductions in advertisement and stamp duties (in 1833 and 1836 respectively) and a growing market for periodical literature about music, contributed to the favourable technical circumstances that ushered in a new era in musical journalism. In 1818 the first substantial specialist music periodical, the Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review, had been founded by Robert Mackenzie Bacon (1776-1844); it had a strong literary flavour and flourished for about 10 years. It was followed in 1822 by a more ‘newsy’ monthly publication with substantial musical supplements, The Harmonicon, which was edited by William Ayrton (1777-1858). Sales fell off dramatically from 1831 and the journal was forced to close in 1833. With the foundation in 1836 of the Musical World, however, a new type of musical periodical was introduced. Initially small in format, it appeared at weekly


\[37\] For a detailed publishing history of The Harmonicon see Langley, The English Musical Journal, 318-43. After The Harmonicon’s demise, Ayrton and his printer Clowes tried a cheaper version called the Musical Library (1834-7).
intervals and concentrated on musical intelligence and concert and opera reviews; music was not appended. The Musical World was to last more than half a century (it closed in 1891).\textsuperscript{38} In its pages the increasing momentum of English musical life is clearly displayed, and the burgeoning amount of concert reviewing during the 1840s in particular may be seen as testimony to rapid developments in concert life.

Musical journalism also gained enhanced status in the general press. Daily and weekly newspapers produced a more enlightened and informed style of concert reporting, and many papers began to pay specialists to write musical notices; The Athenaeum, The Atlas, the Morning Post, and the Morning Chronicle are notable examples. The desire for musical knowledge, the availability of information and the consequent increased musical understanding produced a healthy environment for the development of an intellectual musical life among the wealthy classes.\textsuperscript{39}

The press also brought concert-givers essential publicity, and served both to reflect and sustain the ever-growing concert life of London. At a time when newsprint was the chief vehicle for disseminating information, no concert organizer could realistically ignore the power of the press. Moreover, there was also the possibility of securing a symbiotic relationship with an editor or proprietor. The mutual benefits of such a relationship are obvious: advertisements could be placed by the promoter

\textsuperscript{38} For a survey of the Musical World from 1836 to 1845 see Langley, The English Musical Journal, 573-85.

\textsuperscript{39} Music for, and musical education of, the masses developed later in the Victorian period, though its beginnings can be traced to the late 1830s and early 1840s; tied to ideas of self-improvement were the cheap promenade concerts (Musard, Jullien and others), the singing movements of Mainzer, Hullah and Curwen, the brass band tradition and the mechanics' institutes. For a general account see E. D. Mackerness, A Social History of English Music (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964), 153-98; for discussion see Dave Russell, Popular Music in England, 1840-1914: a Social History (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987).
(producing revenue for the paper), while sympathetic editors could be persuaded to 'puff' particular events and cover them favourably afterwards (increasing the reputation of the concert-giver in the eyes of potential concertgoers). What is more, the press enhanced the social respectability of West End concerts by publishing reports in prominent positions on the 'court circular' pages of newspapers, and by invariably mentioning by name certain aristocratic and wealthy patrons who had been in attendance. The press was also able to 'talk up' particular types of music and even to direct audiences towards particular repertories: this was certainly to be the case with the new chamber concerts, once they had become established. The press thus played an important role in nurturing audiences for chamber concerts - though other factors of course affected the readiness of concertgoers to attend the new type of concert. In the two chapters that follow we shall observe the ways in which the future audiences and performers at chamber concerts were able to develop a taste for chamber music in the decades leading up to the initial concerts of 1835.

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40 For an illuminating discussion of the manipulation of demand see Ehrlich, The Music Profession, 54.
CHAPTER II: CHAMBER MUSIC IN PRIVATE

When public chamber-music concerts were first presented in the West End of London in November 1835, they were greeted with excitement by many who attended. The *Morning Chronicle* was one of several newspapers to praise the innovative enterprise. In particular the paper remarked that a specialist audience appeared to be ready and waiting for the new type of concert. It is clear that not only did the members of this audience have the requisite wealth to attend concerts (the organizers operated a relatively expensive subscription system: 21s for four concerts), they also had a keen enthusiasm for modern chamber music, such as the works of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and Spohr, since only those with a demonstrable taste for this repertory were accorded subscriptions.¹ No lists of subscribers survive, but the *Morning Chronicle* claimed that, while not attended by those 'whose chief objects of attraction are English ballads or the airs of the last new opera', the new Concerti da Camera could count among their supporters 'a large and rapidly increasing body of amateurs, of both sexes, who are conversant with the higher branches of instrumental music'.² In addition, some members of the audience were amateur practitioners, and for them the concerts were 'full of instruction'.³

¹ *Musical Magazine*, no.11 (Nov 1835), 169.

² *Morning Chronicle* (9 Nov 1835).

³ Ibid.
Clearly, audiences' familiarity with chamber music, and in particular with many of the ‘Viennese Classics’, was not born overnight. Indeed, for most people knowledge of the repertory seems to have grown in either one or both of the following ways: firstly, through the experience of hearing or playing quartets, quintets and other types of chamber music in the informal atmosphere of the home; and secondly, through attendance at formal ‘mixed’ orchestral concerts, which had since the late 18th century included occasional chamber items. In this chapter I shall examine the evidence for traditions of private chamber music in London in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, and in particular in the decade and a half leading up to the first chamber concerts of 1835. The current discussion begins with some general remarks about source materials and definitions of chamber music; it continues with a short overview of domestic chamber music in London in the late 18th century, and proceeds to build a picture of private chamber-music activity in the early 19th century, among both amateur and professional musicians. In particular the chapter seeks to challenge, and ultimately qualify, the commonly held assumption that instrumental chamber music was rarely played in the home during the early 19th century.

1. Sources, definitions

The tradition of making music in the privacy of the English home, which can be traced back to the 15th and 16th centuries, is - for obvious reasons - documented and assessed only with the greatest of difficulty. Information is scattered and scanty, and must be picked up from a wide range of sources: extant diaries and letters, contemporary drawings and paintings, music publishers’ catalogues, the music itself, etc. The most one can hope to achieve is an outline sketch of the types of domestic music-making that are
known to have taken place, and the sorts of people who are known to have been engaged in it. What is ultimately impossible to assess is how many people played ensemble music in private, and how often they did so: just because little documentary information about domestic music-making survives, it does not necessarily follow that the activity was little cultivated. Indeed, for the 19th-century instrumentalist the playing of music in the home was an increasingly important route to gaining an appreciation of the repertory.

The concept of domestic or 'private' chamber music in the late 18th and early 19th centuries necessarily embraces a number of definitions. Theoretically it could include domestic music-making on solo instruments, most notably the piano, the predominant instrument of many aspiring amateur musicians. However, the current discussion is focussed on ensemble music-making (that is, music involving two or more instrumentalists) in the home, an intimate activity which has always presented special musical challenges and rewards to those engaged in it. As we shall see, string quartets, which now reside at the heart of the modern chamber repertory and which were composed in large numbers during the period under discussion, were attempted, as were other genres, ranging from accompanied sonatas (e.g. for piano and violin, piano and cello etc.) to string quintets (with two violas or cellos), piano trios and piano quartets.

Although some musical réunions involved only the participating musicians, not all such occasions were restricted to the players themselves. Indeed, the ubiquitous term 'quartet-party' normally implied some social function and could refer to many types of musical occasion, from an informal reading of quartets, quintets etc., perhaps in front of a few casual listeners, to a private concert attended by an invited audience. The term 'private concert' also had its own connotations; as one observer has remarked in connection with 18th-century domestic music:

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... those events described by the omnium gatherum term 'private concert' ... could embrace anything from the informal meeting of a few friends to a musical society concert open only to members or a select gathering in an aristocratic drawing-room for a professionally performed programme.4

Furthermore, the social and musical backgrounds of the instrumentalists who participated in these events were often diverse. Amateur quartet-parties took place among the middle classes as well as the aristocracy; and professional musicians were sometimes called in to reinforce amateur musical ensembles. Quartet-parties among professional musicians, for their own edification and amusement, were also known.

2. The late 18th century

The vogue for domestic music-making among the upper and middle classes of 18th-century England has long been recognized, though rarely studied in detail.5 Recently, patterns of 'private' concert-giving in London homes in the late 18th century have been skilfully documented by Simon McVeigh, whose findings provide a convenient point of departure for this investigation into music in the home in the early 19th century.6 Small-scale concerts in private houses were numerous in the late 1700s, and were 'Typically ... informal morning or evening gatherings with a few dilettante or celebrity performers'.7 The informality and intimacy of these events links them closely to


7 McVeigh, Concert Life, 45.
traditions of domestic music-making. There are numerous references in diaries and letters from the 1760s onwards to informal chamber-music parties in upper- and middle-class homes in and around London: for example chez Dr Burney (1768, 1772 and 1775), Mr Harris (1778), William Sharp (1780), Mrs Greenland (1784) and the Papendieks (1788, 1791). Fanny Burney’s account of the concert at Mr Harris’s gives a flavour of these entertainments:

On Thursday morning, we went to a delightful Concert at Mr. Harris’s. The sweet Rauzini was there, & sung 4 Duets with Miss Louisa Harris; ... La Motte, Cervetto, [and others] played several Quartetos divinely, & the morning afforded me the greatest Entertainment.

Professional musicians were often involved in these private concerts, either performing to the host or hostess and their guests, or augmenting amateur ensembles. There is also extensive documentation of chamber music at court, mainly because the Prince of Wales (1762-1830; later Prince Regent and George IV) was an enthusiastic amateur cellist - a pupil of John Crosdill (1755-1825) - while his brother Adolphus, Duke of Cambridge,

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9 Troide and Cooke, The Early Journals, iii, 7-8.


11 Marquis of Lansdowne, ed., The Queeny Letters: being Letters addressed to Hester Maria Thrale... (London [etc.]: Cassell and Co., 1934), 164.

12 Mrs Papendiek, Court and Private Life in the Time of Queen Charlotte... (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1887), i, 288-9, 316-17, 325-6; ii, 271.

13 Troide and Cooke, The Early Journals, iii, 7-8.
was an accomplished violinist. Not only was chamber music played by professional musicians in front of royal audiences - for instance, the performances given by members of the Royal Chamber Band at court in the 1770s and 80s - but there were also quartet-parties in which the Prince of Wales participated. From the early 1780s the prince was involved in regular quartet-parties, which brought him into close proximity with the most accomplished London violinists: Wilhelm Cramer (1746-99), Felice Giardini (1716-96), Johann Peter Salomon (1745-1815) and Giovanni Battista Viotti (1755-1824). Many of these reunions took place in the daytime - or, in the language of the time, in the 'morning' - and were held in private, the prince being 'too great an amateur to suffer the buz [sic] of conversation to interrupt the harmony of his concerts'. Even his evening concerts, which were 'on a more extended scale', maintained the air of chamber entertainments. In addition, Salomon was a regular participant at the Prince of Wales's musical entertainments at Carlton House (the prince's town residence), and led quartets on many such occasions from the mid-1780s.

14 Several other members of the royal family had received musical training, among them Ernest, Duke of Cumberland (1771-1851; the prince's brother), Princess Augusta (1768-1840; his sister) and William, Duke of Gloucester (1776-1834; his brother-in-law).

15 Papendiek, Court and Private Life, i, 65; Lady Llanover, ed., The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany... (London: Richard Bentley, 1862), ii, 378-9, and F. McKno Bladon, ed., The Diaries of Colonel the Hon. Robert Fulke Greville... (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1930), 26, 30.

16 See Papendiek, Court and Private Life, i, 133, 234.

17 Morning Herald (5 May 1786). It is likely that only a few invited listeners attended these reunions; see W. T. Parke, Musical Memoirs, comprising an Account of the General State of Music in England from the First Commemoration of Handel in 1784, to the Year 1830 (London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1830), ii, 320.

18 Parke, Musical Memoirs, ii, 320.

19 Papendiek, Court and Private Life, i, 234; ii, 178-9; see also 'Memoir of Johann Peter Salomon', The Harmonicon, viii (1830), 45-7, esp.47.
Evidence also suggests that Christopher Schram [Schramb, Shram] (fl London, 1788-97) and one or more of his brothers were active as chamber musicians to the royal establishment in the 1790s, performing works by Boccherini and Pleyel.20

Much of the music performed at quartet-parties in the late 18th century was by contemporary composers (many of whom were foreigners), and was galant in style and idiom.21 At this period the term ‘quartet’ did not automatically denote ‘string quartet’; rather, it referred to a composition for four instruments, and thus embraced, for instance, works for keyboard and strings, such as Venanzio Rauzzini’s six quartets op.6 (published London, c1778), or works for one woodwind instrument (flute or oboe) and strings, such as J. C. Bach’s op.8 set of quartets (London, 1772). Chamber music with a keyboard part (which would have often been executed on a square piano) was especially popular among amateur players, and English publishers frequently supplied figures to the bass parts of quartets where no independent part existed for keyboard; indeed, the keyboard player stabilized many an amateur ensemble.22

Among the many professional musicians who performed at the private chamber-music concerts at court in the 1770s and 80s were Wilhelm Cramer (violin), John Crosdill (cello), Johann Christian Fischer (oboe; 1733-1800), Carl Friedrich Abel (viola


22 The role of the keyboard in string trios and quartets is discussed in detail in Sadie, ‘Music in the Home II’, 332-5.
da gamba; 1723-87) and Johann Christian Bach (keyboard; 1735-82); all except Crosdill were composers of repute and they may well have organized the performance of their own chamber works on these occasions. String quartets proper, including those in the Viennese tradition, were performed as much in the concert hall as in the parlour; indeed, the many chamber works composed and published in the 1780s and early 90s included a number of virtuosic works (for example, quartets by Boccherini, and Haydn's opp.71 and 74) which would clearly have been beyond the technical capabilities of most amateur players.

Comments published in The Britannia in 1844, and much quoted thereafter, paint a rosy picture of chamber music in the homes of the aristocracy in the late 18th century:

Despite of the advance of art, chamber music in the days of George III. [reigned 1760-1820], was more in vogue than at present [1844]. The patriarch Dragonetti had his two-guinea subscription concerts at the houses of the nobility. Salomon, and the leading men of his time, were nightly engaged in similar entertainments; and where there is now no territory sacred to the promulgation of this species of music in the mansions of our modern wealthy amateurs, save Mr. Alsager [founder of the Beethoven Quartet Society], there were at least a dozen at the period alluded to. The young princes were most of them amateur performers, and naturally sought for musical companionship amongst the musical nobility.

It is difficult to determine the exact period being discussed by the writer, mainly because the remarks were published in the middle of the 19th century and came from the pen of Papendiek, Court and Private Life, i, 65, and Bladon, The Diaries of Colonel the Hon. Robert Fulke Greville, 26, 30.

See McVeigh, Concert Life, 105. For a detailed discussion of chamber music in the 18th-century public concert see Chapter III, pp.85-92 below.

The Britannia, v, no.298 (28 Dec 1844), 823. This passage was subsequently reprinted in the Record of the Musical Union (1845), no.3, p.13, and (1857), no.4, suppl., p.xv [the author is here identified as C. L. Gruneisen], and has been quoted in McVeigh, Concert Life, 46, and Deborah Adams Rohr, A Profession of Artisans: the Careers and Social Status of British Musicians, 1750-1850 (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1983), 249.

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Charles Lewis Gruneisen (1806-79), who must have been relying on hearsay. Clearly, the passage relates to a period no earlier than 1780: Salomon was in London only from about 1781, and the double-bass virtuoso Domenico Dragonetti did not arrive until 1794. The period could extend at least to 1811, the year the Prince of Wales took over as regent (George III lived on until 1820); but the reference to the musical ‘young princes’ (most of whom would have been in their 20s or 30s during the 1790s) suggests the years around the turn of the century - say, c1794 to c1805 - a supposition that is consistent not only with remarks published in 1835 in connection with chamber music at court that ‘some forty years since [i.e. c1795] quartet parties were very much in fashion’, but also with evidence relating to music in royal circles quoted above.

The performance of chamber music in aristocratic homes at this period may, as Simon McVeigh suggests, be linked to the concomitant increase in public concerts in the late 18th century: an aristocracy threatened by the broadening of the social base of public concerts accordingly retreated into its own world of private concert-giving. In addition, the fact that chamber music was seriously cultivated at court may have encouraged many members of the nobility to emulate royal habits in their own homes. And although public concert life contracted after the outbreak of the Napoleonic Wars in 1793, this may arguably have fuelled the desire among the aristocracy to maintain or even expand opportunities for private music-making - opportunities to which many musicians, including Salomon and Dragonetti, appear to have been quick to respond.

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26 Morning Post (9 Nov 1835).

27 McVeigh, Concert Life, 7, 47.
Detailed investigation into patterns of domestic music-making in 19th-century London has been hampered by a lack of documentary evidence. Gruneisen's comments in *The Britannia* (1844) suggest a tailing-off of domestic chamber-music activity (especially quartet-parties) during the first four decades of the 19th century. Although this viewpoint has been taken up by modern commentators, many of whom see the piano as the most potent symbol of 19th-century domestic music-making, and chart a decrease in the number of anecdotal references to chamber-music parties as the century progresses, it should not go unchallenged. For a start, assumptions about the prevalence and function of pianos in the home in the 19th century demand qualification, since pianos became affordable by the masses - and popular on a large scale - only towards the end of the century. Even in 1851 the instrument was still considered a luxury item; square pianos by such makers as Broadwood or Stodart then cost between 60 and 70 guineas. In any case, the piano largely symbolized solo music-making, which is itself contrary to the concept of chamber music as a musical conversation among friends. (The role of the piano in ensemble pieces such as piano trios or even piano duets is, of course, a completely different matter.) Secondly, as suggested earlier, although there is a clear lack of documentation about domestic music-making in memoirs, letters and so on at this period, this alone does not necessarily indicate a decline in activity, for there may have been any number of good reasons why domestic music-making went unreported. It

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should be obvious that much of the ensuing argument of necessity embodies a good deal of conjecture; but I believe it is wrong to suppose that private quartet-parties ceased altogether after 1800. Rather, as I shall show, they continued to flourish among certain groups of amateur and professional musicians.

(i) The perceived decline in chamber-music-making

Much of the evidence for the decline in chamber-music parties in the early 19th century - given the almost total lack of other documentary accounts - relies heavily on Gruneisen's account in The Britannia. It is important to note, however, that Gruneisen's comments almost certainly relate to one specific manifestation of chamber-music-making: that is, the performance of chamber music by leading professional musicians in the houses of wealthy, often aristocratic amateurs, which of necessity must have involved some element of conscious organization. At some of these performances, competent wealthy amateurs may have been members of the performing group. Gruneisen is probably not referring to the informal, private renditions of chamber music by amateurs for their own amusement, for which there is little evidence to suggest a decline.

Surviving documentary reports indicate that many aristocrats continued to employ professional musicians to entertain them at informal private concerts in the early 19th century, but that more often than not the emphasis was on technical display, both vocal and instrumental, and that serious chamber music was rarely performed (some exceptions are noted below, p.81). Favourite operatic arias, often sung by the stars of the Italian opera, had in fact been the staple fare of a large number of private concerts in aristocratic homes during the late 18th century, and such a practice thus represented continuity rather than change: it was a tradition that was simply maintained during the first half of the 19th
century. 3° Private Sunday entertainments given at the home of Lady Flint (dates unknown) in Birdcage Walk in about 1815, which employed the services of a small group of professional musicians including Viotti, Lindley and Dragonetti, were intimate and serious in character, and thus perhaps something of an exception; even so, according to the anecdotal recollections of Captain R. H. Gronow (1794-1865), the instrumental music was spoilt by:

... the annoying conduct of those who had no taste for music, who disturbed the enjoyment of some of the most beautiful pieces by the rattling of their cups and saucers, and the tone in which their conversation was carried on.31

Furthermore, although the American scholar Deborah Rohr has demonstrated that there was a resurgence of private concert-giving in aristocratic circles in the 1820s, these events were on a grand, opulent scale, with operatic arias and orchestral numbers performed before large audiences by professional, often virtuoso, musicians.32 Chamber music - with its serious overtones - normally played no part.33

In addition to hosting or attending private concerts given by leading professional musicians, wealthy amateurs also had the chance to participate in domestic music-making, often in groups that were reinforced by professional players. A good example of this practice is the performance of operatic excerpts on a chamber scale, which came swiftly into vogue in the 1820s, largely through the efforts of the young violinist John Ella, who began organizing a number of musical entertainments in the houses of the aristocracy.

32 When hiring musicians for private concerts, aristocrats often favoured foreigners; see Rohr, A Profession of Artisans, 94-9.
33 An important exception is discussed in Chapter III, pp.102-3 below.
Ella, the son of a confectioner, was born in 1802 in Leicester, where his musical talents were almost certainly nurtured by William Gardiner (1770-1853), the stocking manufacturer, amateur musician and writer on music. Although Ella was apprenticed to his father in 1817, two years later he arrived in London and took violin lessons with François Fémy (b 1790; d after 1835), probably on the recommendation of Gardiner, who had a number of French connections. Ella’s musical career developed quickly and he was engaged as a rank-and-file violinist at the Philharmonic Society in 1822, the same year he first played in the orchestra at the King’s Theatre. In 1823 Lord Saltoun, an amateur musician and patron of many London glee clubs, engaged Ella to give piano lessons to his nieces; before long, Ella was arranging piano-duet accompaniments (four hands, one piano) to opera arias for these pupils. Through Saltoun, Ella gained access to aristocratic musical circles, where his prowess as an opera arranger quickly bore fruit (his experience in the Opera orchestra undoubtedly stood him in good stead in this respect). From 1826 until 1846 the Società Lirica, a small orchestra of well-to-do amateurs judiciously supplemented by a few professionals (including Dragonetti, Lindley, the violinist Weichsell, and Nicholson), met regularly under Ella’s direction for the study and performance of operatic excerpts. The orchestra normally performed overtures and instrumental items before dinner; after the meal, operatic excerpts (including solo items) were sung by a small number of vocalists, often students of the Royal Academy of Music.

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35 Ella’s engagement is recorded in the minutes of the directors’ meetings in London, British Library, MS Loan 48.2/1, 21 Feb 1822.

36 *Record of the Musical Union* (1870), no.3, suppl., p.i.
or singers from the Opera, to the accompaniment of a chamber band. The earliest meetings took place at Lord Saltoun's residence in Albemarle Street, and the society was affectionately termed the ‘Saltoun Club’. Saltoun financed the enterprise, while Ella engaged the professional performers and prepared the musical parts. According to Ella, he had ‘carte blanche to translate, and adapt for a chamber band (Ottetto) and chorus, selections from the best German, English, French, and Italian operas’; the meetings were ‘among the pleasantest musical entertainments in London’. William Gardiner, who attended a meeting during a visit to London in the 1830s, was full of admiration for the enterprise:

At Lord Saltoun's I heard parts of the new operas cleverly arranged for his lordship's parties by Mr. Ella. Lady Conyngham was at the piano-forte, Captain Montague, violoncello; the Duke of Leinster, double bass; Mr. Ella, violin; and Lord Saltoun, the guitar. This is an agreeable way of becoming acquainted with the elaborate productions performed in the Opera House, especially to these noblemen who support the theatre. It is like reading the play before you go and see it; you enter more into the minutiae of the composition, which is apt to escape you in the representation.

Ella's experience as an arranger of operas for small ensemble served him well in other enterprises at this period. In a series of private concerts organized for Sir George

37 Record of the Musical Union (1870), no.3, suppl., p.i-ii [including a list of the orchestral players].

38 John Ella, Musical Sketches, Abroad, and at Home (London: Ridgway, 1869), 37.

39 Although J. A. Fuller Maitland, ‘Ella, John’, Dictionary of National Biography, ed. Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1885-1901), vi, 659-60, depicted the Saltoun Club of Instrumentalists and the Società Lirica as separate organizations, contemporary evidence strongly suggests that there was only one society, and that the names were used interchangeably.

40 Record of the Musical Union (1854), no.1, p.4.

Warrender (1782-1849) in 1830, for example, the music consisted almost exclusively of excerpts from Italian operas performed by professional singers and a ‘petit orchestre’ of professionals, directed by Ella.42

If documentary evidence alone is considered, the making of instrumental chamber music in private aristocratic circles (whether in formal concerts or informal parties) emerges as a relatively rarefied pursuit during the first 35 years of the 19th century. Certainly, there are few descriptions of chamber-music réunions or private concerts of serious chamber music among the nobility at this period.43 Perhaps the fact that by 1818 the Prince Regent had ceased to play the cello and, presumably, to participate in his much-loved private chamber concerts on account of an injury to his right arm, led many to stop emulating the royal practice.44 However, against this scenario must be set the incontrovertible fact that by the 1830s and 40s a number of aristocrats had established reputations as skilled amateur chamber musicians and, one may suppose, had been participating in ‘serious’ chamber music for some time. The Duke of Cambridge, an enthusiastic amateur musician (he was an avid supporter of the chamber concerts of the 1830s, and in the 1840s was an important force behind the development and success of

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42 Ella Collection, MS 81, items 10a, 10b, 11a, 11c, 12a, 12c [concert programmes] and 11b [letter from Warrender to Ella]. Ella had organized a series of concerts for Warrender the previous year, but no programmes survive; see Ella Collection, Diary for 1829 [entries for 13 April, 23 April, 3 May, 18 May]. In this and subsequent footnotes, items in the Ella Collection are identified in accordance with a checklist I prepared in 1990-91.

43 G. G. Ferrari’s observations of the quartet-playing activities of Sir William Hamilton (1730-1803), in Giacomo Gotifredo Ferrari, Anedotti piacevoli e interessanti (London: the author, 1830), ii, 129-30, probably date from the turn of the century, if not earlier. Hamilton, a viola player, enjoyed participating in Giardini’s quartets in particular.

44 ‘Royal Patronage of Music’, Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review, i (1818), 154-9, esp.158.

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the Musical Union), owned a number of Stradivarius instruments as well as a large collection of chamber music, mostly in parts, and there can be little doubt that he was involved in private musical gatherings for much of his life. The German musicians Adolf Ganz (violin; 1796-1870) and his brother Moritz (cello; 1806-68), for example, apparently played quartets privately with the duke when he visited Wiesbaden. After the duke’s death in 1850 his music library was sold by the auctioneers Puttick and Simpson. The sale catalogue paints a vivid picture of the duke’s enthusiasm for the ‘Classics’: the auction lots contained the parts for dozens of string quartets, quintets, piano trios, accompanied sonatas, violin duets and so on, by composers ranging from Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven to Rodolphe Kreutzer, Pierre Baillot, J. B. Vanhal and J. C. Bach. The Earl of Falmouth (1811-52), a talented amateur violinist (and later a supporter of the Musical Union), also had a remarkable library of music and a collection of old instruments which were auctioned by Puttick and Simpson in the early 1850s; he too appears to have been an experienced chamber musician.

Ultimately, sheer lack of evidence makes it impossible to tell whether amateur quartet-parties occurred less frequently in the homes of the aristocracy in the early 19th century than they had in the late 18th century, but they surely did not cease entirely. Where they did occur, most chamber-music gatherings were probably private, amateur


47 Puttick and Simpson sale catalogue (28-9 Nov 1850).

48 King, Some British Collectors, 48, 136. See also the Puttick and Simpson sale catalogue (26-8 May 1853).
affairs with little or no reliance on the musical support of 'top' professional players. This situation is in sharp contrast to Gruneisen's description of chamber-music parties in the 1790s, which seem to have been conceived primarily as informal private concerts, involving a number of professional - often foreign - musicians, and which seem to have dwindled in the early 19th century. Herein may lie one of the reasons for the paucity of documentary accounts of chamber-music-making in the first half of the 19th century: whereas the musical collaboration of professional instrumentalists, especially talented and famous foreign players, and aristocratic amateurs may have given many members of the 'chattering classes' (as well as the musicians themselves) good cause to record such events in memoirs and letters, the activities of amateur players alone almost certainly would not.

(ii) The domestic repertory

Many modern commentators consider that the increasing technical difficulties of the early 19th-century chamber repertory prevented its performance by amateurs. Even in the late 18th century many string quartets had been deemed too difficult for amateur performers, who preferred accompanied keyboard sonatas for two, three and even four performers; indeed, keyboard sonatas (designated for either piano or harpsichord) with accompaniments, many of which were optional, maintained their popularity in the early 19th century. Furthermore, the incipient popularity of the piano ushered in a new repertory for amateurs in which arrangements of orchestral or operatic works (many as piano duets), accompanied songs, and easy solo pieces often based on popular tunes
played an important part. 49

The duet genre is worth singling out here, since it enjoyed a particular vogue and
may well have satisfied both the social and technical needs of many aspiring amateur
chamber musicians: duets for single-melody instruments (most frequently for two violins,
two flutes or two cellos) were produced in significant quantities, as were duets for four
hands on one piano. Much of the duet repertory was technically easy and musically
trivial. The rigid association of instruments and sexes was still in evidence, and in the
home the piano was the province of the female. 50 According to convention the violin,
viola, cello and flute were played by gentlemen amateurs; the piano, harp and guitar by
ladies. 51 Violin, cello and flute duets would have been played by men, piano duets
by women. Gender boundaries were occasionally broken: Lord Saltoun, so William
Gardiner tells us, played the guitar, 52 and it is recorded that George Grote (1794-1871),
the banker, Greek historian and amateur cellist who lived in the City, frequently played
duets for two cellos with his wife. 53

It would be shortsighted, however, to consider that domestic performances of the
more ‘serious’ chamber genres in the early 19th century were non-existent. While it is

49 For a comprehensive discussion of the repertory for amateur pianists see Dorothy
Jean DeVal, ‘Gradus ad Parnassum’: the Pianoforte in London, 1770-1820 (PhD diss.,

50 Few professional pianists were women; for an interesting discussion see DeVal,
‘Gradus ad Parnassum’, 140-44.


52 Gardiner, Music and Friends, ii, 692.

53 Mrs Grote, The Personal Life of George Grote, compiled from Family
Documents, Private Memoranda, and Original Letters to and from Various Friends
(London: John Murray, 2/1873), 41.
clear that the increased technical and ensemble demands of 'modern' quartets and quintets must have alienated some amateur musicians, others, such as the Duke of Cambridge, maintained their enthusiasm. Indeed there are good arguments to suggest that by the 1830s a number of amateur musicians were attempting to play much of the Viennese chamber repertory.\textsuperscript{54}

A better-focussed picture of the domestic demand for chamber music and the relative popularity of individual genres in the early 19th century may be obtained from extant music publishers’ catalogues in the British Library, London, and the Bodleian Library, Oxford. Although few catalogues survive and detailed comparisons or statistical analyses are of necessity crude, the lists of instrumental works issued by Preston (1803, c1817),\textsuperscript{55} Lavenu and Mitchell (1806),\textsuperscript{56} Broderip and Wilkinson (sold by Preston, c1811),\textsuperscript{57} Monzani and Hill (1820),\textsuperscript{58} Thomas Boosey (two catalogues, c1820)\textsuperscript{59} and

\textsuperscript{54} For further discussion see pp.70-73 below.

\textsuperscript{55} Additional Catalogue of Musical Publications, printed and sold by Preston, Manufacturer of Musical Instruments, Music Printer and Publisher, at his Wholesale Warehouses. No.97, Strand, and Exeter Change, London (1803); Select Musical Publications, by the Principal Classic Authors, printed and sold by Preston, Music Publisher, and Manufacturer of Musical Instruments (c1817).

\textsuperscript{56} New Music, printed and published by Lavenu and Mitchell. Music-sellers to His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, at their New Circulating Library. No.26, New Bond-Street, London (1806).

\textsuperscript{57} Musical Publications selected from the Catalogue published by Broderip and Wilkinson, lately purchased, and now printed and sold by Preston, Manufacturer of Musical Instruments, Music Printer and Publisher, at his Wholesale Warehouse. No.97, Strand, and Exeter Change, London (c1811).


\textsuperscript{59} New and Classical Music, by the most admired foreign Composers, just published by T. Boosey and Co., 28, Holles Street, Oxford-Street and Music, printed in Germany, for T. Boosey and Co. (c1820); Selection of admired Compositions contained in T.
Goulding et al (1820, 1828)\textsuperscript{60} give some indication of the profile of the publishing of chamber music in the first three decades of the century.

Table 1 attempts to present the amount of chamber music produced by each of these publishers as a proportion of the total number of instrumental works in each of the catalogues examined (vocal music is excluded from the analysis), and to give an idea of the amount of chamber music that could be commercially obtained in the early 19th century. It cannot be overemphasized, however, that caution is essential when interpreting the information in this table, since the data inevitably embodies distortion. For example, figures reflect the number of publications advertised for sale, not the number of individual works; this means that collections or sets of works (e.g. works published as one opus) are counted as one item. Much more important, though, is the fact that publishers do not appear normally to have issued complete catalogues of all the works they had in print at any one time, preferring to concentrate their publicity on their latest products, or on specific repertories. Hence it is ultimately impossible to compare like with like, and the reader should avoid imputing undue significance to the relative amounts of chamber or piano music listed for each publisher. Monzani and Hill’s catalogue of 1820, for instance, is an interesting example of a catalogue being given over to a particular portion of stock (string music); but it should not be assumed from the table that the firm did not publish the piano music and tutor books which reveal themselves as the mainstay of the other publishers’ catalogues. It is also worth pointing out that the

Boosey & Co.’s General Catalogue of foreign Music & Supplement (c1820).

\textsuperscript{60} Catalogue of Instrumental Music, published by Goulding, D’Almaine, Potter and Co., Musical Instrument Manufacturers and Music Sellers at their Wholesale and Retail Warehouse, No.20, Soho Square... (1820); Appendix to the General Catalogue of Music, Vocal and Instrumental, by the most eminent Masters, English, Italian and French (1828).
### TABLE 1: Items of Instrumental Music in English Music Publishers' Catalogues, 1803-28

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Catalogue</th>
<th>Tutors</th>
<th>Piano solo</th>
<th>Piano duet</th>
<th>Instl chamber</th>
<th>Instl Other 61</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preston 1803</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>70 62</td>
<td>409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lavenu and Mitchell 1806</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>539</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broderip and Wilkinson 1811</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>541</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preston c1817</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>43 63</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9 64</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boosey (1) c1820</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boosey (2) c1820</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goulding 1820</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>1283</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>2136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monzani and Hill 1820</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goulding 1828</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>351</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

61 Primarily instrumental solos (sometimes with bass or continuo accompaniment), orchestral music and military music in parts, and concertos.

62 Includes 25 concertos and nine items of 'Scots music'.

63 Includes two works optionally for organ.

64 Includes one collection of Mozart's works, for both piano solo and piano ensemble.
table focusses only on publishers who sold instrumental music; there were, of course, a large number of other firms who dealt more specifically in the profitable repertory of vocal music: songs, ballads, glees etc.

Notwithstanding these caveats, it may be seen that piano music had the lion's share in most of the catalogues examined. Of those that include piano music, works for solo piano generally take up about 60% - sometimes more - of the catalogue (Lavenu and Mitchell, 1806; Broderip and Wilkinson, 1811; Preston, 1817; Goulding, 1820, 1828). Boosey's catalogues, which are dominated by ensemble chamber music over solo piano works, are an interesting exception. Piano duet music, by comparison, has a relatively slender profile, normally claiming between 5% and 10% of catalogue space in those lists that include the genre. Even so, when music for piano solo and piano duet is added together, the amount of space devoted to piano music in many catalogues creeps closer to 70%.

As for instrumental chamber music, the available evidence suggests that this repertory was published in significant quantities by specialist firms only: in addition to Monzani and Hill, there were Preston and Boosey. Yet the primary importance of publishers' catalogues to the current discussion resides in the detailed information about the chamber repertory that they contain. In the catalogues from the first decade of the 19th century, many of the works I have designated as 'chamber music' are instrumental duets (two violins, two cellos, two flutes etc.) and piano pieces with *ad libitum* accompaniments. String quartets and other forms of 'serious' chamber music occupy only a small portion of catalogue space, suggesting that these were publications for the connoisseur and were stocked in small quantities. Many had been in print for several years. The quartets advertised by Preston in 1803 were a mixture of styles and
instrumental combinations, many of which looked backwards to the 18th century; they included Abel’s op.8, J. C. Bach’s op.8, Antonín Kammel’s op.7 and J. G. C. Schetky’s op.6. In 1806 Lavenu and Mitchell boasted string quartets by Paul Alday, Federigo Fiorillo and Mozart, along with flute quartets by P. G. Florio and C. E. Graf [Graeff].

The stock from Broderip and Wilkinson (c1811) had a more serious and modern profile, but even here vestiges of the 18th century remained: string quintets and quartets by Mozart, Beethoven (his op.18), Haydn and Pleyel, and violin duets by Spohr and Viotti sat alongside flute duets by François Devienne and violin duets by Luigi Borghi.

Preston’s small catalogue of c1817, though little concerned with ensemble music, contains four items of interest under the heading ‘Music for Small Concerts’. These were arrangements for quartet or quintet of symphonies by Haydn, as well as his Creation, and of overtures by Pleyel and Borghi.

Threads of the 18th-century repertory survive in Monzani and Hill’s catalogue (1820) in such works as Ignazio Raimondi’s trios, and Pleyel’s duos, although here too there are examples of more modern pieces: Krommer’s quartets op.26 and Radicati’s quintet op.22. Much of Monzani and Hill’s chamber music was published with extra parts for alternative instruments. There are also copious arrangements: Beethoven’s symphonies and Mozart’s overtures for small ensemble (e.g. two violins, flute, two violas, cello and bass), and songs and overtures for piano and accompanying instrument (violin or cello).

In Boosey’s catalogues (c1820) the emphasis is clearly on works in modern genres and styles. String quartets and quintets by Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven are supplemented by works by Fesca, Kreutzer, Krommer, Mayseder, Onslow, Rode, A. J. Romberg, B. H. Romberg, Spohr and others. The catalogues include piano trios by
Beethoven and Hummel, string trios by Beethoven, Kreutzer and Viotti, and accompanied sonatas (piano and violin; piano and cello; piano and flute) by Beethoven, Mayseder, Onslow and Ries; there are also a number of operas by Cimarosa, Mozart and Rossini in arrangements for quartet. Even the lists of ubiquitous instrumental duets have a less 18th-century flavour; duets by such composers as Kreutzer, Krommer, Mozart, the Rombergs and Spohr are typical.

In Goulding's catalogues chamber music is accorded a minor position; in the 1820 list there are violin, cello and flute duets, as well as trios (normally for two melody instruments and bass), a few string quartets, namely Kozeluch's opp.32 and 33, some 'easy' quartets for flute, two violins and bass by Schwindl, and items from Mozart's keyboard works arranged for string quartet. The 1828 catalogue (itself an appendix to the General Catalogue) lists only harp duets and flute duets.

Certain patterns emerge from this information. First of all, and as one would expect, as the 19th century proceeds, fewer and fewer items of 'old', galant-style chamber music are listed in publishers' catalogues; and by about 1820 publishers are mainly offering trios, quartets, quintets etc. in a more modern vein. Secondly, accompanying this shift to modern 'serious' chamber compositions is the robust (and presumably lucrative) repertory of instrumental duets, which remains an important pillar of most catalogues. By 1820 many of the duets advertised for sale are in a more 'serious' style (e.g. violin duets by Hoffmeister, Mozart and Pleyel). Increasingly, publishers vaunt arrangements of orchestral, operatic and even keyboard works for quartet or chamber ensemble - a practice which may well indicate a growing commercial demand for music for chamber forces.

It has already been suggested that a typical publishers' stock of this period centred
on songs and piano pieces, backed up, Donald Krummel observes, by a little chamber and church music, and that chamber music appears to have been published or imported in sizeable amounts by specialist firms only. In fact, although these specialist publishers seem to have issued a wide range of chamber music, ‘serious’ compositions were probably printed and sold in slender numbers. The market for chamber music was a small one, since the sheer cost of buying parts meant that only the upper and wealthier middle classes could afford to buy items on a regular basis. In one of Boosey’s 1820 catalogues, for example, the price of parts for single quartets and quintets ranged from 5s to 10s, while a set of parts for Beethoven’s six quartets op.18 cost £1 2s 6d, and Pleyel’s ‘Collection Complète’ of Haydn’s quartets cost £10. On the face of it this would suggest that relatively few sets of chamber music were to be found in English homes, and that domestic chamber-music-making was thin on the ground. But the role of the music circulating library in this equation remains to be fully investigated. Many English instrumental-music publishers, for example Lavenu and Mitchell, are known to have operated circulating libraries, and although virtually no contemporary library catalogues survive, evidence strongly suggests that the circulating library played a vital role in the dissemination of published music. Clearly, opportunities for the domestic

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67 *Selection of admired Compositions (c1820).*

68 Detailed information about British circulating libraries is found in Alec Hyatt King, ‘Music Circulating Libraries in Britain’, *Musical Times*, cxix (1978), 134-8; the role of lending libraries in early 19th-century musical life is the subject of a general discussion in Lenneberg, ‘Early Circulating Libraries’.

69
performance of chamber music would have increased greatly with the resources of circulating libraries; and there is good reason to believe that such libraries carried the parts to several pieces of chamber music. 69

The foregoing evidence suggests that there was a small but sizeable demand for instrumental chamber music among English players in the 1820s and 30s, and that the amateur musician had reasonable access to a wide selection of works. It certainly does not lead to the conclusion that chamber-music parties at this period were swamped by the vogue for pianos. And while there is no doubt that the technical demands of passages in much of the repertory probably exceeded the abilities of most amateur exponents, it does not necessarily follow that amateurs did not attempt to play the music, however badly; furthermore, it is quite possible that, faced with the difficulties of quick outer movements, many amateurs elected to play only the technically simpler slow movements and minuets.

(iii) Standards of music-making among amateurs

Conventional wisdom suggests that in the early 19th century most amateur musicians - many of whom would have been self-taught - were sadly lacking in technical and musical expertise. Several literary sources from the 1830s reinforce the notion that amateur quartet-playing was not dead, but stress that in many quarters its health was a cause for concern. The Morning Chronicle, in response to the first of the Concerti da Camera (1835), lamented that:

69 In one rare extant catalogue (albeit for a late 18th-century Scottish library) a good choice of chamber music is listed; see William R. McDonald, ‘Circulating Libraries in the North-east of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century’, The Bibliothek, v (1967-70), 119-37, esp.127-9.
Amateurs who are in the habit of playing quartets, quintets, and other concerted pieces, with each other, are apt to be too easily satisfied with imperfect and slovenly performance, and to play without apprehending the style, expression, and even time of the music. It is by hearing it played by able professors that they have a standard set before them, an attempt to arrive at which is the only means of improving themselves in delicacy and finish...\textsuperscript{70}

This accords with comments made by George Dubourg (1799-1882), in his survey of violin playing and violinists (first published in 1836), where he admonishes amateurs to perfect the art of good quartet playing, and endorses Spohr’s recommendation that ‘No opportunity ... of joining a good quartett-party, ought to be lost’.\textsuperscript{71} Apparently, before the advent of chamber-music concerts in London (1835), ‘The occasions afforded for such mode of improvement were for a long while ... in our English metropolis, as rare as they might have been advantageous’.\textsuperscript{72} Dubourg also satirized inept amateur quartet playing at the expense of the French, by creating a chaotic scenario in which the cellist, M. Pattier, is playing a Mozart quartet in B flat while the upper strings are attempting a Pleyel quartet in D.\textsuperscript{73} When Dubourg added that ‘For the credit of English Amateurs, it is to be hoped that so elaborate a display of incompetence - so complete a fiasco - as is presented in the foregoing sketch, has very rarely its parallel among ourselves’,\textsuperscript{74} he was almost certainly indulging in wishful, nationalistic thinking (French violinists were generally far more skilled than English ones), rather than painting a true picture of the home situation.

\textsuperscript{70} \textit{Morning Chronicle} (9 Nov 1835).


\textsuperscript{72} Dubourg, \textit{The Violin}, 336.

\textsuperscript{73} Dubourg, \textit{The Violin}, 319-23.

\textsuperscript{74} Dubourg, \textit{The Violin}, 323.
Elsewhere, judgments of English amateurs were equally harsh. In the columns of the newly founded *Musical World* of 1836, the tendencies of amateurs to ‘imitate the showy and more external quality of professional playing, called *execution*’ and to exhibit characteristics of musical vanity were severely criticised. To the many amateurs who commonly refused to play second violin or viola parts, preferring the extrovert nature of the first violin, advice was simple: listen to the sensitive viola-playing of those who perform in the new chamber-music concerts and learn to appreciate that ‘refined taste and expression’ are more valuable qualities than execution for its own sake. Likewise Edward Holmes (1797-1859), in an essay on Beethoven in the *Foreign Quarterly Review* of 1831, claimed that the string quartet and quintet were ‘a species of chamber music now greatly cultivated in England’, and that during the London musical season Mozart and Beethoven’s quartets and quintets:

... form a principal part of the entertainment of amateurs, yet they are not frequently understood, the difficulties of their execution being more apt to provoke the vanity of the performers, than the raciness of the compositions to excite their interest.

In other words the technical difficulty of the music was, ironically, more of an incentive than a deterrent to some amateur musicians. Of course, not all were unskilled or insensitive players: the Duke of Cambridge and the Earl of Falmouth, referred to above, were regarded in their day as talented musicians; coming from a highly monied and leisured class, they would have benefitted from the instruction of the best teachers in London, and from time to practise and improve their technique and musicianship. In

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Ibid.

*Foreign Quarterly Review*, viii (1831), 439-61, esp.453-4. The reference to Beethoven’s quartets is almost certainly to the op.18 set only.
addition, many skilled amateur musicians from the middle classes often had special connections with the musical profession and/or came from musical families.

(iv) Domestic music and the professional musician

The domestic musical activities of Fanny Horsley (1815-49) and her sister Sophy (1819-94), which are recorded in letters written between 1833 and 1836, provide evidence of contact between middle-class amateurs and professional musicians. Fanny and Sophy were daughters of the composer William Horsley (1774-1858) and Elizabeth Calcott (1793-1875), herself the daughter of the composer J. W. Calcott. The family home in High Row, Kensington Gravel Pits, was alive with musical visitors (among them Mendelssohn and Moscheles) and witnessed regular music-making. Both young women played the piano. The violinist Joseph [?John] Mountain (dates unknown), leader of the Covent Garden orchestra, often came to play sonatas with Mrs Horsley or with Sophy; in 1834 the latter wrote to her aunt, Lucy Calcott, as follows:

He [Mr Mountain] came again on Friday; it is most delightful. I have been playing such beautiful sonatas of Beethoven with him, and one of Felix Mendelssohn's which Papa brought me on Tuesday, and which I played on Friday with Mr M. It is quite an early composition, but very beautiful, dedicated to his friend Edward Ritz.

Quartet-parties, in which the young women and their friends participated, were frequently held at the Horsley home; on many occasions leading London musicians were present, both as listeners and performers. Sophy recounted one particularly lengthy réunion, in November 1834:

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79 Gotch, Mendelssohn, 139. The work in question was the op.4 violin sonata.
The day on Friday was truly ridiculous; the music began at two. Mama played a Sonata of Mozart with Mr. Mountain, then Charles [Horsley] and Mama played a beautiful symphony of Haydn’s in C with Quartett accompaniment, and then I played Mendelssohn’s [piano] Quartett\(^8\) which I sincerely hope you will hear some day or other - it is so splendidly beautiful and lovely. The party at Dinner consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Mountain, Mr. Fleischer, Mr. Bannister (the violin cello player) [ , ] Mr. Klingemann, Harriet Neill and ourselves. We dined at four as we wished it to be an early party. ... In the evening Matilda, the Buckleys, Mary, Helen, and Uncle William and Dr. Rosen came. Harriet played after tea a quartett of Mozart’s. I am quite glad Mr. K. should have heard her at last, for such a good judge as he is he must have been pleased. Mr. M. was quite delighted, and has asked her to play a Sonata of Beethoven’s with him. ... I then played Mendelssohn’s Concerto, and we afterwards sung a dirge of Papa’s for five voices, which he has been writing for the British Concerts [i.e. the Society for British Musicians], and we ended by playing the Quartett of Mendelssohn again. Was it not very kind of the worthy Trio to go through it again? It went much better the second time.\(^8\)

Other chamber-music events recorded in the Horsley letters include a ‘quiet musical soirée’ at the home of Lucy Anderson (1797-1878) on 20 December 1834, at which Sophy again played a piano quartet by Mendelssohn, this time with Charles Guynemer (violin; 1770-1862), George Anderson (viola; 1793-1876) and Robert Lindley (cello); and a quartet-party at the Moscheles’s (23 February 1835).\(^8\) For the Horsley women the musical benefits of playing with distinguished musicians must have been great indeed.

Equally notable were the private parties held at the instigation of Thomas Massa Alsager (1779-1846), whose house in Queen Square was something of a Mecca for serious chamber-music-lovers and leading performers. Alsager was a financial writer for, and part proprietor of, The Times, with great skills as an amateur musician and an

\(^{80}\) Probably the piano quartet no.3 in B minor.

\(^{81}\) Gotch, Mendelssohn, 172-3.

\(^{82}\) Gotch, Mendelssohn, 183, 188.
extraordinary devotion to chamber music. Well-connected with literary circles, he numbered among his associates the Lambs, Leigh Hunt, Crabb Robinson and others. Among his musician-friends were William Ayrton and Mendelssohn, who first visited London in 1829. The latter paid many visits to Alsager’s house; a letter of 1829, from Alsager to Mendelssohn, indicates Alsager’s excitement at the prospect of meeting the composer:

Your great success & the great admiration you have attracted in our musical circles are a source of real pleasure to me - it proves that there is something like good taste & judgment among us. You will be expected impatiently on Wednesday.

Years later, in a letter to Karl [Carl] Klingemann (1798-1862), Alsager recalled Mendelssohn’s attendance at his Sunday quartet-parties:

He [Mendelssohn] will recollect I am sure having joined my Sunday morning parties, many years ago, & particularly one occasion when his Quintett in A [op.18] was performed for the first time I believe in England, from a copy he brought over with him from Germany.

When Abraham Mendelssohn (1776-1835) visited his son in London in 1833 he wrote home about a visit to Alsager’s:

From there [church] we went to a regular Sunday-quartet which takes place at a private gentleman’s [identified as Alsager], in the inmost recess of his house. We chanced upon a quartet by Onslow; two of Onslow’s quartets had been played already. They wanted to perform Felix’s octet, but I begged for the quintet

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85 Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS M. Deneke Mendelssohn, c.34, f.1; reproduced in Levy, ‘Thomas Massa Alsager’, 120.

[op.18], and they played it, and gave the octet over and above.87

Leading instrumentalists gathered regularly at Alsager’s parties; surviving letters (probably dating from the late 1820s or the 1830s) from Alsager to Domenico Dragonetti clearly illustrate the scope and popularity of the Queen Square meetings.

26 Queen Square
Bloomsbury
May 30

My dear Sir

I expect Mr. Pigott88 & Mr. Beale89 will spend the day with me on Sunday next & it will be a great gratification if you can favour me with your Company. We meet at 2 o clock to play quartetts & reserve the Piano forte music for after dinner.

I remain
My dear Sir
Very faithfully yours
T. M. Alsager

Mrs. Alsager & the little girls desire their best respects to you.90

26 Queen Square
Bloomsbury
Tuesday

My dear Sir

I intend having a small party on Sunday evening at 1/2 past 7 at


88 Possibly the musician George Pigott [Piggott] (dates unknown), whose piano arrangement of the second movement of Beethoven’s quartet op.130 was published in The Harmonicon, ix (1831), part 2, 206-9. A violinist named Pigott played in chamber concerts between 1835 and 1846; this may or may not have been the same person.

89 Possibly the pianist John Beale (b 1796; d after 1827), a pupil of J. B. Cramer (1771-1858).

which I hope to be favoured with your company. Mr. Willman\textsuperscript{91} & other friends have already promised & I propose playing the Nonetto of Spohr, Hummel's Septett & some other good music of the sort you like.

As Mr. Laporte\textsuperscript{92} & the influenza have made this a day of rest I hope the [?] notion of coming out on Sunday, in this busy season, will not be inconvenient or fatiguing to you.

I remain
My dear Sir
Very truly yours
T. M. Alsager

D. Dragonetti Esqr.\textsuperscript{93}

In spite of busy teaching, rehearsing and performing schedules, many professional musicians appear to have derived much pleasure from coming together in private to play chamber music. The musical rewards of participating in small-scale serious music written for solo players - as opposed to orchestral music - would have been a powerful incentive for the string-playing fraternity in particular. While the extent and nature of chamber music-making in professional circles has hitherto been shrouded in mystery, the scrapbooks and diaries of John Ella now throw a good deal of light on the matter.

As noted earlier, Ella's passion for chamber music probably had its roots in his acquaintance with William Gardiner in Leicester. Gardiner was an avid chamber musician, whose attendance at quartet-parties during visits to London is charted in his memoirs;\textsuperscript{94} through such occasions Ella may well have been introduced to the chamber music of Haydn, Mozart and even Beethoven. In his diaries from the early 1820s Ella

\textsuperscript{91} The clarinettist Thomas Willman.

\textsuperscript{92} Pierre François Laporte (1799-1841), manager of the King's Theatre, London, from 1828.

\textsuperscript{93} London, British Library, Add MS 17838, f.14; the word following [?] is unclear in the MS.

\textsuperscript{94} Gardiner, \textit{Music and Friends}, 690-95.
zealously noted his daily appointments; although many entries are in shorthand or in abbreviated form, a vivid picture of his musical life emerges from them.\textsuperscript{95} During the spring and summer months especially, a number of Ella’s engagements were quartet réunions (see Table 2). Many of the events took place at Ella’s lodgings; some - though not all - entries name Ella’s fellow-musicians. Table 3 lists the musicians named in his diary; William Watts (dates unknown) and Antonio James Oury (1800-83) were clearly favoured chamber-music companions (they were also among Ella’s closest friends at this period). On two occasions Ella noted that works by Onslow and Romberg were to be played, and there is at least one reference to Ella himself playing a double-bass part (in

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of réunions\textsuperscript{96}</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1823</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1824</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1825</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1826</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{95} The shorthand system used by Ella is an adapted form of Samuel Taylor’s \textit{An Essay intended to establish a Standard for an Universal System of Stenography or Shorthand Writing} (London: the author, 1786); for information on Taylor’s system see E. H. Butler, \textit{The Story of British Shorthand} (London: Sir Isaac Pitman and Sons, 1951), 70-73.

\textsuperscript{96} The number of réunions given in the table refers to quartet-parties that took place in London and is almost certainly a conservative figure, being based on references in the diaries which indicate beyond doubt that a chamber-music party had been arranged. In all likelihood the number of quartet-parties was much larger, since many dinner and other social engagements may well have included music-making, though were not noted by Ella as quartet-parties \textit{per se}.

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TABLE 3: John Ella's Chamber-music Colleagues, 1823-6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name (with no. of diary references)</th>
<th>Identification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anderson (2)</td>
<td>George Anderson (1793-1876): conductor of the Royal Private Band; treasurer of the Philharmonic Society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banister (3)</td>
<td>Henry Joshua Banister (1803-47): cellist; later involved in chamber-music concerts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bellen (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beniolli (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Binfield (4)</td>
<td>Thomas Binfield (d 1840): cellist; member of the Royal Society of Musicians. Many of his siblings were musical.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Binfield’s nephew (1)</td>
<td>Nephew of Thomas Binfield.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brooks (2)</td>
<td>Cellist (d 1835); member of the Opera and Philharmonic orchestras.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calcotts (2)</td>
<td>? probably a son of J. W. Calcott; and possibly the Mr Calcott who played in Dando’s chamber-music concert on 9 March 1836.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castelli (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elliot (3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gattie (3)</td>
<td>Henry Gattie (d 1853): violinist; later involved in chamber-music concerts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Griesbach (1)</td>
<td>? possibly G. A. Griesbach (dates unknown): violinist who later played in chamber-music concerts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>? possibly John Henry Griesbach (1798-1875): cellist and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Notes and Details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirkman (1)</td>
<td>Thomas Haydon (1787-1845): organist and composer; professor of piano at the Royal Academy of Music.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lindley (2)</td>
<td>Robert Lindley (1776-1855): cellist; later involved in chamber-music concerts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyon (1)</td>
<td>? possibly the Mr Lyon who played the viola in chamber-music concerts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moralt (3)</td>
<td>Johann Wilhelm Moralt (b 1774; d after 1842): German viola player active in London; later involved in chamber-music concerts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mori (3)</td>
<td>Nicholas Mori (1797-1839): violinist; later involved in chamber-music concerts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nadaud (1)</td>
<td>? possibly the Monsieur Nadaud who played the violin at the Musical Union concerts from 1845.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robinson (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seymour (1)</td>
<td>Charles Alexander Seymour (1810-75): violinist and viola player; friend of Ella.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spagnoletti (1)</td>
<td>Paolo Spagnoletti (1768-1834): Italian violinist; leader of many London orchestras.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomlinson (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
William Watts: violinist; secretary of the Philharmonic Society, 1815-47; later involved in the chamber-music concerts.

1825 he entered the Royal Academy of Music as a student of the double bass). A few entries suggest that he was part of a group of musicians that had been hired to play quartets with a wealthy patron such as General Upton at a private house, or that the chamber group included one or two amateurs (e.g. Rev. Vicary or Mr Broms). Most entries, however, suggest that the normal practice was for Ella to play with his fellow professional musicians. Some appointments give little information, stating for example 'quatuor - 7 o'clock'; it is likely, however, that most of Ella's quartet- and quintet-playing took place in private. This is consistent with the picture of Ella's musical life that emerges from his closely-kept journals of the late 1830s.

A further indication of Ella's profile as a chamber musician is found in a letter from Ignaz Moscheles (1794-1870) to Ella, in which Moscheles requests Ella's services; the letter probably dates from the mid-late 1820s:

Sir

I shall be happy if you will join us to-morrow evening about 8 o'clock to try Pixis Quintetto; we shall be quite entre nous and you will find an instrument here

Yours truly

I. Moscheles

The favor of your answer will oblige

Saturday

Many of Ella's chamber-music partners were his colleagues from the Opera and

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97 Probably the piano quintet.

98 Ella Collection, MS 81, item 3c.
Philharmonic orchestras, or fellow-students from the Royal Academy of Music. Together they constituted something of a network of chamber-music players, whose existence suggests a wider familiarity with the technique and repertory of chamber music among professional musicians than has hitherto been understood. In the light of this it is not surprising that several of them went on to participate in the new-style chamber concerts of the late 1830s.

(v) Summary

From the evidence above it seems reasonable to conclude that, in early 19th-century London, instrumental chamber music was played in certain homes by musicians of all abilities - professional as well as amateur, good as well as bad. Standards of music-making clearly varied greatly; and although many amateurs lacked the critical or technical apparatus to play much of the music to a reasonable standard, many appear to have carried on regardless. The power of chamber music to intoxicate the musician was an important factor, then as now. Amateur chamber musicians were found in middle-class circles as well as among the aristocracy; a small number had the opportunity to play with professional musicians, but generally speaking the private musical activities of amateur and professional groups remained separate. Opportunities for professional musicians to participate in private concert performances of chamber music were limited, because - unlike the situation in the late 18th century - chamber music appears to have held relatively little appeal for aristocrats hosting private concerts. In spite (or perhaps because) of this, many professional musicians delighted in playing much 'serious' chamber music for its own sake, in private.

Whether or not there was a real decline in domestic chamber-music activity in the

82
early 19th century is difficult to determine. Nevertheless, instrumental chamber music appears to have been more widely practised in the home in the early 1800s than has hitherto been thought. Certainly, in the decade and a half before the establishment of chamber music concerts (i.e. 1820-35), domestic ensemble music-making seems to have gathered momentum. There are more references to quartet playing in private sources from the 1820s and early 30s than from the first two decades of the century, and although this in itself is not necessarily proof of a developing trend, information from contemporary publishers’ catalogues coupled with circumstantial and other documentary evidence suggests that in London an increased amount of chamber music was being printed, disseminated and played. The stimulus for this apparently growing interest in chamber music - among professionals as well as amateurs - may be related in part to the occasional inclusion of modern chamber music in public concerts, and in particular in the programmes of the Philharmonic Society from 1813.

To what extent chamber music continued to be played for enjoyment in London homes once the new chamber concerts were established remains to be examined. Certainly, the repeated performance of most of the gems of the Viennese chamber repertory in concerts in the late 1830s and 40s may well have stimulated many string players - both professional and amateur - to explore its treasures, and pianists to seek groups with whom concertante works - either piano trios, piano quartets and so on, or accompanied sonatas - could be tried.
CHAPTER III: CHAMBER MUSIC IN THE PUBLIC ORCHESTRAL CONCERT

Domestic music-making was not the only route by which those serious music-lovers who attended chamber concerts in the 1835-6 season had been able to gain familiarity with the chamber repertory. Nor was it, for many amateur instrumentalists, necessarily the best way of increasing musical appreciation, since many renderings of quartets in private were probably poorly executed, and this would have doubtless obscured much of the musical argument and design. By the time chamber concerts were inaugurated in London it was common for large orchestral concerts (such as those given by the Philharmonic Society) to include in their programmes an item of chamber music, usually performed by eminent instrumentalists. For many music-lovers, listening to such performances in concert would have been an important way of getting to know the repertory (indeed, many amateur musicians may have been inspired to try out works for themselves afterwards); for others, especially those non-practitioners, it may have provided the only path to gaining familiarity with chamber works.

Items of chamber music began to be included in London concert programmes in the late 18th century. This chapter opens by tracing fluctuations in the amount of chamber music included in orchestral concerts from the 1760s to the mid-1830s. It then concentrates at length on the role of the Philharmonic Society in raising the profile of
chamber music in the early 19th century, and also considers other concerts of the period in which quartets, quintets and the like were heard. As a result a clear picture emerges of the ways in which concertgoing amateurs - both those who played instruments and those who did not - were able to taste the riches of the chamber repertory.

Throughout the period under discussion the chamber music that was performed in London concerts generally reflected changing compositional styles, so that, with the passing of the years, the music of J. C. Bach and Pleyel dropped out, while that of Hummel and Mayseder came in. The exception to this principle was the chamber music of Beethoven and, to a lesser extent, Haydn and Mozart, which never really fell from the repertory: rather, once it had been introduced it maintained its place and began its march towards acceptance in the musical canon of exemplary masterpieces, where it has ever since resided.¹

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1. Patterns of performance, c1770-1835

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries London public concerts were generally hybrid affairs, in which instrumental items (normally symphonies, overtures and concertos) were liberally interspersed with vocal numbers; sometimes concerts also included an item of chamber music. Concerts were in two parts or ‘acts’, and the order in which items were played was relatively fixed; proceedings normally lasted about three hours.² As Simon McVeigh has shown, items of chamber music - duos, trios, quartets, quintets and so on -

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¹ Questions of repertory and canon are addressed in detail in Chapter VI below.

appeared regularly in this type of concert programme from 1774. The first known performance of a string quartet in a 'miscellaneous' concert dates from 1769, when a quartet by Kammell was given at a benefit concert at Hickford's Rooms on 27 April. During the following 60 years the amount of chamber music performed in 'mixed' concerts varied, largely in accordance with the ebb and flow of concert life. For example, in the ten years from 1776 to 1785 a total of 51 quartets (including works for keyboard or one woodwind instrument and strings, as well as string quartets, but excluding works described as concertantes) are known to have been included in advertised programmes for concerts. There would, of course, have almost certainly been other performances of quartets which went unadvertised in newspapers; and some quartets were clearly introduced into, or excised from, programmes at the last minute. Nevertheless, such statistics give a general idea of overall trends. During the 'rage for music' of the late 1780s and early 1790s the number of advertised quartet performances (especially works for two violins, viola and cello) grew rapidly to exceed 20 in most years between 1787 and 1792. Table 4 gives a picture of the growth and subsequent decline of quartet performances in the decade from 1786 to 1795, as derived from newspaper advertisements. In all there were at least 200 performances, although, as noted above, many others may have occurred but not have been advertised. In the late 18th century,
benefit concerts provided the principal forum for the performance of chamber music, including many genres other than quartets. In addition, subscription series such as the Professional Concert, the Pantheon concerts, Salomon’s concerts and Mara’s

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**TABLE 4: Number of Quartets Performed in London Concerts, 1786-95**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of performances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1786</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1787</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1788</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1789</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1790</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1791</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1792</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1793</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1794</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1795</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>200</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

concerts frequently included one or more items of music for small ensemble. The Oratorios, Garden concerts and ‘Readings and Music’ also admitted chamber music, though only occasionally.⁷

During the first decade of the 19th century, when the French wars were in progress and concert activity was apparently waning, the opportunities for hearing chamber music in London concerts seem to have diminished accordingly. Nicholas Temperley, surveying concert life from 1800 to the foundation of the Philharmonic Society in 1813, acknowledged that "Chamber music" ... was very infrequently

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⁶ Information from McVeigh, *Calendar of Concerts*.

⁷ Information from McVeigh, *Calendar of Concerts*.
performed’ and adds, with insight, ‘or, at least, if there were many performances very few are on record’.\(^8\) The Concerts of Ancient Music, the Vocal Concerts and the Oratorios did not include chamber items (their programmes were clearly centred on different types of music), and details of only a few benefits and subscription concerts have so far been unearthed by modern scholars. According to Temperley’s findings, there were only 19 public performances of chamber works, mostly in benefit concerts, between 1800 and 1812, ranging from six renderings of Beethoven’s septet op.20 and three of his piano quintet op.16, to occasional performances of a Corelli trio for two cellos and double bass, and string quintets by Hoffmeister.\(^9\) On the face of it, the general absence of chamber music from concerts signals a break from late 18th-century traditions, though it is possible that the picture is distorted due to the small amount of data that has been uncovered, and that the number of concerts (and consequently the number of chamber works performed) was actually greater than that reported here. It seems likely, for instance, that Temperley’s figures represent a minimum number of performances, and that a comprehensive study of London concert life in this period is needed.\(^{10}\) Nevertheless, the evidence available points to a downward trend in the

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\(^8\) Temperley, Instrumental Music, 91; in his dissertation Temperley defines chamber music as ‘music for from two to ten solo instruments, including at least one stringed or keyboard instrument, not more than one of any woodwind instrument, and not more than two brass instruments’ (definition, p.vii).

\(^9\) Temperley, Instrumental Music, 347, cites 17 performances; but two additional performances - of British works - are listed in his Appendix G, making a total of 19. It is unclear whether Temperley’s data comes from advertisements, programmes or concert reports.

\(^{10}\) A comparison of the data supplied by McVeigh for 1800 and Temperley for 1801 suggests that a survey of a larger number of newspapers and a careful chronicling of advertisements, programmes and concert reports for the period 1801-35 would doubtless yield a larger number of performances.
frequency of concert giving between 1800 and 1812; and, as with earlier periods, this fluctuation is reflected in the amount of chamber music performed.

With the foundation of the Philharmonic Society in 1813 the number of public chamber-music performances in London increased markedly. In his dissertation Temperley provided detailed statistics for the performance of chamber music in London in 1801-35. Although his figures are slightly flawed by errors of calculation as well as circumscription, they provide a useful starting point for a revised reckoning: between 1801 and 1810 there were at least 13 performances, between 1811 and 1820 126 performances, and between 1821 and 1830 72 performances; at least 37 performances are on record for the five years before the introduction of chamber-music concerts (1831-5). The majority of performances listed by Temperley took place at the Philharmonic; the remainder occurred in benefit or other concerts. As already noted in connection with the first 12 years of the century, Temperley’s statistics for benefits and other concerts are almost certainly limited. This supposition is further endorsed by extant playbills for benefit concerts in the 1820s and 30s, housed in the Portraits Collection of the Royal College of Music, London, which provide examples of chamber-music performances not listed by Temperley.

11 Temperley, Instrumental Music, 350. His calculations relate to what he calls ‘chamber music proper’, that is, ‘music for from two to ten solo instruments’; he excludes music for wind band and divertimentos.

12 Temperley, Instrumental Music, 350, gives 17 performances for 1801-10, 114 for 1811-20, 63 for 1821-30, and 29 for 1831-5. Temperley fails to include in his figures a number of chamber performances at the Philharmonic; these are listed in detail in the introduction to Appendix A below, and are included in my revised calculations. He also does not include the few performances, outside the Philharmonic, of works by British composers; these are listed in his Appendix G and have been included in my totals.

13 Details of some of these concerts are given below, pp.101-2.
During the late 18th and early 19th centuries opportunities for the public performance of chamber music in the ‘mixed’ concert thus appear to have been closely tied to the general concert-giving climate in London. Although it is possible that further investigation into the period between 1800 and 1835 may ultimately reveal a greater number of concerts, and by extension a greater number of chamber-music performances, the basic picture is unlikely to change radically. The ‘rage for music’ of the late 1780s and early 90s saw chamber music blossom; in the ‘dark age’ of concerts in the early 19th century, when public concerts temporarily lost their appeal, the number of chamber-music performances appears to have tailed off, or at least to have been less reported. The renaissance of interest in chamber music in the second decade of the 19th century clearly relates to the foundation of the Philharmonic Society and the inclusion of quartets and other items in its programmes; the reduction of chamber-music performances in Philharmonic concerts during the 1820s is connected with changes in programme policy by the society, which had the effect of ‘squeezing’ chamber music out of its concerts.14

The fortunes of the quartet genre between 1761 and 1835 are charted in Table 5. To some extent fluctuations in the frequency of quartet performances in the late 18th and early 19th centuries (such as the sudden increase in performances in 1786-90 during the frenzied ‘rage for music’, and the decrease following the outbreak of the Napoleonic Wars) mirror the changing role of chamber music in concert life. However, it should be noted that these figures mask certain modern distinctions of genre, since all works for four instruments, whether string quartets or quartets for mixed ensembles, are included. In the 1760s and 70s the term ‘quartet’ often designated works for keyboard and strings, or for a woodwind instrument and strings; frequently-encountered quartet composers

14 For further discussion see pp.94-5 below.
included J. C. Bach and K. F. Baumgarten. Works that can be identified as string quartets proper appeared with increasing regularity from the late 1770s (the first known London performance of a Haydn quartet was at a benefit concert in 1777);\(^{15}\) but it was only in the late 1780s and early 1790s that quartets for four string instruments began to outnumber quartets for alternative combinations, and string quartets by Pleyel and Haydn dominated the repertory.

### TABLE 5: Number of Quartets Performed in London Concerts, 1761-1835\(^{16}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5-year period</th>
<th>Number of performances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1761-5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1766-70</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1771-5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1776-80</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1781-5</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1786-90</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1791-5</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1796-1800</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1801-05</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1806-10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1811-15</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1816-20</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1821-5</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1826-30</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1831-5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>396</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As McVeigh has observed, in the chamber music performed in concerts in the 18th century there was a noticeable emphasis on repertory with brilliant, virtuoso-like

\(^{15}\) Information from McVeigh, Calendar of Concerts.

\(^{16}\) Information from McVeigh, Calendar of Concerts, and Temperley, Instrumental Music, 347-50, 393-411.
passagework, and concertante textures. Pleyel’s quartets B331-42 and quintets B274-6, and Haydn’s quartets opp. 71 and 74 (which he wrote for Salomon’s concerts in 1794) are typical. This extrovert style is in fact at variance with the more democratic, conversational idiom of the Viennese quartet, and suggests ironically that the incorporation of the chamber-music item in concerts grew out of the vogue for the instrumental solo. Chamber music appears to have been viewed at this time more as a vehicle for virtuosic display by the performer than as an illustration of compositional intimacy and dialogue between the parts.

After the apparent hiatus in the number of performances in the first decade of the 19th century, the string quartet regained its place as a mainstream genre, but quintets, sextets, septets and so on occupied an equally important position. The most frequently performed chamber work in the years preceding the Philharmonic concerts was Beethoven’s septet op. 20; Temperley records performances at Salomon’s subscription series (23 April and 26 May 1801), George Bridgetower’s benefit (23 May 1805), Miss Stone’s benefit (25 March 1811), [William] Knyvett’s concert (2 March 1812) and Salomon’s benefit (16 May 1812). By the early 19th century the term ‘quartet’ had come to signify ‘string quartet’. Quartets for mixed ensembles normally involved one ‘concertante’ instrument plus string trio, and were generally classified in specific terms: for example as a ‘quartet for clarinet, violin, viola and violoncello’. From 1811 to 1835 the string quartet repertory was dominated by Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven (the earliest known public performances in England of quartets by Mozart and Beethoven came in 1813 at the Philharmonic). The quartets of Pleyel had disappeared. At the Philharmonic

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17 McVeigh, Concert Life, 105.

18 Temperley, Instrumental Music, 347.
frequently performed works for larger ensembles included string quintets by Mozart and Beethoven, septets by Beethoven and Hummel, Ries's piano quintet and Spohr's double quartet.

2. Chamber music at the Philharmonic, 1813-35

The Philharmonic Society was founded in 1813 by a group of musicians, among them Johann Baptist Cramer and Charles Neate (1784-1877), to provide a forum for regular orchestral concerts in London.19 According to its original constitution the society's main objective was to encourage 'the superior branches of Music, by the establishment of a Concert, and combining therein the highest talents that can be procured, for the purpose of forming a full and complete Orchestra'.20 Only people with a serious interest in music were admitted: subscriptions were expensive - four guineas for eight concerts - and to become a subscriber one had to be recommended by a member of the society. Programmes were not restricted to orchestral music, but limitations were imposed on the choice of repertory. The original regulations forbade the performance of instrumental concertos, solos and duets, but encouraged the inclusion of music for small ensemble, namely quartets, quintets and sextets.21 In practice this meant that works for three or more instruments that were designated 'concertantes' were included,


20 Laws of the Philharmonic Society (London, n.d.): the copy in London, British Library, shelfmark K.6.d.3, which is bound with the early programmes of the Philharmonic Society, is annotated 'G. Smart Original Form'.

21 An early prospectus is quoted in Myles Birket Foster, History of the Philharmonic Society of London, 1813-1912: a Record of a Hundred Years' Work in the Cause of Music (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1912), 4.
but solo concertos were not. The official strictures did not last long: in 1816 a ban on vocal solos and duets which had also existed since the society's foundation was relaxed, and in 1819 instrumental solos were allowed, followed in 1820 by solo concertos.

Initially there was at least one item of chamber music in every programme, and quartets, quintets and other chamber genres were a regular feature of Philharmonic programmes well into the 1840s. During the first six seasons (1813-18) two items of chamber music were included in every concert, one in the middle of each act. In 1819 instrumental solos began to be included in programmes, usually at the expense of the second chamber work; and from the 1820s it was more common, though not mandatory, for there to be one piece of chamber music rather than two. Occasionally the chamber music item disappeared entirely from a programme, in order to accommodate concertos and obligato pieces. Where two chamber works were heard on the same evening, the performing groups normally differed.

Economic arguments may well have played a significant role in the continued inclusion of chamber music (and solo items) in Philharmonic programmes. Cyril Ehrlich has suggested that chamber music was 'One method of minimizing costs without endangering standards', since it required few players, and needed 'little or no paid time for rehearsal', though he concedes that 'it may not initially have been conceived so simply'.

Ehrlich, First Philharmonic, 29.
important part of the 'serious' instrumental repertory that the founding members of the Philharmonic were so keen to promote, and that chamber works were included in concerts right from the start, at the period when most players gave their services free of charge.

Concerts were led by accomplished violinists, who were usually invited to take the first violin part in one of the chamber-music pieces as well. Minutes of the directors' meetings such as those for 15 December 1816, in which it is recorded that John David Loder (1788-1846) was requested 'to Lead and play a Quartetto on one or more of the nights', are typical.²⁴ Only occasionally did the leader take the principal part in both chamber items; more often than not the services of another high-calibre violinist were enlisted. Chamber music required superior players, and the need to hire a competent violinist for the first violin part was paramount. Often the names of 'reserve' quartet leaders were discussed: on 14 February 1827, for instance, the directors 'Resolved that ... Mr. Cramer be requested to play the Quartetto should Mr. Mori refuse'.²⁵

The supporting performers were normally drawn from the front desks of the orchestra, with some players - such as Lindley and Dragonetti - appearing on a regular basis. The better rank-and-file string players, such as William Watts and Lyon, took the second violin or viola parts as necessary - the concept of the specialist viola player was largely unknown at this period. When chamber music with wind parts was performed, the orchestra's principal wind players were called into action. Among the Philharmonic directors, formal discussion of who should play the supporting parts in chamber ensembles appears to have been non-existent - or, if it did occur, it was not minuted. It

²⁴ London, British Library, MS Loan 48.2/1, 15 Dec 1816.
²⁵ London, British Library, MS Loan 48.2/2, 14 Feb 1827.
is possible that the players had a say in the matter: in a letter to the Philharmonic directors dated 16 March 1837, Loder expressed the hope that Watts, Auguste-Joseph Tolbecque (1801-69) and Lindley would be his coadjutors in the quartet. 26 There was certainly no question of all string players being given a turn, for within the Philharmonic (as with all orchestras at this period) there was a clear-cut division between a few truly competent ‘front-desk’ string players (who were remunerated well) and the generally less proficient ‘back-desk’ group (who were poorly paid). 27 As a result, the ripieno players - among them Ella, whose enthusiasm as a chamber musician has already been noted - were not invited to participate. A comparison of the orchestral lists for 1824 and 1825 with the chamber music performers of the corresponding seasons clearly shows that only the principal players in each section were called upon. 28 Unsurprisingly, those not involved in chamber items were eager to leave the stage during proceedings, and on 11 April 1819 the directors resolved to remind the rank-and-file that this was not acceptable - there being not enough room for them in the auditorium. 29

As a result of the exodus of several first-rate French violinists from London after the Peace was declared in 1815, the number of truly high-calibre violinists who were available to lead orchestral works and chamber items in the post-war years was small. Occasionally the Philharmonic directors managed to recruit foreign players, including Pierre Baillot (1771-1842) in 1816, Louis Spohr (1784-1859) in 1820 and Jacques-Féréol Mazas (1782-1849) in 1822; but such players were expensive and more often than not the

26 London, British Library, MS Loan 48.13/19, f.236.
27 Ehrlich, First Philharmonic, 21.
28 Ella Collection, diaries for 1824 and 1825.
29 London, British Library, MS Loan 48.2/1, 11 April 1819.
directors were forced to rely on the most talented resident musicians such as Spagnoletti, Mori and Loder.30

Baillot's performances at the Philharmonic are of particular interest to the present discussion, since two years earlier in Paris he had established his own concerts devoted to chamber music, and had substantial experience of the problems associated with its performance. In London he led a Mozart quartet in D minor (possibly K421; 26 February 1816), a quartet by Haydn (probably op.9 no.2) and a quintet by Nicolas Baudiot (both on 13 May 1816), and one of Beethoven's quintets (27 May 1816). According to his fellow Frenchman, the violinist Charles Guynemer, Baillot was highly critical of the arrangements for performing chamber music at the Philharmonic. In his Essay on Classical Chamber Music Guynemer gives a glimpse of the physical arrangement of the quartet at the Philharmonic concerts:

Baillot complained bitterly, when he visited this country and played at these concerts, to be obliged, in accordance with the laws of the society, to perform, on two occasions, a Quartett in a large room, in the presence of numerous auditors, and all the performers standing in a row, and thus unable to see one another and to establish, by means of the sight, that understanding and sympathy so indispensable in all conversational intercourse.31

Sometimes the Philharmonic directors requested the performance of a specific chamber work - Beethoven's septet and works by B. H. Romberg were singled out more than once - but more often than not the invitation was simply for 'a Quartett or Quintett', there being no discernable preference for the quartet genre above the quintet genre. Instrumentalists presumably negotiated which works were to be played: on 22 February

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30 This subject is explored in greater detail in Ehrlich, First Philharmonic, 24-6.

1819 J. D. Loder suggested a quartett by Ries,\textsuperscript{32} and on 18 April 1832 Mori proposed Beethoven’s quartet in C minor, op.18 no.4.\textsuperscript{33}

The chamber works performed at the Philharmonic between 1813 and 1835 are analysed by composer and work (where such precise information is available) in Appendix A, and discussed in relation to the emerging repertory of the new chamber concerts in Chapter VI. For present purposes it will suffice to give an outline of the Philharmonic repertory. Quartets by Haydn, quartets and quintets by Mozart, and Beethoven’s op.18 quartets, his quintets and septets were the staple fare of Philharmonic programmes - and, presumably, the favourite works of many performers - throughout the period. Other works came and went, largely in keeping with changing musical taste. Hence, whereas music by such composers as J. C. Bach (a quintet for piano, oboe, violin, cello and horn), Boccherini (string quintets with two cellos) and Viotti (string quartets) complemented the ‘Viennese classics’ in the opening seasons, by the late 1820s and early 30s quartets by Mayseder and Spohr, or Hummel’s septets, were more typical companions.

Not all negotiations between Philharmonic directors and performers were trouble-free. In 1819 Mori wrote a long and carefully worded letter of complaint to the directors about a dispute he had had with William Ayrton which had resulted in a quartet being dropped from a programme. Mori’s grievance, however, was less a musical one - ‘it was, and is wholly a Matter of indifference to me as far as relates to the playing of the

\textsuperscript{32} London, British Library, MS Loan 48.13/19, f.224.

\textsuperscript{33} London, British Library, MS Loan 48.13/24, f.71 [letter dated by Myles Birket Foster].
Quartetto' - than a personal complaint about Ayrton's high-handedness.\textsuperscript{34} In addition, as the Philharmonic concerts became more established, the question of remuneration for performing in a piece of chamber music loomed large. Although a system of graded payments was in operation by 1824, many fees seem to have been made on an ad hoc basis, especially to supporting players or those making special appearances.\textsuperscript{35} It is recorded, for example, that the horn player Giovanni Puzzi (1792-1876) was offered five guineas to play in a performance of Beethoven's septet in 1820, and that A. J. Oury was offered the same sum to lead a quartet in 1830.\textsuperscript{36} Players had to fend for themselves. Although the leader received an enhanced fee, to cover his appearance in solos and/or chamber works as well as the duties of leading the band, by 1835 this was not enough for Mori, who accepted the terms for leading and playing in the orchestra, but wanted additional fees for chamber music or solo performance, pointing out that he would have to sacrifice a large amount of teaching time and money in order to prepare himself adequately.\textsuperscript{37} The argument that an instrumentalist had to spend much time engaged in individual practice was a canny one on the part of the player, but does not necessarily indicate that works were rehearsed to any great standard: in 1832 the directors had no compunction in ordering the last-minute substitution of a new quartet on the grounds that

\textsuperscript{34} London, British Library, MS Loan 48.13/24, ff.69-70.

\textsuperscript{35} For more information on payments to players see Cyril Ehrlich, \textit{The Music Profession in Britain since the Eighteenth Century: a Social History} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 48-9, and First Philharmonic, passim.

\textsuperscript{36} London, British Library, MS Loan 48.2/1, 18 May 1820, and Loan 48.2/2, 12 April 1830.

\textsuperscript{37} London, British Library, MS Loan 48.13/24, f.74.
the one selected was in the same key as many other pieces in the concert.\textsuperscript{38} Between 1813 and 1835 more than 90 players were involved in chamber-music performances at the Philharmonic; some, most notably section principals, were especially active. Lindley (cello) and Dragonetti (double bass) anchored many ensembles, and William Watts, Lyon and J. W. Moralt regularly took second violin and viola parts. Ensembles were most frequently led by Nicholas Mori, Paolo Spagnoletti and Charles Weichsell (1767-1850).

In addition, at least a dozen others frequently performed, including A. J. Oury (violin), Joseph [? John] Mountain (viola), Friedrich Griesbach (oboe; dates unknown), William Griesbach (violin and viola; dates unknown), Franz Cramer (violin; 1772-1848), Henry Gattie (violin and viola), Holmes (bassoon; dates unknown), Charles Nicholson (flute), Edward Platt (horn; 1793-1861) and Thomas Willman (clarinet).

The situation at the Philharmonic, where the performance of chamber music revolved around a small number of key players (who were only occasionally augmented by a visiting virtuoso), was in many ways a continuation of the situation in the late 18th century. Then, Wilhelm Cramer and J. P. Salomon were the most usual leaders of ensembles; James Cervetto (1747/9-1837), Lindley and a musician named Smith (dates unknown) were favourites for cello parts; Luigi Borghi (?1745-c1806) frequently played second violin; and Benjamin Blake (1751-1827) and John Hindmarsh (c1755-1796) were the most active viola players. Indeed, certain players performed together so frequently that regular ensembles developed: at the Professional Concerts Wilhelm Cramer, Borghi, Blake and Smith played together for many years, and in the opening two seasons of Salomon’s concerts an ensemble of Salomon, Peter Dahmen (c1757-1835), Hindmarsh

\textsuperscript{38} London, British Library, MS Loan 48.2/2, 11 March 1832.
and a cellist named Menel (dates unknown) was regularly heard. This contrasts with the
practice at the Philharmonic Society, where the players of the violin and viola parts were
rotated, and few 'fixed' ensembles coalesced.

Nevertheless, by the 1820s and early 1830s many professional instrumentalists
were reasonably familiar with the chamber-music repertory; and many of the regular
performers at the Philharmonic were among those known to have played chamber music
in private with John Ella in the 1820s.\textsuperscript{39} Indeed, many of the Philharmonic musicians
were also to be found in ensembles in West End benefit concerts, which were again
including chamber music in their programmes. For Lucy Anderson's benefit at the
Argyll Rooms (home of the Philharmonic) on 13 May 1829 the playbill heralded the
performance of 'Onslow's Grand Sextuor, as performed this season at the second
Philharmonic Concert'.\textsuperscript{40} The line-up of performers - Lucy Anderson, Nicholson,
Willman, John Mackintosh (bassoon; 1767-1844), Platt and Dragonetti - was exactly the
same too. Likewise, at the farewell concert for Johann Nepomuk Hummel (1778-1837)
at the King's Theatre (then the temporary venue for Philharmonic concerts) on 21 June
1830 the composer performed his septet in D minor op.74, accompanied by Nicholson,
Willman, Moralt, Platt, Lindley and Dragonetti; a week before, the same instrumentalists
had played the work with Lucy Anderson at the Philharmonic.\textsuperscript{41}

3. Chamber music in other concerts in the early 19th century

The Philharmonic players did not have a monopoly over chamber music, but because they

\textsuperscript{39} For a list of Ella's chamber-music colleagues see Chapter II, pp.79-81 above.

\textsuperscript{40} Playbill in London, Royal College of Music, Portraits Collection.

\textsuperscript{41} Playbill in London, Royal College of Music, Portraits Collection.
were the most highly-prized freelance musicians they tended to be in demand for fashionable West End benefits. The principal exceptions to this 'rule' were a few 'one-off' chamber performances by foreign ensembles, most notably the Herrmann brothers, whose benefit at Willis's Rooms on 26 May 1828 involved their performing in a vocal ensemble and as a string quartet. Elsewhere - in the City and the suburbs - less well-known instrumentalists, including many who had not had the opportunity to perform chamber music at the Philharmonic, were making their mark. Such performances are important to this discussion, since they gave concertgoers in other areas of London the opportunity to gain familiarity with chamber music. At a concert at the London Mechanics' Institution, Southampton Buildings, Holborn, on 10 May 1832 the Philharmonic trumpet player Thomas Harper made a guest appearance in Hummel's Military septet in C op.114; his colleagues, unnamed on the handbill, were students of the Royal Academy of Music. Similarly, a concert for the Surrey Musical Amateurs (venue unknown) on 18 October 1833 included a Haydn quartet played by 'Mess. Pigott, J. Banister, Beal [sic], and H. [J.] Banister' - at least three of whom are known to have played chamber music privately in the 1820s.

By the 1830s John Ella was capitalizing on his chamber-music experience and directing a number of chamber-scale concerts at private residences. The concerts for Sir George Warrender in 1829-30 have already been noted (see Chapter II, pp.58-9 above); to these must be added two series of more formal concerts, namely Ella's soirées musicales, which took place by subscription at the London home of the Duke of Leinster

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42 See The Harmonicon, vi (1828), 167.

43 Playbill in London, Royal College of Music, Portraits Collection.
in 1830 and at the Argyll Rooms in 1831.¹⁴ Like his other entertainments, Ella’s soirées involved the services of a ‘chamber band’; and although they primarily presented a patchwork of operatic numbers and overtures, solo instrumental items and pieces of chamber music were also included from time to time. The performers, recruited from Ella’s friends at the Philharmonic and the Royal Academy of Music, were mostly well known to the fashionable audiences. Edward Eliason (violin; dates unknown), Watts (violin), Seymour (viola), Lucas (cello), David Schlesinger (piano; b 1802; fl London, 1827-30), Tolbecque (violin), Guynemer (viola), James Howell (double bass; 1811-79) and Scipion Rousselot (cello; b g 1800; d after 1857) were chosen to perform quartets by Mayseder (11 February 1830) and Haydn (18 March 1830), a piano trio by Beethoven (25 February 1830) and a quintet by Rousselot (25 February 1831).

According to Gruneisen’s article in The Britannia, these soirées musicales were the first chamber-music concerts, the true forerunners of the speculations of 1835-6.¹⁵ Although this was clearly not the case - the concerts may have been on a chamber scale, but their wares remained essentially vocal - the story persisted, and Ella, himself a close friend of Gruneisen and an ardent self-publicist, did nothing to repudiate it. (By 1845 Ella’s reputation as a promoter of chamber music was increasing dramatically, and that year he reprinted Gruneisen’s article in the Record of the Musical Union.) In fact, the first public chamber-music concerts in London seem to have taken place earlier in the century, and the honours for this achievement may be bestowed on the Polish émigré

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¹⁴ The Duke of Leinster was an accomplished double-bass player (a pupil of Dragonetti and a member of the Società Lirica), and was probably influential in securing the patronage of Queen Adelaide, the Duchess of Kent and the Duchess of Cumberland for the second season.

¹⁵ The Britannia, v, no.298 (28 Dec 1844), 823.
violinist Felix Yaniewicz (1762-1848), who advertised in The Times in March 1810 as follows:

MR. YANIEWICZ most respectfully acquaints the admirers of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Bocherini [sic], &c. that at the desire of several amateurs, he has opened a SUBSCRIPTION for SIX EVENING CONCERTS, to commence early in April, at his house, No.49, Leicester-Square. ... The instrumental department will be filled by the first professors on their respective instruments, in order to give due effect to the most favourable quartettos, quintettos, and sextettos of the above celebrated composers.

The concerts began on 25 April and were held at weekly intervals. In the event, a 'vocal department' served to balance the concentration of instrumental music, and prominence was given to the performance of solo concertos. A report in the Morning Post emphasized the singing and concerto playing, but hardly mentioned the chamber music. Little is known about these concerts - Yaniewicz repeated the enterprise the following year, but the concerts appear to have had no immediate successors. A prominent violinist and quartet player, Yaniewicz had been active in London since 1792. He became a founder member of the Philharmonic Society and played chamber music at its concerts in 1813 and 1815. Had he not, shortly afterwards, moved to Liverpool (and later to Edinburgh) and pursued his career in the north of Britain, he would almost certainly have contributed to the rise and early development of the chamber-music concert in London: in 1831 he engineered what was possibly the first purely instrumental recital in Britain, when a concert 'without a single vocal piece!' was given in Edinburgh.

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46 The Times (14 March 1810); quoted in Temperley, Instrumental Music, 93.
47 Information from an advertisement in the Morning Post (29 March 1810).
48 Morning Post (27 April 1810).
49 The Harmonicon, ix (1831), 93; see also the original passage in The Scotsman (26 Jan 1831).
After Yaniewicz's experiments of 1810 and 1811, music-lovers in London had to wait some 25 years before chamber-music concerts proper were formally established.

4. Summary

Although chamber music was regularly included in orchestral concerts in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, its profile in the concert repertory waxed and waned. After the frenzied activity of the 1780s and early 90s, chamber music seems to have lost its prominence in 'mixed' orchestral concerts; but with its regular inclusion at the Philharmonic from 1813 the trend was restored and chamber works also began to be inserted in other types of concert. At the Philharmonic the performance of chamber music was at its height between 1813 and 1820; thereafter the deliberate change in policy which admitted solo instrumental items and concertos meant that the number of chamber-music performances was reduced. Nevertheless, the importance of the Philharmonic concerts to the cause of serious chamber music in the early 19th century must be acknowledged. Although Nicholas Temperley may have been overstating the case somewhat when he claimed that 'The most striking innovation brought about by the Philharmonic was the regular performance of chamber music in public', it is clear that the Philharmonic concerts played a significant part in bringing chamber music before its subscribers, and in raising awareness of the repertory in the minds of many people who may later have attended chamber concerts.

The inclusion of chamber works at the Philharmonic may have stemmed as much from the tradition of providing display items for first-rate violinists and the need to keep costs in check, as it did from a genuine mission to bring forward serious chamber

50 Temperley, Instrumental Music, 56.
compositions; but the effect appears to have been to stimulate interest in the genre among both performers and listeners. While the more talented professional musicians had the opportunity to perform in chamber ensembles at the society's concerts, others became familiar with the repertory by joining colleagues to play through chamber works in private, or by giving concert performances in less fashionable areas of London. In this way an identifiable group of professional London musicians acquired competence in the performance of the chamber-music repertory. Amateurs were almost certainly caught up in the trend too, and, quite possibly as a result of witnessing chamber music in performance at the Philharmonic, may have attempted to play chamber works in the privacy of their homes. As shown in the previous chapter, there was probably more chamber music being played in the home in the 1820s and 30s than earlier in the century.

When public concerts of chamber music were set up in 1835, a receptive public welcomed them, and the new type of concert quickly became established in London musical life. Although many commentators have seen the advent of chamber-music concerts as a sudden phenomenon, few have understood the background to the enterprise. Temperley was correct when he observed that:

This outburst of interest in chamber music was as sudden as it was intense. In this one season (1835-6) at least 22 chamber concerts were given in London; all were apparently well attended. In the previous season there had not been one concert of this type. There is only one satisfactory explanation for this remarkable phenomenon. There must have been, for some time, a considerable latent public interest in chamber music.51

That 'latent public interest in chamber music' had been developing - perhaps symbiotically - in the home and in the concert hall for many years; in the decade and a half leading up to 1835 it had grown with vigour. Hence, by the time chamber concerts

51 Temperley, Instrumental Music, 96.
proper were established, not only were there several professional musicians eager and prepared to perform chamber music in public but, more importantly, there was also an audience ready and waiting, not only in the West End but also (as we shall see) in the City. Success was assured.
PART 2: INTO THE CONCERT ROOM, 1835-50
CHAPTER IV: FIRST EXPERIMENTS, 1835-45

This and the following chapter trace the development of public chamber-music concerts in London from 1835 to 1850. Much of the factual information has been drawn from newspaper reports, to which the reader must turn for more detailed information; the principal press sources are listed, concert by concert, in Appendix F. Full histories of each and every concert series are beyond the scope of these chapters, but details of concert dates, venues and repertory are to be found in Appendices B to F. The discussion proceeds largely chronologically. The present chapter provides a broad survey of chamber concerts from the mid-1830s up to the formation of the Musical Union and Beethoven Quartet Society in spring 1845; Chapter V looks in detail at these two complementary organizations and surveys other concert series from spring 1845 until the end of the 1849-50 season.

1. 1835: Horn Tavern; the Concerti da Camera

Credit for the introduction of chamber-music concerts to London has traditionally been given to the violinist and viola player Joseph Dando (1806-94), who organized a benefit concert in aid of a friend in pecuniary difficulties on 23 September 1835 at the Horn Tavern, Doctors’ Commons. The programme is said to have consisted entirely of instrumental chamber music. George Dubourg may have been the first to assess in print
the significance of the event: in his book The Violin he claimed 'This presentation was the commencement of an epoch in the musical history of this country'.

Although it now appears that at least one musician - Felix Yaniewicz - had tried to initiate public chamber-music concerts in London many years earlier, Dando's concert is nevertheless important, for it effectively heralds the outburst of chamber-music concerts in the 1835-6 season.

At this period musical entertainments in the City were not advertised or noted in the mainstream daily and weekly newspapers, whose reporting of musical activities was sharply focussed on the fashionable West End, and little is therefore known about Dando's enterprise, except that two further concerts were presented on 12 and 26 October. Even the musical journals of the day - the Musical Magazine and the Musical Library Monthly Supplement - did not mention them. Dubourg's book is the sole contemporary source of information; and his claims that the evening of the first concert 'passed away in raptures' and that the whole series excited a 'furore' in the musical world remain uncorroborated.

Only a few weeks after Dando's experimental concerts began in the City, a similar venture was set up in the West End. In October 1835 a series of four concerts under the title Concerti da Camera was announced for the Hanover Square Rooms on 7 and 21 November, and 5 and 19 December. Whether or not Dando's concerts acted as a stimulus for the West End concerts is unclear, though the proximity of the two series should certainly be noted. According to the prospectus for the Concerti da Camera a nucleus

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2 For discussion of Yaniewicz's concerts see Chapter III, pp.103-5 above.
of instrumentalists had been formed with the express purpose of performing ‘trios, quartets, quintets, sestets, septets, otets [sic], nonets, and double quartets, selected from the works of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Bocherini [sic], Onslow, Mayseder, Hummel, Weber, Moscheles, Czerny, Spohr, Mendelssohn, Romberg, &c.’. The core players were named as Henry Blagrove (violin; 1811-72), G. A. Griesbach (violin), Watkins (violin; f London, 1835-7), [?George] Pigott (violin), Edward J. Card (flute; d 1877), Philip Powell (clarinet; f London, 1830-40), James Rae (horn; f London, 1830-53) and Charles Salaman (piano; 1814-1901). In practice a number of other instrumentalists, including Charles Lucas (cello), H. J. Banister (cello) and James Howell (double bass), were involved in the concerts; a viola player named Sherrington (dates unknown) acted as secretary. The musicians claimed only to cover their expenses; and a subscription system modelled on that of the Philharmonic Society, whereby only members could nominate subscribers, was used.

The programmes of the Concerti da Camera consisted of four or five items of instrumental chamber music interspersed with vocal numbers. The choice of repertory was bold: in the opening concert of the series the first English performances of Schubert’s Der Hirt auf dem Felsen and Beethoven’s quartet op.59 no.1 were given, and the second concert included a performance of Mendelssohn’s octet, which had yet to be performed at the Philharmonic concerts.

According to an illuminating account in The Atlas, the large concert room at

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3 Musical Magazine, no.11 (Nov 1835), 169.

4 Morning Post (21 Dec 1835).

5 Musical Library Monthly Supplement, no.21 (Dec 1835), 20. For full details of the instrumental and vocal repertories of the Concerti da Camera see Appendices B and D.
Hanover Square, which was more commonly used for large-scale orchestral concerts, was specially set up for chamber music by the temporary creation of a small and intimate performance space:

The great room, by the erection of a temporary screen, is considerably diminished from its real proportions, and brought more within the compass of a private music-room - the true sphere of the excellence of the quartet.6 Moreover, the players, perhaps for the first time in a London concert, sat (rather than stood) to play chamber music: 'The performers are at a slight elevation above the auditors, and sit while playing, thus divested of the formality and parade of the concert-room'.7 This statement gives a rare glimpse of an elusive aspect of local performance practice. Very few contemporary writers tell us whether musicians in London sat or stood for orchestral concerts, probably for the simple reason that the status quo was not considered worthy of comment. The French violinist Pierre Baillot, in his account of playing string quartets at the Philharmonic Society in 1816, suggests that in large concerts of that time it had been normal for chamber musicians to stand in a straight line.8

Most of the musicians involved in the Concerti da Camera were young men on the threshold of their careers. Henry Blagrove, for instance, was 24 years old, and had only recently returned from a period of study with Spohr in Kassel (1832-4). Blagrove, like the 27-year-old cellist Charles Lucas, was a former student of the Royal Academy of Music and a member of Queen Adelaide’s private band. Both went on to enjoy

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6 The Atlas, x, no.496 (15 Nov 1835), 728.
7 Ibid.
8 C. Guynemer, Essay on Classical Chamber Music (London: the author, 1846), 10 [the passage is quoted in Chapter III, p.97 above].
distinguished musical careers. Absent from the performing ranks of the Concerti da Camera were the more established London musicians. Some of them, namely Franz Cramer, Domenico Dragonetti, Nicholas Mori, Cipriani Potter (1792-1871), and Charles Neate, were among the audience at the first concert. Nothing is known about the musicians who played in Dando's Horn Tavern concerts; but in all probability the 19-year-old Dando, like Blagrove, relied on the services of his musical friends and contemporaries.

The Concerti da Camera were greeted warmly by the London press. Some writers were quick to make comparisons with the chamber concerts of Schuppanzigh in Vienna and Baillot in Paris. The critic in the Morning Post expressed his relief that London had finally caught up with the Continent; and William Ayrton, in the Musical Library Monthly Supplement, even suggested that Baillot's concerts had been used as something of a model. A number of critics expressed the hope that similar concerts would follow the Concerti da Camera. The Times considered 'there would be no truer test of the existence among us of a just and refined musical taste than a rapid increase in the number


10 Musical Magazine, no.12 (Dec 1835), 184; the presence of the composers Thomas Attwood and William Carnaby was also noted.

11 Morning Post (9 Nov 1835).

12 Musical Library Monthly Supplement, no.21 (Dec 1835), 19; the claim is only partially appropriate, because Baillot's concerts did not admit vocal music. Blagrove had, however, visited the principal cities of Europe while studying abroad and it is highly probable that he had witnessed concerts devoted to chamber music there.
and quality of these concerts'.

2. The 'Classical Chamber' and 'Quartett' concerts, 1836-42

The critics' hopes were realized: even before the year was out, advertisements for another series of chamber-music concerts began to appear. A set of three Classical Chamber Concerts was announced by two of the most senior and respected instrumentalists in London, the violinist Nicholas Mori and the cellist Robert Lindley. Both were professors at the Royal Academy of Music and may well have been irritated by the extent of interest in the former students' Concerti da Camera. The Classical Chamber Concerts, which operated by subscription, took place at Willis's Rooms on 27 January, 3 February and 10 February 1836. Two further series (each comprising three concerts) followed later in the season. Like the Concerti da Camera, the Classical Chamber Concerts presented instrumental items and a sprinkling of vocal numbers. In quartets and larger ensembles Mori and Lindley were joined by J. W. Moralt (viola) and William Watts, the secretary of the Philharmonic Society (second violin). From 1838 A.-J. Tolbecque took over from Watts as second violin. Dragonetti became strongly associated with the Classical Chamber Concerts, playing the double bass in many pieces (including quintets and other large ensembles which were intended for two cellos). All six men had experience of performing chamber music, sometimes together, at the Philharmonic concerts.

At the outset the Classical Chamber Concerts issued a number of transferable press tickets, a gesture which was initially rewarded by a host of generally favourable

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13 The Times (8 Dec 1835).
articles and concert reviews in newspapers and journals.\textsuperscript{14} It was widely acknowledged, nevertheless, that Mori and Lindley founded the concerts in direct response to the competition from the younger players. Mori and Lindley had established reputations to protect, and had hitherto enjoyed something of a monopoly over chamber-music performances at the Philharmonic. At the time of the Concerti da Camera they were 66 and 61 years old respectively. The critic for \textit{The Atlas} (probably the perceptive Edward Holmes) reviewed the state of affairs in January 1836 and predicted positive effects from the musical rivalry between the two groups:

\begin{quote}
The quintett \textup{(sic)} concerts, commenced towards the close of the year by BLAGROVE and others, have opened a quiet musical entertainment that we shall see extend far and wide with immense results for music. ... Quartett playing, which was always ineffective in the Philharmonic Concert-room, must now be supplied by something else - but that style, now that rivalry is openly in the field (the gauntlet thrown and taken up), will be brought to higher perfection than was ever known in this country. BLAGROVE’s party commenced by some rough performances - excellent in detail, but not sufficiently practised together. The old players, piqued, have tried some quartetts, and produced a rival society of finished excellence. The other party will retort. Competition is the order of the day - music gains and amateurs profit.\textsuperscript{15}
\end{quote}

The younger players did indeed retort. And quickly. For reasons that are not totally clear, Blagrove and Lucas abandoned the name ‘Concerti da Camera’ - perhaps they felt it was too easily confused with ‘Classical Chamber Concerts’ - and re-formed to present a subscription series of four ‘Quartett Concerts’.\textsuperscript{16} Contrary to what their new name suggested, the Quartett Concerts were not restricted to the string quartet repertory; like the Concerti da Camera they embodied vocal numbers and chamber works for

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\textsuperscript{14} Information concerning the issue of press tickets is found in London, British Library, Add MS 17838, f.227 [letter from Dragonetti to Mori].
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\textsuperscript{15} \textit{The Atlas}, xi, no.507 (31 Jan 1836), 66.
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\textsuperscript{16} An advertisement in \textit{The Spectator}, no.393 (9 Jan 1836), 46, suggests that the concert-givers had initially intended to keep the name Concerti da Camera.
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miscellaneous combinations of instruments. The Concerti da Camera had been strongly criticized for allowing too many different violinists to lead the ensembles; and, although the playing of Blagrove and Lucas had been generally admired, there had been negative remarks about the second violinist, Watkins, and the viola player, Sherrington. It may well have been in response to such criticism that the new society decided not only to create a ‘fixed’ string quartet but also to choose a new second violinist and viola player. Henry Gattie (second violin) and Joseph Dando (viola) joined Blagrove and Lucas to form a regular ensemble; they performed together for seven years.

Dando was well placed, from both a musical and organizational point of view, to join the new enterprise. He had participated in a performance of Spohr’s double quartet in E minor op.87 at the fourth of the Concerti da Camera in December 1835; and he had first-hand experience of setting up chamber-music concerts in the City, an enterprise he continued to exploit during the New Year. (Four further chamber concerts were held at the Horn Tavern from January to April 1836 and were even noticed on two occasions by the press, once in the newly founded Musical World and once in the fashionable Morning Post.) The formation of the Quartett Concerts thus brought together the pioneers of the two experimental projects of 1835 - Dando, Blagrove and Lucas. Their first concert took place at the Hanover Square Rooms on 17 March 1836.

According to an article in The Spectator, the young men had run into difficulties with the Lord Chamberlain’s office, which was responsible for the licensing of buildings

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17 See The Atlas, x, no.502 (27 Dec 1835), 824; and the Morning Herald (9 Nov 1835).

18 Musical World, i, no.1 (18 March 1836), 5, and Morning Post (11 Feb 1836). It is certainly noteworthy that an account of a Horn Tavern chamber concert was considered significant enough to be published in a mainstream daily paper.
for entertainments in the West End. The comptroller, Thomas Mash, had for many years been levying an apparently unofficial tax on all concert-givers, which served as a considerable disincentive to any musicians wanting to mount a concert. It was:

... a pitiful tax ... on all associated musical societies and individual professors giving concerts ... which has been quietly submitted to by them all for fear of giving offence to these high and mighty personages.19

Blagrove and his associates, when confronted with Mash’s demands, courageously refused to pay, claiming that as the Hanover Square Rooms were licensed under the Theatre Act of 1837 (10 George II c.28) no further licence was needed; in response Mash threatened to use his influence to have Blagrove and Lucas sacked from Queen Adelaide’s band. The young men refused to yield to Mash’s threat, and as a result apparently ‘put an end to a claim which has pressed severely and unjustly on many members of the musical profession’.20

By the end of the 1835-6 season both Mori’s and Blagrove’s concerts were widely considered a great success, and further series were announced for the following year.21 The two concert organizations went from strength to strength. In 1838 Mori and Lindley secured the patronage of Queen Victoria and were quick to vaunt it to potential subscribers (though it should be noted that the Queen never attended any of the

19 The Spectator, no.409 (30 April 1836), 415.
20 Ibid. A series of scandals in the Lord Chamberlain’s office were drawn to public attention during the 1830s, and by the end of the decade his control over concert-givers was waning; see Joel Sachs, ‘The End of the Oratorios’, Music and Civilization: Essays in Honor of Paul Henry Lang, ed. Edmond Strainchamps and Maria Rika Maniates (New York and London: Norton, 1984), 168-82.
21 For instance in the Musical Library Monthly Supplement, no.26 (May 1836), 79, and The Athenaeum, no.443 (23 April 1836), 291.
concerts), and in 1839 the Classical Chamber Concerts moved to the Hanover Square Rooms, where they would surely have continued for many years had it not been for Mori’s sudden death in 1839, which brought them to a close. Blagrove’s series, which expanded to six concerts the following year, operated under his aegis until 1842.

The rivalry between the Quartett Concerts and the Classical Chamber Concerts was a potent force in their development. Comparisons between the new concert series were inevitable, and the London press almost certainly exaggerated the sense of tension and intensified the competition between the two groups. There were, however, two areas in which the rivalry had beneficial effects: repertory and rehearsal.

From their first season Blagrove’s concerts embraced new and challenging works, while Mori’s concerts generally centred on more familiar repertory. Continuing the policy of the Concerti da Camera, Blagrove introduced in the first season the English premieres of Beethoven’s piano trio op.70 no.1, Mendelssohn’s quintet op.18, Spohr’s quartet op.82, Schubert’s canzonet ‘Der Wanderer’, and Carl Keller’s fantasie ‘Der Blinde’. Most significantly, Blagrove also gave in 1836 the first English performances of two of Beethoven’s ‘late’ quartets, opp. 130 and 132. Mori’s selections were generally more conservative and included works already tested at the Philharmonic, such as Beethoven’s septet op.20, duets and trios by Corelli (played by Lindley and Dragonetti), and quintets by Onslow. When the Classical Chamber Concerts did attempt a less familiar work, they appeared to do so primarily to compete with the Quartett Concerts.

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22 See the letter from the Queen’s secretary, which was published in The Observer (21 Jan 1838).

23 The press seized on such copy-cat tactics; see, for example, The Atlas, xi, no.507 (31 Jan 1836), 76: ‘BEETHOVEN’s quartett, one in E flat, is the same that was played at the last concert of the opposition’.

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The performance of selected movements of Beethoven’s A minor quartet op.132 at the Classical Chamber Concerts, for example, came less than two weeks after Blagrove had introduced the B flat quartet op.130, and was almost certainly a gesture of competition. Blagrove was not to be outdone, and within days he had given op.132 in its complete form at the Quartett Concerts. Presumably Mori and his colleagues had neither the will nor the inclination to address the difficulties of the late quartets, which henceforth became virtually the sole property of Blagrove’s group.24

The technical requirements of much ‘modern’ music appear to have been the principal stumbling block for Mori and his colleagues. Difficult new works needed careful preparation, and it may have been a lack of desire - or time - for rehearsal (Mori’s associates were, after all, among the busiest instrumentalists in London) that led Mori’s group to perform only selected movements of some modern compositions. On 25 February they played the first movement of Mendelssohn’s octet op.20, and on 3 March the third and fourth movements; but they stopped short of meeting the demands of the second movement (the scherzo). Furthermore, there was no great respect for the composer’s intentions, a deficiency that inflamed one particular critic (probably Thomas Alsager) when reviewing Mori’s performance of the first three movements of Beethoven’s quartet op.132:

A portion only of this sublime work was given, and setting aside the bad taste of omitting any thing in a composition where the parts sustain and relieve each other, the movements chosen were incomplete in themselves; there was no return to the minuet after the trio, and one of the connecting limbs of the adagio, the inimitable song of thanksgiving, ... an andante, was omitted, with which most "lame and impotent" conclusion the so-called "quartett" broke off. It was an exhibition to make every true judge and lover of the art blush with shame.25

24 For a full discussion of the reception of the late quartets see Chapter VII below.

25 The Times (18 April 1836).
In comparison, Blagrove and his associates always gave works in their complete form; they also addressed the need to rehearse regularly in private before venturing into the concert room. Beethoven’s late quartets in particular were thoroughly rehearsed, sometimes - according to The Atlas - at the expense of the more familiar repertory. Dubourg insisted:

There is the best authority for stating that they did not think six or eight rehearsals, previous to the production of a work in public, too much trouble, or time and application thrown away, or even unnecessarily bestowed. The success of their undertakings has been commensurate with the pains which they underwent to secure it.27

The critic for The Atlas had not been alone in noticing raggedness of ensemble in the younger players’ performances at the Concerti da Camera of 1835, but this was a criticism that soon faded: careful rehearsal paid dividends and the Quartett Concerts soon acquired a reputation for unanimity of ensemble and unity of expression. The press lighted on this aspect of Blagrove’s concerts with relish, and comments such as the following became commonplace:

The merit of the party of Saturday evening is, that they have entered on the right system, with means which must carry it on to perfection; that the quartett always remains the same, each performer retaining his part, and that they devote much previous time to the study of the composition, as well as of the mechanical difficulties of the music, before they present it in public.28

Hitherto our professional violinists sought to distinguish their performance by a great volume of tone and manual dexterity, without reference to the intentions of the composer. Wanting that unanimity of feeling and enthusiasm which is necessary in developing the more delicate shades of an author’s meaning, and which is the very life and soul of quartett playing, up to the present time most of the instrumentalists in this country were content to get through the composition, each endeavouring to produce as great a sensation in regard to himself as his

26 The Atlas, xi, no.519 (24 April 1836), 265.
27 Dubourg, The Violin, 301.
28 The Times (28 March 1836).
abilities and power would admit. The performances of the Messrs. BLAGROVE, GATTIE, DANDO, GUYNEMER, LUCAS, and HOWELL have, however, been characterised by a totally different feeling, and they have throughout these meetings forcibly reminded us of the celebrated quartett performances of the MULLER and BOHRER families.29

Although less experienced and less revered as soloists, the members of the Blagrove quartet started to outshine their elders when performing as a group. The accolades accorded to Blagrove’s performances may well have prompted Mori and his colleagues to review - perhaps reluctantly - their own standards, for they too began to rehearse in advance of performance:

That these players are wonderfully improved - (we do not, of course, allude to their mechanism, but to the effect of their ensemble in quartetts, quintetts, &c.) - there cannot be a doubt. They rehearse together both with a conscientious zeal towards good music, and a lively sense of their own reputation as artists.30

As the Morning Herald subsequently pointed out:

But even to them [Mori’s ensemble] the constant practice of minor concerted composition was not usual before these entertainments were introduced, and even they had something to improve in an almost new experience.31

It was inevitable that the press should constantly compare the musicianship and technical abilities of the two ensembles. Initially many critics judged the performances in superlative and hyperbolic terms, but as standards of performance began to improve

29 Morning Post (18 April 1836). The comparison with the Müller and Bohrer quartets is pertinent. The violinist Karl Müller (1797-1873) and three of his brothers formed a regular string quartet while in the service of the Duke of Brunswick. In the early 1830s they gave concerts throughout Europe and gained a distinguished reputation. The two Bohrer brothers, Anton (violin; 1783-1852) and Max (cello; 1785-1867), were members of a regular quartet which gave concerts in Paris, 1830-31. Their repertory included some of Beethoven’s late quartets; see Joël-Marie Fauquet, Les sociétés de musique de chambre à Paris de la Restauration à 1870 (Paris: Aux Amateurs de Livres, 1986), 116-19.

30 The Atlas, xii, no.562 (19 Feb 1837), 125-6.

31 Morning Herald (1 Feb 1838).
a more discriminating criticism developed. Even by the end of the first season the critic for the *Morning Post* (probably John Ella) was making relatively sophisticated observations:

... it is in vain to expect the proper effect in quartett performance unless the phrases and their analogies are expressed with the same feeling and sentiment by all the *artistes* engaged. Each performer must execute the passages in the same manner, so that even every bow shall move up and down at the same time and place when expressing the same phrase.\(^{32}\)

And before long many other critics were making critical observations about the playing of both groups.\(^{33}\) *The Times* even cautioned against complacency, remarking in 1840 that 'it is possible to play quartetts better still'.\(^{34}\)

Attendance at the new chamber concerts grew steadily. In spite of a paucity of information concerning attendance figures and subscriptions (no lists of subscribers or account books survive), we know that the audiences for the Concerti da Camera were considered small by 19th-century standards and that one critic estimated there were between 200 and 300 people at the first concert in November 1835.\(^{35}\) As we have already seen, the performance space at Hanover Square had been specially adapted to accommodate a smaller than usual audience. Similar arrangements were used for the Quartett Concerts and, at Willis's Rooms, for the Classical Chamber Concerts.\(^{36}\) The inaugural Classical Chamber Concert attracted some 400 people, according to the reporter

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\(^{32}\) *Morning Post* (19 April 1836).

\(^{33}\) See, for example, *The Athenaeum*, no.541 (10 March 1838), 188, on Blagrove's quartet; and the *Musical World*, xi, no.157 (16 March 1839), 165, on Mori's quartet.

\(^{34}\) *The Times* (21 April 1840).

\(^{35}\) *Musical Library Monthly Supplement*, no.21 (Dec 1835), 19.

\(^{36}\) For a description of the arrangement of the concert hall at Willis's Rooms see the *Musical Library Monthly Supplement*, no.25 (April 1836), 69.
for the *Morning Herald,*\(^{37}\) and audiences swelled as the season progressed. An increase in audience numbers appears to have taken place at the Quartett Concerts too; the opening concert of their second season was given 'to an absolutely crammed audience, many of whom could not obtain a seat'.\(^{38}\) In order to accommodate the ever-increasing numbers of subscribers the screens were pushed back and the performing space enlarged (at Hanover Square in 1837, and at Willis's in 1838). Even then, according to the *Morning Post,* the designated auditoria were sometimes excessively crowded.\(^{39}\) Contemporary reports of two concerts in 1838 and 1839 put the attendance at chamber-music concerts in Willis's Rooms at about 600.\(^{40}\) To the modern observer it may seem strange that large audiences should have been attracted to such specialized entertainments as chamber-music concerts; but it should be remembered that the programmes were punctuated by vocal items, often operatic arias, and that concessions to instrumental virtuosity - in the guise of Baroque sonatas rendered by cello and double bass - were close at hand. The purely instrumental chamber concert was yet to come.

One of the disadvantages of performing chamber works in a large room was that the intimacy and effect of the music were attenuated. Complaints of this nature were not new: Baillot had said much the same when he performed quartets at the Philharmonic

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\(^{37}\) *Morning Herald* (29 Jan 1836).

\(^{38}\) *Musical World,* iv, no.50 (24 Feb 1837), 154.

\(^{39}\) *Morning Post* (14 April 1837 and 1 Feb 1838).

\(^{40}\) *Sunday Times* (18 Feb 1838) and the *Morning Post* (13 Feb 1839). These estimates may well have been conservative, since the Hanover Square Rooms had a capacity of 800-900, and the large room at Willis's held 900; see Robert Elkin, *The Old Concert Rooms of London* (London: Edward Arnold, 1955), 93; Michael Forsyth, *Buildings for Music...* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 38; and Adam Carse, *The Orchestra from Beethoven to Berlioz...* (Cambridge: W. Heffer and Sons, 1948), 162.
concerts in 1816.\textsuperscript{41} The Times felt the enlarged space at Hanover Square was 'not an advantage' for chamber music: 'the feeling of the audience, as well as that of the musicians, was stronger when the space was more contracted'.\textsuperscript{42} As if to counteract this problem, Blagrove introduced a changed concert-room arrangement for the 1839 series by:

\begin{quote}
... erecting a small orchestral platform at one side of its [the room’s] centre, half round which the seats of the audience were placed semicircularly. By this means all were enabled to hear as well as only one-fourth could under the usual plan, and such a result could not be priz’d too highly where music so nicely delicate in all its parts was to be listened to and appreciated.\textsuperscript{43}
\end{quote}

The steady growth of audiences for Mori’s and Blagrove’s concerts was no doubt linked to the general expansion in London concertgoing in the 1830s and 40s. Although chamber-music concerts may have initially been viewed as somewhat recherché, the inclusion of popular items and songs was almost certainly a conscious move to give the concerts a wide appeal and to attract those aristocrats and members of the upper middle classes who could afford to attend them. In the space of two or three seasons the following sort of observation had become commonplace:

\begin{quote}
The [fact that a] crowded and fashionable audience assembled to listen to a series of long instrumental pieces, which, a few years ago, nobody would have thought of performing in public, shows how much the taste for this description of music is increasing.\textsuperscript{44}
\end{quote}

Mori’s and Blagrove’s series were of course welcomed by members of the music profession and by enthusiastic amateurs, but the popularity of the new chamber-music concerts was not limited to the cognoscenti. The press were eager to report the presence

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{41} See Guynemer, Essay, 10. \\
\textsuperscript{42} The Times (31 March 1837). \\
\textsuperscript{43} Morning Herald (8 Feb 1839); see also The Times (22 Feb 1839). \\
\textsuperscript{44} Morning Chronicle (1 Feb 1838).
\end{flushright}
of ‘fashionables’ in the audience, and reviews of both sets of concerts were given prominent positions on the court pages of most newspapers. Indeed, the popularity of the chamber-music concerts with the fashionable world was often cited as proof of improving standards of musical appreciation.45

Attentiveness was encouraged, particularly at Blagrove’s concerts, where the printed programmes provided tempo indications of the individual movements of instrumental works to help listeners follow the basic design of each piece. Concentrated listening was not a new phenomenon - Simon McVeigh has shown that in the 18th century it had been fostered at certain concerts (e.g. the meetings of the Castle Society), where concentration was clearly focussed on the music rather than the social event46 - but it was only gradually achieved at other types of London concert. In fact, the emergence of a public audience for chamber music in the 1830s and 40s clearly played an important part in the development and honing of listening skills during the 19th century. At the new chamber concerts changes were definitely afoot (the ability of much of the new chamber repertory to invoke silence was frequently remarked upon by critics), and codes of behaviour more typically associated with 18th-century audiences were being questioned, if not condemned, by many. Critics, in particular, while keen to promote enthusiasm for serious chamber music, were becoming increasingly uneasy about the way in which some people behaved during performances. The Duke of Cambridge, a frequent visitor to Mori’s and Blagrove’s concerts, was reprimanded on more than one occasion by the musical press for his enthusiastic, but inappropriate, gestures of appreciation

45 See, for example, the Morning Chronicle (17 Feb 1837).

during the music. As in most London concerts, listeners were able to come and go during the performance and most people began to leave the hall during, or even before, the last item of each ‘act’. This too was being questioned. In a review of a Classical Chamber Concert in 1839, The Atlas lamented that large numbers of people had left at the end of the penultimate item:

The last chord of HAYDN’s charming quartett was the signal for a pretty general scramble for hats and cloaks, and as the shuffling of feet and other noises attending fashionable departures precluded any positive knowledge of the fact, we were left to conjecture that the performance of BEETHOVEN’s superb terzetto concluded the concert.48

The ability to attract audiences large enough to cover most of the concert expenses was intrinsic to the economic health of the new West End chamber-music concerts. Even without the expense of hiring an orchestra, the organizers of small concerts had no guarantee of breaking even, let alone making a profit. When John Ella gave his first small-scale subscription series in 1830 (four concerts) and 1831 (three concerts), he made losses of £57 8s and £70 respectively; the shortfall was attributed to the costs of hiring singers (usually five for each concert) and the limited numbers of subscribers (fewer than 100).49 Subscriptions amounted to £92 14s 6d in 1830 and £90 in 1831; expenses, including fees to players and singers, advertising and printing costs, lighting, concert room hire etc., were £150 2s 6d and £160 respectively.50 The Quartett and Classical Chamber concerts appear to have fared much better. Unfortunately, no accounts for

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47 See the Musical World, xiii, no.207 (5 March 1840), 142-3: ‘we, however, wish he would not be quite so forte in his admiration, especially during piano passages’.

48 The Atlas, xiv, no.664 (2 Feb 1839), 75.

49 Record of the Musical Union (1857), no.4, suppl., p.xiv.

50 Information found in the Ella Collection, MS 82 [account book for 1830-31 concerts].
Blagrove’s or Mori’s concerts survive; but it seems probable that both series broke even and, more likely, that they made a profit. Audience numbers, as we have seen, were healthy; and with small numbers of performers, including only one or two vocalists who appeared in only a small proportion of the concerts (some performed towards the end of the concert and would arrive after an engagement at the opera), the cost of performance fees would have been minimized. Perhaps the biggest financial drain on the concert promoters was the increasing need to hold and pay for rehearsals; William Watts’s withdrawal from Mori’s quartet at the end of the 1837 season was connected with a dispute over what he considered to be measly remuneration for rehearsal time and effort, in the light of the concerts’ healthy profits. As second violinist he was paid less than the other musicians; he explained his position to Mori in a letter of resignation:

You must feel assured that I am always flattered and delighted to be one of your Accompanists but when it is before a public Audience it becomes a Matter of extreme attention and anxiety. I am perfectly aware that all the Rehearsals, and perhaps more than we have had are quite necessary to the well going of the Music, therefore your offer of terms wd. not pay me for the trouble and time so occupied under five guineas a Concert at the least.51

In 1836 the subscriptions for the Quartett and Classical Chamber concerts were set at one guinea per series; this entitled subscribers to four concerts from Blagrove’s group or three from Mori’s. Individual tickets were priced at 7s and 10s 6d respectively. Blagrove’s concerts remained much less expensive than Mori’s until 1838, when Mori instituted reductions in the cost of individual tickets which brought prices down from 10s 6d to 8s. In 1839 Mori’s prices dropped further to match Blagrove’s: 7s bought an individual ticket, and for the first time a guinea subscription covered four concerts rather than three. The cost of tickets for Blagrove’s concerts during the period was unchanged.

51 London, British Library, MS Loan 48.13/38, f.15.
It is difficult to estimate how much money was made from subscriptions and individual ticket sales, but with audience numbers reported as 400 (1836) and 600 (1839), and relatively few performers to remunerate, takings must have generally exceeded expenses.

Numbers of performers of course varied between concerts, depending on the repertory being performed, octets and nonets requiring the presence (and payment) of more musicians. Between 1836 and 1839 Mori’s concerts typically involved some 15 performers (including instrumentalists, singers, and accompanists), while Blagrove’s called, on average, on nine. In addition, a number of Mori’s colleagues would have expected higher fees than Blagrove’s fellow musicians. Some, such as Lindley, Dragonetti and Giovanni Puzzi, were the cream of London freelance players, while others, such as Moscheles and Madame Dulcken, were soloists with significant reputations. Dragonetti, whose reputation for driving a hard bargain is well known, characteristically demanded five guineas per night for performing in the first series of Classical Chamber Concerts. In comparison, Blagrove’s personnel were drawn largely from a group of players who then occupied only rank-and-file orchestral positions and presumably would not have expected particularly high fees. Dando, Gattie, Lucas, Charles Guynemer, William Blagrove (violin; d 1858) and James Howell were among this core team. Solo pianists and wind players were engaged much less frequently than at Mori’s concerts; on a few occasions Blagrove hired more expensive musicians, such as Moscheles and the leading orchestral clarinettist in London, Thomas Willman, though he more typically engaged younger and/or less expensive performers such as the pianists William Sterndale Bennett (then in his early 20s) and Lucy Anderson, and the wind

52 See Dragonetti’s correspondence in London, British Library, Add MS 17838, f.227.

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players Jean Sedlatzek (flute; 1789-1866) and Bowley (clarinet; dates unknown). Mori’s subsequent reduction in ticket prices in 1839 may also have been connected with competition for audiences, since by the end of the decade the feasibility of chamber-music concerts in London was clearly established, and a crop of similar chamber-music concerts had begun to spring up.

3. Other chamber-music concerts, 1836-42

The increase in chamber-music concerts in the late 1830s was not restricted to the West End. Although participating in the Quartett Concerts at Hanover Square, Dando continued to be involved in the chamber-music concerts in the City which had been established in the 1835-6 season. Regular performers included H. J. Banister (cello), Joseph Banister (violin; dates unknown), Henry Hill (viola; 1808-56) and Charles Severn (double bass; 1805-94). The concerts were later known variously as the Classical Instrumental Concerts (1836-7) and the City Quartett Concerts (1838), and were organized by the violin maker Purdy [Purday] of Finch Lane, Cornhill. The 1836-7 series was held at the Horn Tavern; the 1838 concerts took place at the London Tavern in Bishopsgate Street. No other London chamber concerts at this period excluded vocal music from their programmes. A series of chamber-music concerts given at Grove House, Camberwell, in the 1837-8 season adopted the tested West End formula of chamber music and songs, as did the four chamber-music concerts organized by the violinists John Willy (1812-85) and Joseph Banister at the London Tavern in 1840.

In the West End Ignaz Moscheles began to capitalize on the new vogue for

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53 The Atlas, xiii, no.608 (7 Jan 1838), 12; Pigot & Co’s National London, & Provincial Directory (1836) lists as violin makers the firm Purdy & Fendt, of 20 Finch Lane, Cornhill.
chamber-music concerts in a new and original way: early in 1837 he announced that ‘in accordance with the increasing taste for Classical Music’ he would give three soirées of piano music ‘hitherto unheard in public in this country’ at the King’s Concert Room, Hanover Square. In particular, works by such ‘old’ composers as Domenico Scarlatti, Handel and J. S. Bach were to be heard alongside the music of Beethoven, Mendelssohn and Weber. As Nicholas Temperley has shown, performances of solo piano music by Classical composers were virtually unknown before the advent of Moscheles’s concerts, and even Beethoven was little regarded as a composer for the piano. Before the concerts were inaugurated many voiced doubts as to the wisdom of performing so concentrated a programme of piano music, but once the series had begun such comments appear to have evaporated. The Atlas was certainly not alone in its commendation of the enterprise: ‘The idea of serving up by degrees all the good things that are lying perdue in the pianoforte library is excellent’. More controversial, at a time of great technological progress in piano-making, was Moscheles’s decision to perform many of the Baroque works - especially the music of Scarlatti - on a harpsichord. The Times, for example, considered it a gimmick, claiming that the instrument ‘should be sent back

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54 The Spectator, no.445 (7 Jan 1837), 21 [advertisement].


56 The Morning Post (20 Feb 1837) and the Musical World, iv, no.50 (24 Feb 1837), 156, in particular, were quick to refute the charge that Moscheles’s programmes were monotonous.

57 The Atlas, xii, no.563 (26 Feb 1837), 142.

58 According to the Musical World, the idea was suggested to Moscheles by two of the journal’s readers; see the Musical World, iv, no.47 (3 Feb 1837), 111. The harpsichord Moscheles played was made by Burkat Shudi in 1771.
to the obscurity from which he has drawn it', while the *Morning Post* admitted the harpsichord's tone was 'poor and thin after that of the pianoforte' but felt it 'carried us back to the days of BACH, SCARLATTI ..., HANDEL, &c.'.

Moscheles's concerts were repeated in 1838 and in 1839 (as matinées); the 1838 and 1839 series were patronized by the Duke of Cambridge, an avid supporter. All three series were imbued with a sense of historicism. In the first concert of the second series (27 January 1838) Moscheles gave his listeners a chronological survey of the piano repertory. The programme began with Scarlatti and ended with Weber; in between there was music by a number of composers, including Handel, Dussek, Clementi, Field, Mendelssohn and Beethoven. According to Moscheles, this approach served to:

> ... introduce the public first to those composers from whose shoulders Beethoven launched himself on his eagle's flight. The background to his art must not be forgotten if one is to pay homage to his music now.

In the 1839 series Moscheles pushed the historical boundaries back even further, and performed pieces by Mondonville and Orlando Gibbons.

Although Moscheles's soirées were built around solo keyboard music, they also included a selection of vocal numbers and, usually, one item of piano chamber music. In the first series the chamber music was limited to accompanied sonatas: Puzzi joined

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59 *The Times* (24 March 1838).

60 *Morning Post* (20 Feb 1837).

61 Charlotte Moscheles wrote that "The tone at these soirées was set by the Duke of Cambridge. He wanted to hear everything twice over ... He is extremely kind to Moscheles and asks after each soirée, "Pray, when is the next?"": quoted in Emil F. Smidak, *Isaak-Ignaz Moscheles: the Life of the Composer and his Encounters with Beethoven, Liszt, Chopin and Mendelssohn* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1989), 117.

62 Smidak, *Isaak-Ignaz Moscheles*, 117. The suggestion for a chronological programme had been aired the previous season; see *The Spectator*, no.452 (25 Feb 1837), 183.
Moscheles to perform Beethoven’s sonata for piano and horn op. 17, and Mori played the ‘Kreutzer’ sonata op. 47. In later seasons, piano trios and larger ensembles were admitted to the repertory. Moscheles also used these concerts to introduce his own works, including his series of Characteristic Studies op. 95. The concerts were halfway between piano recitals and chamber-music concerts, and were the first in London to present concentrated programmes of solo piano music. Thereafter, piano music became relatively commonplace in many chamber-music concerts, though few concert-givers maintained the serious tone of Moscheles’ enterprise, and most included virtuosic piano pieces, such as fantasias and variations on popular tunes.

In May 1837 the pianist and composer Charles Neate began a series of three soirées at the Hanover Square Rooms. Like Moscheles, Neate used his concerts to promote his own solo piano compositions, as well as his reputation as a performer. Piano chamber music - in which Neate played the piano parts - was a central feature of the concerts, which also included vocal items and instrumental showpieces for a variety of guest performers, normally flautists, harpists and other pianists. Neate’s soirées lacked the concentration of solo piano music that characterized Moscheles’s concerts; instead they focused on the repertory of concertante piano chamber music. They continued to be held annually until 1841.

Christian Rudolph Wessel (1797-1885) opened a similar set of evening concerts at Pape’s Piano Rooms in Frith Street in 1837. Like Neate’s soirées, Wessel’s were a mixture of serious chamber music - much of it with piano parts - songs and lightweight instrumental items, but the rationale behind Wessel’s concerts was slightly different from that of others. Although Wessel was a good amateur flautist - he played in at least one of the soirées - he was a music seller and publisher by profession and his concerts
essentially served to further his commercial ends. Wessel was known mainly as an importer of foreign music and publisher of Chopin, and the concerts, which were dominated by works by Chopin, Kuhlau and Mayseder, provided a practical ‘tasting’ of items in his catalogue. No entry fee was charged. The concerts were repeated in 1838, this time at Kirkman’s Piano Manufactory in Soho Square. Little else is known about these concerts or their economics. The piano makers, by allowing their instruments to be used in the concerts, received good publicity from the enterprise, and may have even contributed financial support.

In May 1842 the German violinist and composer Bernhard Molique (1802-69) was in London for the première of his symphony at the Philharmonic Society. Three days after the performance Molique began a series of soirées musicales at Hanover Square. The concerts were in the same mould as Neate’s, but with the emphasis on the violin rather than the piano: works (in this instance violin solos and string quartets) composed and performed by Molique, other chamber music, showy instrumental items and songs. Two string quartets and a piece of piano chamber music were played in each concert. In quartets Molique was joined by Jean-Baptiste-Victor Mohr (violin; dates unknown), Henry Hill (viola) and Georg Hausmann (cello; dates unknown).

Another variation on the chamber-concert format was tried by the renowned Italian horn player Giovanni Puzzi, who gave a series of three ‘Classical Wind Concerts’ at the Hanover Square Rooms in February and March 1838. The concerts mirrored the overall design of the Quartett and Classical Chamber concerts, but relied on chamber music for wind rather than strings. Reicha’s wind quintets formed the nucleus of Puzzi’s programmes, though Krommer’s nonet in E flat, Beethoven’s piano quintet, Onslow’s piano sextet and other works were also played. Songs were interpolated. A core
ensemble of Puzzi (horn), Sedlatzek (flute), Willman (clarinet), Baumann (bassoon; dates unknown) and Apollon Marie-Rose Barret (oboe; 1804-74) was supplemented when necessary by other leading London wind players, the pianists Lucy Anderson, Edouard Schulz (1812-76) and Moscheles, and Dragonetti on the double bass. The concerts were well attended, and some critics voiced the hope that they would be continued the following season. Even so, limitations of repertory and tone colour meant that wind chamber music was not to everyone’s taste. The concerts were not repeated, although music for wind ensemble was occasionally included in other types of chamber concert.

The majority of the new chamber concerts were organized in series (normally comprising three concerts and operating by subscription), but a few one-off entertainments are also known to have taken place, both in the City and in the West End. For example, in April 1836 H. J. Banister gave a benefit concert at the Hanover Square Rooms; the programme comprised chamber music and was cast in the same mould as the Quartett or Classical Chamber concerts: items of instrumental chamber music interspersed with a few songs. A similar benefit for Blagrove took place in May 1837. In the City the following month, a benefit concert for the young violinist George Case (dates unknown), was given at the Horn Tavern. Case was a frequent performer in Purdy’s regular chamber concerts, and the benefit programme, like those for the other City concerts, consisted entirely of chamber music.

The City was also host to a ‘showcase’ chamber-music concert for the famous Norwegian violinist Ole Bull (1810-80) in July 1836. The event was promoted by Purdy, and the performers included Dando and Hill, regular participants in Purdy’s City series. Although the programme included string quartets by Mozart and Beethoven (led by Bull),

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63 See, for example, criticisms in *The Athenaeum*, no.537 (10 Feb 1838), 107.
a large portion of the proceedings was devoted to less serious instrumental music: Charles Neate played a piano fantasia on ‘Rule Britannia’, Bull extemporized on Mozart’s duet ‘Là ci darem’ (Don Giovanni) and the Belgian cellist Adrien-François Servais (1807-66) performed a solo in dazzling style. Vocal numbers were also included.

A number of different types of chamber-music concert thus evolved in the wake of Mori’s and Blagrove’s experiments. Even though contemporary writers were unconcerned with generic distinctions and tended to classify all small-scale concerts together, the concerts discussed above may be broadly categorized according to programme content, as follows: ‘pure’ chamber-music concerts, in which only instrumental ensemble music occurred (e.g. Purdy’s City concerts); and ‘mixed’ chamber-music concerts, in which instrumental ensemble items were interspersed with songs and duets (e.g. the Classical Chamber Concerts, Quartett Concerts and Puzzi’s concerts). In some ‘mixed’ concerts, display pieces for solo instruments were placed alongside ensemble chamber music and vocal numbers (e.g. Neate’s, Wessel’s and Molique’s concerts); these may be termed ‘hybrid’ chamber-music concerts. Such concerts served to promote the instrumental or compositional skills of the concert-giver and/or performer.

The inclusion of fantasias and other flamboyant pieces of solo instrumental music may well have attracted larger audiences, as well as satisfying the performers’ need for showmanship. Not everyone thought such programme policy a good idea. In a review of one of Molique’s soirées, for example, The Atlas remarked that ‘M. MOHR’s flute variations were most cleverly and tastefully executed, but the trivial character of the music wholly unfitted it for companionship with the instrumental compositions by which it was surrounded’.^^

^^ The Atlas, xvii, no.836 (21 May 1842), 329.
From the outset, West End chamber-music concerts were held at the beginning of the season, normally between January and March. This had several advantages, not the least of which was that musicians were more easily engaged then than later in the year. The Philharmonic, Ancient Music and Società Armonica concerts began to make demands on the time of both musicians and audiences from March onwards, and the summer months of May, June and July were traditionally clogged with benefit concerts. Furthermore, many felt that in the early part of the season the sort of people who went to concerts were sympathetic to serious music; many of the more frivolous concertgoers were simply not yet in town. The *Musical World* echoed the opinions of many other journalists:

> We quite agree with the *Morning Herald*, in attributing more of interest and attraction for the sound musician to the opening, than to the close of the London concert seasons; for although the latter is far more brilliant in its audiences, the former is usually more remarkable for the excellence and high character of its performances. ... If the reader only call to mind the character of an audience at a benefit morning concert, late in July, where all the prodigious people go, and compare it with that of one of our serial concerts which begin at this period of the season [i.e. January], ... he will be struck with the difference.\(^6^5\)

It is interesting to note in the light of this that 'hybrid' chamber concerts (e.g. Neate's and Molique's), in which there were concessions to instrumental display, normally took place in the latter part of the season, usually in May and June.

4. Gathering momentum, 1842-5

During the early 1840s the number of London chamber-music concerts increased still further. In the space of five seasons the number of chamber concerts had more than quadrupled, rising from 15 concerts per season in 1839-40 to at least 62 in 1844-5. A

\(^{65}\) *Musical World*, xi, no.151 (31 Jan 1839), 71.
significant development came when Blagrove decided to end his association with the Quartett Concerts, apparently because of disputes between him and the other players. Their last concert together was given on 29 April 1842. The series was continued, however, by Dando, who moved the concerts to the City and renamed them ‘Dando’s Quartett Concerts’. The venue for the new enterprise was the Throne Room at Crosby Hall, Bishopsgate; according to a circular issued in early 1842, Dando had recently acquired the lease to the Throne Room, and had had it refurbished. Dando became the leader of the quartet, John Fawcett Loder (1812-53), son of the veteran violinist J. D. Loder, took Dando’s place on the viola, and Gattie and Lucas maintained their roles as second violin and cello respectively. The first concerts were given even before the association with Blagrove had been dissolved, and the series continued until 1859.

The transplantation of the Quartett Concerts from the West End to the City quickly proved that there was a ready audience in the mercantile district. There had, after all, been chamber-music concerts in the City during the previous decade and Dando, a key participant in them, was presumably confident that subscribers could be found. Newspaper reports tell us that the concerts were well attended by local people; and as their reputation increased a few enthusiasts even made the journey across the capital. The Throne Room at Crosby Hall was smaller than that used for the Quartett Concerts at

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66 The Times (18 May 1844) [a retrospective account].

67 Elkin, The Old Concert Rooms, 144. Dando lived at 31 Bishopsgate Street (the front entrance to Crosby Hall); see the Musical World, xvi, no.291 (12 Aug 1841), 101.

68 For a discussion of Dando’s Quartett Concerts from the 1845-6 season onwards see Chapter V, pp.198 and 201-3 below.
Hanover Square, with less than half its square footage, and a putative capacity of 370.\textsuperscript{69} Indeed, its dimensions made it a far more suitable venue for chamber music.\textsuperscript{70} Furthermore, unlike earlier City concerts, these events were widely reported both in the general and the specialist press, suggesting that the West End was beginning to recognize the merit of the City’s musical traditions.

Dando’s thirst for new and interesting repertory, and the exacting rehearsal and performance standards of his ensemble (a habit ingrained from their years with Blagrove), kept the concerts in the forefront of London musical life. The series of four concerts announced for 1843 was extended to six by popular demand. In the first four seasons there were English premières of a number of works, including Boccherini’s quartet op.33 no.2, the quartet arrangement of Haydn’s Seven Last Words (performed at a concert in Holy Week 1843), Mendelssohn’s quartet op.44 no.3, Spohr’s quartet op.74 no.2 and Weber’s clarinet quintet op.34.\textsuperscript{71} At the last concert of the 1844 series Dando secured the services of Mendelssohn, who performed some of his Songs without Words and extemporized on the piano; there was also a performance of the octet op.20. The presence of Mendelssohn was a great attraction and the room was ‘crammed full’.\textsuperscript{72}

In the West End, many musicians appeared eager to fill the gap in the concert calendar that had been left by the departure of the Quartett Concerts. In the two seasons 1842-3 and 1843-4 more than a dozen different series of chamber concerts were

\textsuperscript{69} According to The Times (8 April 1842), the room measured 44ft x 22ft; this can be compared with the large room at Hanover Square which measured 79ft x 32ft and had a seating capacity of 800 (see Forsyth, Buildings for Music, 38-9).

\textsuperscript{70} This view was put forward in The Atlas, xviii, no.879 (18 March 1843), 171.

\textsuperscript{71} For details of other premières see Appendix B.

\textsuperscript{72} Musical Examiner, no.84 (8 June 1844), 617.
introduced. At the same time, the number and variety of musical entertainments in London was expanding rapidly; according to one periodical it would be 'endless to recount the multitude and variety of musical entertainments with which the metropolis abounds'. Hence, organizers of chamber-music concerts had to vie with other entertainments for prospective performers and, to some extent, audiences. Such was the competition for suitable concert dates that chamber concerts began to occur both earlier (November and December) and later (June and July) in the season. Moreover, concerts were frequently rescheduled - which means that advertisements are often misleading as to where and when concerts took place - and few journals were able to keep abreast of all that was going on.

From 1843 a number of subscription concerts of chamber music were held in private houses, often musicians' lodgings or rooms specially rented for the purpose. The location of such addresses was critical, since wealthy Londoners were highly sensitive to the social tone of districts (many respectable areas were situated in close proximity to disreputable ones), and only musicians giving concerts in reasonably reputable neighbourhoods could hope successfully to attract audiences. (For the same reason many musicians chose to rent lodgings in acceptable areas for the purposes of giving lessons.) At this period many fashionable people had town houses in Mayfair, St James's, Belgravia and the Portland and Portman estates north of Oxford Street. Not surprisingly, then, most of the chamber concerts that were given in private houses took place within the area bordered by Tottenham Court Road to the east, Gloucester Place to the west, Marylebone Road to the north and Oxford Street to the south; and some venues in Harley

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73 Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, li (1842), 428.

74 For an accurate list of concert dates see Appendix F.
Street, Baker Street, Mortimer Street and Berners Street continued to be used for concerts for many years. Such venues had artistic advantages, for chamber music was at last being heard in the intimate surroundings for which it was written, but whether or not these concerts were financially rewarding is open to doubt. The Britannia made the following observation:

The custom of giving soiêres musicales at their [musicians’] own residence is progressing rapidly. It is generally admitted that these small concerts do not pay, but the professors urge that they keep their teaching connection together, and add to their individual fame. 75

For the musician the principal advantage of giving concerts at a private address was that some of the overhead costs disappeared (hire of hall etc.); but for most concert-givers the cost of engaging musicians, particularly singers, remained, and with smaller auditoria the profits from subscriptions were unlikely to match those seen by Mori and Blagrove in the previous decade. 76

Many of the concert-givers were pianists, most notably William Sterndale Bennett, Luise Dulcken (1811-50), and Charles Salaman. Bennett’s first two series of Classical Chamber Concerts were held at his residence at 42 Upper Charlotte Street in January and February 1843 and 1844. As a pianist, Bennett already commanded a considerable reputation for his blend of technical accomplishment, delicacy of touch and sound musicianship; but he soon showed himself also to be an intelligent programme planner. His programmes consisted mainly of solo piano music, and as such may be seen as a continuation of Moscheles’s concerts of 1837-9. Piano pieces by Bennett sat alongside

75 The Britannia, v, no.255 (2 March 1844), 138.

76 The number of musicians involved in what became a ‘round’ of chamber-music concerts was actually quite small, and it is possible, though unproven, that many gave their services free, in the manner of benefit performances.
works by Scarlatti, Bach, Beethoven and Mendelssohn. Two or more pieces of chamber music - usually accompanied sonatas, piano trios or larger ensembles - were also included, and there was the ubiquitous sprinkling of songs. Bennett, who was also the most distinguished British composer of the period, was keen to secure performances of his own music, and several works for solo piano, the piano trio op.26 and the sextet op.8 were introduced in the course of his Classical Chamber Concerts. The concerts, which were generally considered to be aimed at the connoisseur, attracted many distinguished musicians, professional as well as amateur. The Morning Herald summed up the concerts as follows:

... there is good honest music, performed by clever painstaking people, selected with the discretion of the master, and intended for the mental refreshment of those only who have some acquaintance with the divinity of art.

Although no concerts were held in 1845 or 1846, Bennett recommenced his series in 1847.

In November and December 1843 Luise ('Madame') Dulcken gave her first series of Soirées Musicales at her home in Harley Street. The sister of the violinist Ferdinand David (1810-73), Dulcken enjoyed a reputation for brilliance of execution, and was highly esteemed in fashionable London circles; she was also an experienced chamber musician and had given many performances at the Quartett and Classical Chamber

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78 The names of a number of concertgoers were printed in the Musical Examiner, no.15 (11 Feb 1843), 104.

79 Morning Herald (6 Feb 1844).

80 For a discussion of Bennett’s later series see Chapter V, pp.198-201 below, passim.
concerts. Dulcken's concerts were far less focussed on the solo piano repertory than Bennett's: although she occasionally included a piano sonata or other solo piece, there was much more chamber music, including string quartets and other works in which she did not play. In conventional fashion, vocal numbers were introduced between the instrumental items.

Dulcken's soirées were well attended - one critic observed 'upwards of 240 ladies and gentlemen' - and were generally commended for the choice of music presented and the type of listener the concerts attracted:

... her programmes have but little of the popular flashiness to recommend them, and they are inviting only to those to whom music is something more than an agreeable noise ... In the best sense of the word her audiences are select; that is, they are ... people whose ears take in music with an Epicurean relish, and with a keen intellectual enjoyment.\footnote{Morning Herald (21 Nov 1844).}

Programmes were dominated by 'serious' ensemble music, especially works by Beethoven, Mendelssohn and Mozart, and the solo piano music was usually confined to sonatas by Beethoven or Weber. Experimentation and first English performances were rare: the première of a quintet by Nicholas Schaffner in December 1844 caused something of a stir, partly because it introduced a new string instrument, the basso di camera (a small double bass), and partly because there was controversy over the merits of the music.\footnote{Morning Chronicle (5 Dec 1844).} A second series of Soirées Musicales was announced for early 1844 and the pattern of two series, each of three concerts, was repeated in the 1844-5 season.\footnote{For discussion of Dulcken's concerts from the 1845-6 season onwards see Chapter V, pp.198-202 below, passim.}

A similar programme format was adopted by the pianist Charles Salaman, who
gave a series of three Classical Chamber Concerts at his home (36 Baker Street) in spring 1844. Like Dulcken, he was widely commended for his sound choice of repertory, which centred on chamber music by Beethoven, Hummel and Mendelssohn. Salaman, a pupil of Charles Neate, had played in the Concerti da Camera of 1835, but had not performed chamber music in public since then.

1844 also saw the first West End concerts devoted wholly to instrumental chamber music. They were given by the cellist and experienced chamber musician H. J. Banister, who began a series of five concerts at his home in Burton Crescent (now Cartwright Gardens) on 27 January 1844. At each concert two string quartets, two pieces of chamber music for other combinations (quintet, piano trio, string trio etc.) and one solo piano work were performed. Beethoven, Haydn, Mendelssohn, Mozart, Onslow and Spohr were the principal composers whose music was presented. Among Banister's co-performers were the violinists Joseph Banister, Joseph Dando, Henry Gattie and John Willy. The last concert in the 1844 series took place at Blagrove's Rooms, which had recently opened on the former site of Greaves's Auction Rooms in Mortimer Street.

The following February (1845) another cellist with extensive experience of chamber music, Charles Lucas, set up two series of four chamber-music concerts at no.54 Berners Street. The concerts, known as Lucas's Musical Evenings, continued for several years. For his programmes Lucas relied mainly on the string quartet repertory from Haydn to Mendelssohn, with, additionally, sonatas and other chamber genres. During the first season, programmes contained four instrumental items and two vocal numbers (often glee), but from 1846 the vocal music disappeared. Presumably taking

84 For a discussion of Lucas's concerts, 1846-8, see Chapter V, pp.198-201 below, passim.
his cue from the practice adopted at the Quartett Concerts, Lucas arranged the performers in the centre of the room, with the audience gathered 'at pleasure' around them.  

The five series described above - Bennett’s, Dulcken’s, Salaman’s, Banister’s and Lucas’s - maintained similar raisons d'être, namely the performance of ‘serious’ instrumental music to paying audiences in the concert-giver’s home. The press was virtually united in approving the choice of music - which was generally described as ‘classical’ or ‘intellectual’ - and the absence of pieces for virtuoso display. It was also quickly acknowledged that the domestic drawing room was better suited to chamber music performance than the large concert hall. The Atlas, for example, proclaimed that:

... such pieces [quartets, quintets etc.] are really as they describe themselves, chamber-music, ... neither the full extent of their own beauty, nor the finest points in their performance, can be detected in the large areas of our concert rooms.

Furthermore, domestic concert venues were agreeable to audiences:

Ushered into well-lighted drawing-rooms, the company take their seats, not in formal state, but as at a private party, and between the parts of the programme descend to take tea and other refreshments, leaving sufficient time to discuss the quality of the pieces just heard.

Two further ‘domestic’ series deserve mention at this juncture: John Ella’s musical réunions of 1844 and the chamber-music concerts organized by the Society of British Musicians. On 16 April 1844 Ella began a series of 14 weekly réunions at his house in Mortimer Street. The concerts were held in the afternoons, and in many ways laid the foundations for Ella’s Musical Union, which was established the following year. Although vocal music was excluded from the programmes, which focussed on chamber

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85 The Britannia, vi, no.305 (15 Feb 1845), 107.

86 The Atlas, xviii, no.917 (9 Dec 1843), 791.

87 The Britannia, iv, no.243 (9 Dec 1843), 775.
music by Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Mozart and Onslow, there was usually a token solo instrumental item to display the talents of one or more of the famous instrumentalists Ella had engaged. Mendelssohn, Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst (1814-65), Prosper Sainton (1813-90), Camillo Sivori (1815-94) and the young Joseph Joachim (1831-1907) were among the famous musicians who appeared during the series. At the third concert Joachim sight-read the first violin part of Mozart’s string quintet in G minor K516 and led a performance of Beethoven’s quartet in B flat op.130. A host of aristocrats attended every concert. With the exception of the penultimate réunion, which was open to a paying audience, the concerts were organized privately, and were not advertised in newspapers and journals. In spite of this, Ella’s réunions received extensive and favourable coverage in a choice number of papers, in particular the Morning Post - evidence, no doubt, of Ella’s continuing influence in the journalistic world.\textsuperscript{88}

The Society of British Musicians, which was established in 1834 for the promotion of works by native composers, had occasionally included chamber music in its orchestral-cum-vocal concerts. From autumn 1842 chamber music was given a far more prominent role in the society’s proceedings, when a series of nine chamber-music concerts was held on alternate Saturday evenings at 23 Berners Street, the residence of the society’s secretary, James Erat (dates unknown).\textsuperscript{89} The principal aim was to give British composers an opportunity to have their chamber music (and songs) performed; but in accordance with the recent relaxation of the society’s rules, music by non-British composers was also included in the programmes, to enable constructive, critical

\textsuperscript{88} Ella probably wrote some of the notices himself; see the Record of the Musical Union (1865), no.5, suppl., p.9 and (1870), no.1, p.4.

\textsuperscript{89} Erat was a harp manufacturer; the building also housed his showrooms.
comparisons to be made. Instrumental works by C. E. Horsley, G. A. Macfarren, Caroline Orger, Cipriani Potter, Henry Westrop and many others were heard alongside Beethoven, Haydn, Mendelssohn, Mozart, Onslow and Spohr.

The concerts continued for several seasons. Initially known as conversazioni, they aimed both to foster the mutual exchange of ideas and criticism among members, and to promote friendship among musicians. The performers, among them Gattie, Willy, John Wade Thirlwall (violin; 1809-76), Hill, Lucas, H. J. Banister, William Lovell Phillips (cello; 1816-60) and Severn, were society members and gave their services free of charge; audiences were made up of members and their guests (later on public tickets were issued). Not surprisingly, the meetings were deemed to have:

... more the air of a friendly private party than of a formal public concert; most of the visitors appear to be known to each other, and incessant are the mutual recognitions and greetings of the company.

In 1843 and 1844 special chamber-music concerts were held in honour of Spohr and Mendelssohn respectively. By the end of 1844 attendances were healthy, membership of the society had begun to increase, and the concerts were receiving ample coverage in the general press. The cause of British music at this period, however, was an emotive issue, and partisan feelings were rarely far from the surface of newspaper and periodical reports.

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90 For discussion of concerts from 1845 onwards see Chapter V, pp.198 and 203 below.

91 Sunday Times (9 Oct 1842).

92 Dramatic and Musical Review, no.85 (11 Nov 1843), 547.

93 See, for example, the favourable reports in the Musical World by J. W. Davison, and the dismissive remarks in The Britannia and elsewhere from the pen of C. L. Gruneisen.
The performance of British chamber music was not restricted to the Society of British Musicians. We have already seen how Charles Neate and W. S. Bennett, eager to promote their compositional wares, incorporated their own music into their chamber concerts. Others followed suit. In 1843 G. A. Macfarren (1813-87) and J. W. Davison began ‘Concerts of Chamber Music’ at Chappell’s Piano Rooms (50 New Bond Street) in which their own music was given a high profile; the series continued the following year at the newly refurbished Princess’s Theatre at the east end of Oxford Street.

Davison was primarily a song composer and there was a larger than normal presence of vocal items (accompanied by the composer) in the programmes. Whereas three or four songs had hitherto been standard in chamber-music concerts, Macfarren and Davison regularly included at least ten numbers. Nevertheless, there was a substantial amount of instrumental music: chamber music and solo piano pieces by Macfarren and other British musicians featured prominently, though programmes were balanced by the presence of instrumental items by Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Mozart and other well-known foreign composers. The choice of music, which included Beethoven’s quartet in C sharp minor op.131 and Mendelssohn’s piano trio in D minor op.49, was warmly welcomed by most critics, and large audiences were consistently reported. Several leading musicians, among them Mendelssohn, Moscheles and the pianist Leopold de Meyer (1816-83), were known to have attended the concerts; and many prominent instrumentalists, including Blagrove, Madame Dulcken, Ernst, Goffrie (violin; dates unknown), Lucas and even Mendelssohn, performed in them.

Chamber-music concerts with an abundance of vocal music and a firm emphasis on British compositions were also offered by the pianist-composers Thomas Molleson Mudie (1809-76) and William Henry Holmes. Mudie’s concerts took place at Hanover
Square in 1843, Holmes’s at Willis’s Rooms in 1844. Both men placed their own music - some of it for solo piano - alongside works by Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Mozart, Spohr and others. Among the items of chamber music were Mudie’s piano quintet in E flat and his piano trio in D, and Holmes’s piano trio in A and his piano quartet. Although Holmes’s series was criticized by some people for pandering to popular taste, most especially in his selection of vocal music, both sets of concerts generally maintained a serious air, and were considered somewhat recherché.

The 1843-4 season also saw the advent of a set of six subscription concerts at Crosby Hall in the City, under the auspices of the Literary and Scientific Institution and under the immediate management of W. S. Bennett, who strove to ensure the concerts were filled with serious repertory. Chamber works by British composers (Bennett included) were heard alongside pieces by Beethoven, Haydn, Mendelssohn, Mozart and Onslow, and there was a liberal amount of vocal music.

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By the early 1840s many chamber-music concerts were being held before the commencement of the London season proper. Indeed, their appearance soon came to herald the opening of the season for serious music-lovers.\(^4\) Although some of these concerts were given in concert halls, increasingly they took place in the drawing rooms of private houses. The exact number of subscribers to most of the ‘domestic’ series outlined above is unknown, but the attendance at Bennett’s first concert of 1843 was put at 100 (a disappointing size, by contemporary standards),\(^5\) and on one occasion in 1844

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\(^4\) Musical Examiner, no.69 (24 Feb 1844), 429.

\(^5\) See Bennett, The Life of William Sterndale Bennett, 148, and The Athenaeum, no.794 (14 Jan 1843), 44.
Madame Duicken (whose concerts were generally considered to be well attended) attracted more than 240. Average attendance at domestic concerts may have therefore been in the region of 170. These figures contrast sharply with the size of audience reported at Mori's concerts in the mid-1830s, when gatherings as large as 600 were noted. In effect, however, the number of serious chamber-music-lovers was probably not diminishing. With a greater number of concerts available throughout the season, the potential audience would have necessarily been spread more thinly, and although there were surely some stalwart supporters of all chamber concerts, few would have been able to attend every concert on offer. Furthermore, Mori's concerts had, we know, been patronized by members of the fashionable world, many of whom would not have been in London so early in the year. The small, pre-season soirées, with their emphasis on 'serious' repertory, were thus the property of the more dedicated concertgoer.

Chamber music, then as now, carried severe, intellectual overtones, and the repertory at serious chamber concerts ('mixed' as well as 'pure') centred on the works of Mozart, Beethoven and Mendelssohn, backed up by Haydn, Onslow and Spohr. New compositions (especially British ones) were judged against these models. The epithet 'classical' was routinely attached to serious chamber-music concerts by concert-givers as well as critics, though precise definitions of the characteristics of classical music were rare: one writer described classical pieces as 'severe in their character and exacting minute attention'; another felt classicality was defined by an 'absence of anything of a showy or common-place quality'. Indeed, a dichotomy between serious chamber-

96 See The Observer (18 Feb 1844).

97 The Britannia, iv, no.243 (9 Dec 1843), 775, and the Morning Herald (13 Feb 1844) respectively.
music concerts and popular or 'hybrid' ones, at which virtuosic showpieces were performed, soon became apparent. According to an article in The Spectator, at the concerts of Holmes, Dulcken, Bennett and Salaman there seemed to be:

... a general desire to lay aside all claims to the character of the great *artiste-exécutant*, the fire-eater and magician, and to depend for distinction on the more abstract and intellectual quality of expression.98

Although serious chamber concerts were normally clustered at the beginning of the season, by the mid-1840s some were taking place towards the end of the 'benefit season', that is, during the early summer months. In addition to those already mentioned (e.g. Ella's musical réunions) there were the performances in honour of Spohr (July 1843) and Mendelssohn (June 1844) at the Society of British Musicians (a 'mixed' programme of vocal as well as instrumental pieces), and a special concert at Hanover Square given by Sivori, Sainton, Hill and Rousselot (July 1844; a 'pure' programme, comprising instrumental chamber music only). Most of these concerts appear to have been organized to exploit the temporary availability of famous European musicians, for whom London was an important port of call during their annual concert tours.

Popular programmes in the guise of 'hybrid' chamber-music concerts traditionally took place late in the season. Like 'classical' chamber-music concerts they grew rapidly in the early 1840s. Typically, one or two items of chamber music were surrounded by instrumental solos, virtuosic display pieces and songs. Henry Blagrove gave one such series of Séances Musicales at the Hanover Square Rooms in 1843; there was a similar series under the title Concerti da Camera at the Hanover Square Rooms in 1843; and by the mid-1840s one-off 'benefit' performances of similar design were taking place.

98 The Spectator, no.815 (10 Feb 1844), 138.
CHAPTER V: FULL STEAM AHEAD, 1845-50

By 1845 chamber concerts had become a regular part of the London concert calendar, almost all the Viennese chamber-music 'classics' had been introduced and many of them had been repeatedly played, and a clearly discernable body of serious chamber-music-lovers had begun to form. The year itself may be seen as a watershed, for it was in the spring of 1845 that two specialist chamber-music societies, whose names feature prominently in histories of English concert life in the 19th century, were inaugurated: the Musical Union and the Beethoven Quartet Society. Both organizations were established by men with longstanding devotions to chamber music, and both provided a forum for the intellectual appreciation of the medium. Although innovatory in style, the Musical Union and the Beethoven Quartet Society did not appear 'out of the blue'; rather, they were a timely development in a city that was witnessing a burgeoning interest in serious chamber music. Nor were they the only chamber concerts in London during the second half of the decade: many other series were inaugurated and/or continued to flourish. The Beethoven Quartet Society lasted until the early 1850s. The Musical Union became one of the most long-lived concert societies in Victorian London; it flourished until 1881. In the discussion that follows, profiles of the Musical Union, Beethoven Quartet Society and other concert series are limited to the period up to 1850.
1. John Ella and the Musical Union

In the wake of his 14 musical réunions of 1844, the violinist and would-be impresario John Ella began making preparations for a new concert society, under the distinctive name of the 'Musical Union'. Although we do not know why Ella chose this name, it should perhaps be noted that the words have a certain resonance with the Art Union of London, a society established in 1836 to increase levels of art appreciation in England.1 Bearing Cicero’s motto ‘Honor alit artes’ (Honour nourishes the arts), the Musical Union was to be devoted to the intellectual appreciation of chamber music by serious-minded musicians and music-lovers, both amateur and professional. An early prospectus proclaimed:

This Society is organized for the special object of having the highest order of Instrumental Chamber Music executed by first-rate Artists, and to promote Social Intercourse between Native and Foreign Practical, Theoretical, and Literary Members of the Profession, and Amateurs of cultivated and refined taste.2

The idea for the Musical Union was apparently suggested to Ella by Mrs Grote (wife of the banker and historian George Grote), herself a keen amateur musician.3 Concerts were to be held every two weeks, on Tuesday afternoons, at Ella’s residence in the West End (70 Mortimer Street); in the event they were held at Blagrove’s Rooms (71 Mortimer

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1 Early subscription lists show that most members of the Art Union lived in Bloomsbury, Regent Street and other fashionable districts in the West End of London; see Lyndel Saunders King, The Industrialization of Taste: Victorian England and the Art Union of London (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1985), 43-4. Although the overlap between the membership of the Art Union and the Musical Union was small, some people subscribed to both. The philanthropist and Member of Parliament Benjamin Bond Cabell (1781-1874), for example, was one of the founders of the Art Union and also a loyal member of the Musical Union, while the brewer and bibliophile Frederick Perkins (1780-1860) of Chipstead, Kent, subscribed to the Art Union and was on the management committee of the Musical Union.

2 Ella Collection, MS 81, item 18/19.

3 See the Record of the Musical Union (1880), no.7, p.29.
Street), and were deliberately scheduled to follow Philharmonic Society concerts - held on Monday evenings, at fortnightly intervals - and thus to take advantage of those artists and concertgoers likely to be in town. According to the prospectus, the society was to be conducted 'in the same social spirit as the Ré-unions Musicales of ... last season', and there was a strong hint that many of the eminent instrumentalists who had appeared at the 1844 concerts would be engaged for the new concert series (see Fig. 1).

The Duke of Cambridge, a keen violinist whose enthusiasm for playing chamber music has already been demonstrated, acted as president; the Earl of Westmoreland [formerly Lord Burghersh] (1784-1859), an amateur violinist, composer and one of the founders of the Royal Academy of Music, was vice-president; and there was a 17-strong committee, whose members included Viscount Adare (1782-1850) and Viscount Templeton [Templetown] (1799-1863), Lord Saltoun, the Earl of Falmouth, two Members of Parliament, Sir George Clerk (1787-1867) and Sir Richard Bulkeley Philipps (1801-57), and a number of non-titled men. Many of them are known to have been enthusiastic amateur musicians - Sir George Clerk and the Earl of Falmouth, for example, were keen violinists, while Lord Saltoun played the guitar and was a prominent figure in the Melodists' Club and the Madrigal Society. Moreover, the Duke of Cambridge, the Earl

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4 Ella Collection, MS 81, item 18/19.

5 See Chapter II, pp.59-60 above; the Duke of Cambridge was also president of the Art Union.

6 The Committee originally comprised the Earl of Falmouth, Viscount Templeton, Viscount Adare, Lord Saltoun, the Hon. Major Legge, the Hon. Captain Cadogan, Sir George Clerk, Sir Richard Bulkeley Philipps, General Sir Andrew Barnard, General Sir John Campbell, and Messrs E. Jekyll, C. Raper, C. [?] = J.] Clerk, S. Shelley, Clayton Freeling, C. Lukin and C. Staniforth. By the time the first Record of the Musical Union was printed the personnel had changed: Jekyll and Raper had been replaced by the Hon. Lawrence Parsons and Frederick Perkins.
THE MUSICAL UNION.

"HONOR ALIUM ARTES."

"In no State have the Fine Arts obtained perfection, where those who professed them did not receive honours and distinction, exclusively of the just commendation for their ingenuity and their labour."

President.
HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE DUKE OF CAMBRIDGE.

Vice-President.

The EARL of WESTMORLAND.

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THE EARL OF FALMOUTH.

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DIRECTOR.—J. ELLA, PROFESSOR.

(See Mem. of the Phil. Acad. of Rome).

70, MONTMOUTH STREET.


This Society is organized for the special object of having the highest order of Instrumental Chamber Music executed by first-rate Artists, and to promote Social Intercourse between Native and Foreign Practical, Theoretical, and Literary Members of the Profession, and Amateurs of cultivated and refined taste.

The Meetings of The Musical Union will take place at the Residence of the Director once a fortnight, on the Tuesday afternoon succeeding each Concert of the Philharmonic Society. A Record of the performances will be published, and all matters connected with the proceedings of the Society will be under the sanction of the Committee. One Guineas to be paid to the Funds of the Society, on receiving the Card of Membership.

The Musical Union will be conducted in the same social spirit as the Réunions Musicales of Mr. Ella last season, when the following Artists honoured him with their company:—


The Members of the Committee have each Ten Nominations for Ladies and Gentlemen, Amateurs of Instrumental Music.

Fig.1: The 1845 Prospectus of the Musical Union (Ella Collection, MS 81, item 18/19; 85% of original size)
of Westmoreland and at least a dozen of the committee members are known to have attended Ella’s 1844 réunions and other chamber-music concerts. Although subscriptions were priced at one guinea for eight concerts, and were thus relatively inexpensive, admission to the Musical Union was socially restricted, being available only through nomination by a committee member. As a result, members were either well-known professional musicians or amateurs from the higher social orders, and the Musical Union quickly attained a reputation for social exclusivity. The committee had little artistic control over the society; its prime function was to give financial and social support to the new enterprise. It was Ella, the self-styled ‘director’ of the Musical Union, who took musical charge.

From the outset Ella aimed to foster a special atmosphere of musical intellectualism in his concert audiences. To this end he produced the Record of the Musical Union, a four-page printed pamphlet containing skeletal programme notes - among the first of their kind - along with general musical articles, biographies of musicians, anecdotes and news items. Ella owed the idea for the programme notes to Clayton Freeling (dates unknown), a longstanding friend of his and member of the

7 Newspaper accounts record the presence of Barnard, Cadogan, Clerk, the Earl of Falmouth, Freeling, Jekyll, Legge, Parsons, Phillips, Lord Saltoun, Staniforth and Viscount Templeton at many chamber-music concerts.


9 The first programme notes issued in Britain were written by John Thomson for the concert in memory of General Reid (Edinburgh, 13 Feb 1841); see George Grove, ‘Analysis’, A Dictionary of Music and Musicians, ed. George Grove (London: Macmillan and Co., 1879-89), i, 62-3. Ella’s notes were the first in Britain to use musical examples.
Musical Union committee.\textsuperscript{10} The \textit{Record} was published by Cramer, Beale and Co., and copies were circulated to members in advance so that they could ‘prepare’ themselves for the music they were to hear.\textsuperscript{11}

The inaugural meeting of the Musical Union took place on 11 March 1845; the programme consisted of string quartets by Haydn (op.71 no.1 in B flat) and Beethoven (op.59 no.3 in C), and Hummel’s piano trio op.83 in E, described in the programme as ‘Written ... to exhibit the practical skill of his co[n]temporary [J. B. Cramer] in difficult and brilliant passages’.\textsuperscript{12} Ella noted afterwards in his diary that ‘all went admirably well’.\textsuperscript{13} Six further concerts followed at Blagrove’s Rooms; the eighth took place in the Princess’s Theatre. All eight programmes consisted of instrumental music only. In the first number of the \textit{Record of the Musical Union} Ella stated that each programme would ‘be limited to two pieces of Music by the Classical Composers, and one morçeau brillant’.\textsuperscript{14} The idea of including the ‘morçeau brillant’ may have come from the Earl of Westmoreland; in a letter (1844) accepting vice-presidency of the Musical Union he had warned against letting the concerts become too austere:

\begin{quote}
... don’t let it [the Musical Union] become of too exclusive a character as to Author’s as is sometimes the case in England, but let it be open & generous in its patronage protection & encouragement to all that may be ranked as Classical
\end{quote}

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{10}] \textit{Record of the Musical Union} (1854), no.1, p.4.
\item[\textsuperscript{11}] For a bibliographic description of the \textit{Record of the Musical Union} see Leanne Langley, \textit{The English Musical Journal in the Early Nineteenth Century} (PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1983), 628-32.
\item[\textsuperscript{12}] \textit{Record of the Musical Union} (1845), no.1, p.5.
\item[\textsuperscript{13}] Ella Collection, personal diary, entry for 11 March 1845.
\item[\textsuperscript{14}] \textit{Record of the Musical Union} (1845), no.1, p.1.
\end{itemize}
This apparent stipulation turned out to represent guiding principles rather than strict regulations, for more than once during the first season no truly 'brilliant' piece was to be found in the programme, and in 1851 the formal rule regarding the 'morçeau brillant' was dropped from official literature. The majority of Musical Union concerts presented serious, or 'classical', chamber music, with works by Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven the stalwarts of the first few seasons. Some works were revisited in almost every season; among those that made frequent appearances were Haydn's quartets op.76 nos.4 and 5 and op.77 no.1, Mozart's quartet K575, Beethoven's 'middle-period' quartets (opp.59 and 74) and piano trios (op.70 nos.1 and 2; op.97), Mendelssohn's quartet op.44 no.2 and his two piano trios (op.49 and 66) and Spohr's third double quartet (op.87). More than 30 performers appeared in the opening series; among them were Henry Vieuxtemps (1820-81), Sainton, Goffrie and [? Adolphe] Deloffre (violins), Hill (viola), Rousselot (cello) and Wilhelm Kuhe (piano; 1823-1912). Although Ella engaged a number of British instrumentalists, famous foreign musicians dominated the lists of executants.

Ella was well placed to be at the helm of the Musical Union. He was a skilled chamber musician with a thorough and practical knowledge of the chamber-music repertory; and he also had an acute intellectual appreciation of music. He had experience of the practicalities of concert organization, was acquainted with several wealthy amateur musicians and potential patrons, and had numerous contacts in the music profession. In addition Ella was an experienced freelance writer and critic, which enabled him to produce a professional publication for the society.

15 Ella Collection, MS 81, item 20/21a. In the Record of the Musical Union (1845), no.1, p.2, Ella claimed to have anticipated Westmoreland's suggestion.
Ella's love of chamber music was deep-rooted, having been nurtured by William Gardiner in Leicester and continued among the fraternity of professional musicians in London. Moreover, since the late 1820s he had regularly attended chamber-music concerts on the Continent, and in particular had witnessed several quartet performances in Paris. There he had encountered several eminent French chamber musicians, among them Baillot, Jean-Joseph Vidal (violin; 1789-1867) and one or both of the Tilmant brothers, Théophile (violin; 1799-1878) and Alexandre (cello; 1808-80). Baillot's concerts appear to have been a special source of inspiration for Ella, and every issue of the Record of the Musical Union carried the following quotation from Baillot which effectively summed up the spirit of Ella's enterprise:

Il ne suffit pas que l'artiste soit bien préparé pour le public, il faut aussi que le public le soit à ce qu'on va lui faire entendre.

[It is not enough for the artist to be prepared for the audience, the audience must equally be prepared for what it is going to hear.17]

Ella had also attended chamber-music concerts in London, though had rarely participated in them.18 His concert performances as a chamber musician were limited to playing the viola in Madame Dulcken's two series of 1843-4 and performing in his own private réunions of 1844. This situation may at first glance seem surprising, given the fact that Ella is known to have frequently played chamber music in private with many of his orchestral colleagues. However, it should be remembered that most of the London

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16 In his Musical Sketches, Abroad, and at Home (London: William Reeves, 3/1878), 401, Ella recounted how in 1827 he heard Vidal's and Baillot's groups play chamber music; and his diaries record his presence at performances by Tilmant in 1836 and 1843 (see Ella Collection, personal diaries, entries for 1 and 15 Dec 1836, 23 Feb 1843).

17 My translation.

18 Ella's diaries show he was present at a number of Mori's and Blagrove's concerts, 1836-41.
orchestral musicians who participated in chamber concerts were principal players, and as such represented the most technically competent musicians in town. Ella was essentially a ‘back-desk’ player, which meant that his skills as a violinist were almost certainly not matched by his passion for, and understanding of, the music. Nevertheless, his enthusiasm for playing chamber music in private, for personal edification as well as at private soirées, continued throughout the 1830s and early 1840s; entries in his personal diary show that new pieces were normally assessed critically. The following private notes are typical:

Played with Schulz Mayseder’s third Quartet, in F minor arranged in Duo by H. Romberg; the violin passages are unnecessarily for the Piano retained literally as originally written, a fault which should with discretion be remedied in arrangements by suiting the Genius of the particular instrument substituted - this fault pervades the Six Quartets thus arranged. Onslow’s Op 11-No 1 & 2 Sonatas, afforded as much delight by their contrast.¹⁹

Soirée chez Mr. Luard ... S[chulz], I, Banister & Brother played 2 Quartets by Kuhlau, in G and C minor. Both are brilliant; the first ye most original: there are three. In the present dearth of good Piano Quartets, they deserve a place in the Library of a Musician in preference to any but Mozart’s. Played Spohr’s Nonetto arranged as a Quintetto - The Adagio I think a poor movement, & by introducing the Motivo of the first Allegro exhibits a want of invention and power of producing contrast - The chief charm in Spohr consists in the chromatic harmony of his Counterpoint & the smootheness [sic] of the latter in Instrumentation, & his chief defect is to incessantly repeating & working upon his first subject; the effect of his music is frequently languid & monotonous, yet no musician can listen to his music without admiring its workmanship, at least. Played a Pot-pourri by Czerny as a Quintet: of airs from Operas with Variations - Noisy trash.²⁰

Ella had studied harmony with Attwood at the Royal Academy of Music in 1825-6, but attributed his formation as a critical musician to François-Joseph Fétis (1784-1871), with

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¹⁹ Ella Collection, personal diary, entry for 1 Jan 1836.

²⁰ Ella Collection, personal diary, entry for 20 Jan 1836.
whom he had studied counterpoint in Paris in 1827. Ella retained great respect for his Belgian-born teacher and later claimed: ‘To this learned musician, theorist, composer, historian, and critic … I chiefly owe what knowledge I possess of music and musical literature’. Ella’s academic leanings initially found an outlet in the critical notices he wrote for the Morning Post (1828-48) and other papers, and from 1845 he was able to channel his intellectual energies into writing articles and ‘analytical’ programme notes for the Record of the Musical Union. In the compilation and production of the Record, Ella’s journalistic experience was naturally invaluable.

By 1845 Ella had also gained extensive experience of organizing musical entertainments, both private or public, and had been forging links with amateur musicians among the aristocracy and wealthy middle classes for nearly 20 years. Ella’s meticulously-kept diaries from the late 1830s and early 40s show that he spent a lot of time dining and playing chamber music with wealthy amateur musicians, and that he was a frequent house-guest during the summer months at Lord Saltoun’s Scottish country residence, where he came into social and musical contact with many rich and influential people. Ella was thus able to tap into his potential audience with relative ease, and most of the founding committee members of the Musical Union were people with whom he was already associated. Moreover, Ella was known to most professional musicians active in London, and had already called on many of them for his own enterprises. They could

\[\text{References:}\]

21 Record of the Musical Union (1871), no.3, suppl., p.i. In his Lectures on Dramatic Music and Musical Education, Abroad and at Home... (London: Ridgway, 1872), 40, Ella claimed he had also had lessons in composition and ‘instrumentation’ in Paris.

22 Ella, Musical Sketches, 226.

23 For discussion of Ella’s music-making activities in wealthy circles during the 1820s and early 30s see Chapter III, pp.102-3 above.
easily have formed a pool of performers for the Musical Union. But increasingly - and
almost certainly as a result of his numerous trips to the Continent and his strong
Europhile temperament - Ella was becoming socially connected with foreign musicians,
and right from the start his favoured performers at the Musical Union were mainly
foreigners.\textsuperscript{24} In a letter to J. W. Davison early in 1845, Ella identified the qualities
which he believed had marked him out to found the Musical Union:

\begin{quote}
What are my musical qualifications, it may be asked by the envious? Here they
are! I have been many years member of all the great orchestras, am a pupil of
Attwood and Fétis, am devoted to my profession and am Director of the
Noblemen and Gentlemen’s Amateur Club at Lord Saltoun’s and the GUEST of
the leading members of the ‘Musical Union.’ Talent and character - a modicum
of the former combined has given me the power of organising this Society, which
I opine will lead to great results.\textsuperscript{25}
\end{quote}

At the outset, tickets for Musical Union concerts were not routinely issued to the press,
but ‘gentlemen of musical literary attainments, known to the Committee or Director’ were
invited to be present.\textsuperscript{26} This stipulation may well have provoked resentment in certain
journalistic circles, and it is well known that some writers were highly critical of the new
organization. Henry Chorley (1808-72), for example, wrote a series of disapproving
articles in \textit{The Athenaeum} (1845), in which he complained that the prospectus for the
Musical Union was inaccurate and misleading, and suggested that the new society was
not viable financially, nicknaming it the ‘Musical Ruin’.\textsuperscript{27} In the \textit{Musical World
\textsuperscript{24} In particular, Ella was quick to capitalize on the sudden availability of foreign
musicians in England as a result of the revolutions of 1848.

\textsuperscript{25} Henry Davison, comp., \textit{From Mendelssohn to Wagner, being the Memoirs of J.
W. Davison, Forty Years Music Critic of ‘The Times’} (London: William Reeves, 1912),
82.

\textsuperscript{26} \textit{Record of the Musical Union} (1845), no.1, p.8.

\textsuperscript{27} \textit{The Athenaeum}, no.897 (4 Jan 1845), 18-19, and no.901 (1 Feb 1845), 129; see
also no.916 (17 May 1845), 500-01; no.921 (21 June 1845), 621; and no.923 (5 July
Davison wrote equally vituperatively, attacking Ella for (among other things) being more interested in furthering his own interests than in improving the status of musical art.²⁸ Such malice and partisanship demonstrates well the problems of bias that can be encountered when using newspapers as source material. Chorley and Ella had been on particularly bad terms for years: it was an animosity that may well have developed from Chorley’s journalistic relationship with Ella, who had been his predecessor on The Athenaeum.²⁹

Chorley grumbled specifically that Ella had initially intimated there would be 13 concerts but had delivered only eight. He also complained that the Musical Union had not fulfilled its promise to improve on Ella’s private concerts of 1844; in particular the calibre of instrumentalist was, he claimed, decidedly inferior. But Chorley was most critical of the membership and subscription policy, and claimed that in limiting the number of subscribers to about 200 Ella was keeping his takings unnecessarily low. This bothered Chorley on two counts: first, he believed that the subscribers themselves should contribute more money to the enterprise (they could easily afford it, he argued); second, he was convinced - though he appeared to have no proof - that performers were not paid, a practice he abhorred. When Ella scheduled a special director’s benefit concert for 8 July 1845 at the Princess’s Theatre, and priced individual tickets at one guinea (stalls) and half a guinea (gallery), Chorley declared himself vindicated. Central to Chorley’s grievances was his championship of the musicians’ cause and his distaste for the idea that

²⁸ Musical World, xx, no.7 (13 Feb 1845), 73-4; the journal also reprinted some of Chorley’s articles from The Athenaeum.

"gentle" subscribers belonging to the class best able to remunerate talent have got music cheap out of "simple" artists!". 30

The validity of Chorley's complaints is worth considering. Certainly, many of the subscribers to the Musical Union came from the higher echelons of London society (some also subscribed to the Concerts of Ancient Music, the long-standing bastion of aristocratic concertgoing). William Weber, in his Music and the Middle Class (1975), concentrated on the social constituency of the Musical Union up to 1848 and demonstrated that its subscribers were initially drawn from the aristocratic and upper middle classes. 31 According to his calculations, at least 71% of Musical Union subscribers were listed in Boyle's Court Guide (1848), and in 1848 there was a far greater concentration of 'high social status' subscribers in the membership lists of the Musical Union than in those of the Concerts of Ancient Music. 32 Allowing for the acknowledged decline in membership of the Ancient Concerts (the organization had long been in difficulties and 1848 was its final season), Weber also suggested that the social status of the Musical Union had outstripped that of the Ancient Concerts even in their heyday (1820), 33 and - more controversially - that the Musical Union effectively replaced the Ancient Concerts (traditionally attended by the nobility) and Philharmonic Society's concerts (traditionally attended by the upper middle classes), both of which were considered to be in decline in the late 1840s. In Weber's eyes, the Musical Union was 'a new unitary high-status

30 The Athenaeum, no.923 (5 July 1845), 668.
31 Weber, Music and the Middle Class, 65-6.
32 In 1848 124 of the 213 subscribers to the Musical Union were titled, while only 41 of the 220 subscribers to the Ancient Concerts were titled.
33 Weber calculates that in 1820 214 of the 683 subscribers to the Ancient Concerts were titled.
series’, which drew on the audiences of both societies. While in practice the Musical Union may well have satisfied the ‘growing social rapport between the aristocracy and the upper-middle class’, the implication that the Musical Union was founded simply out of a need to satisfy such social demands, or that its importance should be understood primarily in relation to the Ancient and Philharmonic concerts, cannot be sustained. The Musical Union, as we have seen, was primarily concerned with raising awareness of the cerebral qualities of chamber music among a group of musically educated amateurs, in an intellectual and musically sympathetic environment; its social function was minimal. It was a select club for earnest enthusiasts, not a fashionable and faddish form of musical entertainment. Of course, it sought its members from the wealthy and leisured classes (afternoon meetings, after all, effectively precluded a large number of professional men), but seriousness of purpose was the Musical Union’s most distinguishing feature. As The Britannia pointed out at the time, a large number of the subscribers were competent amateur musicians. Indeed, Ella was keen to boast in the first issue of the Record of the Musical Union (1845) that the initial membership included 60 pianists, five ‘authors of published works’, four double-bass players, 29 violinists and 15 cellists; the remainder were ‘known patrons of the various musical institutions of the metropolis’.

The need to court, educate and consolidate an upper-class music-loving audience was central to Ella’s personal vision of the future patronage of music in England and was quite possibly one of the guiding principles behind the establishment of the Musical


36 *The Britannia*, vi, no.307 (1 March 1845), 139.

37 *Record of the Musical Union* (1845), no.1, p.5.

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Union. In a letter to Davison written at the time of Chorley’s attacks, Ella remarked:

Of course, every institution supported by the aristocracy must have enemies amongst levellers, republicans and atheists; ... Now, if we are to ridicule the aristocracy, where must we seek for patronage?38

The financial reasoning behind the Musical Union’s relatively low subscription rate is unclear, but it certainly seems that Ella’s prime concern was to lay the foundations for an intellectual music society among the monied classes, rather than simply to establish a socially élitist, money-making concern. Although account books for the first season do not survive, the list of members for 1845 indicates that there were 194 subscribers, which would have produced a maximum revenue of only £203 14s.39 Chorley was thus correct to surmise that the takings from subscriptions were relatively low, but wrong to conclude that they were Ella’s sole source of income. In fact, even before the season opened the Musical Union committee had agreed to establish a ‘reserve fund’ in case any losses were incurred.40 The idea that the performers were not paid was soon quashed when Davison (in the Musical World), in an astonishing about-face, admitted:

We have been in error, and own it without ceremony. … We are superior to the critic of the Athenæum, inasmuch as we erred conscientiously, while he wilfully misrepresented the truth. … Mr. Ella paid his artists not illiberally, and received a sufficient bonus from his aristocratic patrons to requite him for his expenses and his pains.41

The finances of the Musical Union were, nevertheless, not healthy. In his initial report to the directors of the Musical Union (dated 1 February 1845), Ella had stated his firm

38 Davison, From Mendelssohn to Wagner, 81.

39 This figure accords with contemporary newspaper accounts of Musical Union concerts, which estimate the attendances at no more than 200.

40 See the Record of the Musical Union (1845), no.1, p.2 [statement dated 1 Feb 1845].

41 Musical World, xx, no.32 (7 Aug 1845), 373.
belief that a full membership would be achieved and that there would consequently be no need to draw on the reserve fund at the end of the season. It would appear, however, that things did not go according to plan for, as stated earlier, a director's benefit concert was quickly arranged at the end of the first season (see Fig. 2). Attended by some 400, this event, in which popular chamber works were interspersed with songs and instrumental solos, and performers gave their services free of charge, must have alleviated the financial situation; but in spite of this, there was a deficit of £80 at the end of the first season. Whether it was the size of the loss, or a sense of foreboding about the future prospects of the Musical Union that bothered Ella, we cannot be sure; however, three days before the benefit concert the committee had passed a resolution concerning the management of future seasons. It was thus announced that for the 1846 season the committee would 'accede to the request of Mr. Ella, to add to the Members of this Society, and to have the entire pecuniary responsibility of its management'. Quite why Ella should have chosen to bear the financial responsibility of the organization is unclear: he may have been eager to show himself independent of his aristocratic committee, or he may have already entertained plans for making the society more profitable and may have even hoped to procure for himself a substantial portion of any surplus.

These and other changes to the modus operandi were carried out by the time the

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42 The deficit is mentioned in the Record of the Musical Union (1880), no. 7, p. 29, and in H. R. Haweis, John Ella: a Sketch from Life (pamphlet, c1885), 2. In the Record of the Musical Union (1870), no. 3, suppl., p. vii, Ella referred to 'the failure of the first season of 1845'.

43 Ella Collection, MS 81, item 20c; the resolution is dated 5 July 1845.
Fig. 2: A ticket for John Ella's benefit concert, which took place at the Musical Union on 8 July 1845 (Ella Collection, MS 81, item 19b; 200% of original size)
second season opened. Ella increased the number of Musical Union subscribers by asking existing members to nominate suitable people; the strategy was successful and the number of subscribers for 1846 jumped to 331, an increase of 71%. Ella also had the individual numbers of the Record of the Musical Union for 1845 bound up with supplementary material and sold independently at a cost of 2s 6d. Although he maintained the subscription rate of one guinea for eight concerts, he made it clear that the expenses of the current season were his personal responsibility and stressed that there would be a director's benefit concert, at which he would rely on 'the generous support of the Society'. The director and committee members were henceforth allowed to bring visitors to concerts, and there was also a plan to confer 'associate' status on those who were unable to attend afternoon performances and to allow them to attend rehearsals on the Monday evening preceding the concert. The idea involved rescheduling Musical Union meetings to alternate with Philharmonic concert weeks; but in the event the project was scrapped, and Musical Union meetings continued to be held the day after Philharmonic concert nights.

The opening concert of the 1846 season took place at the Princess's Theatre, but the venue was widely criticized for its acoustical properties - 'the resonance being so strong that the echo of one phrase impedes the development of the next' - and thereafter the concerts were transferred to Willis's Rooms, which, although not possessing a faultless acoustic, became the home of the Musical Union for the ensuing

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44 From 1846 the cost of a bound annual volume of the Record was one shilling.

45 Prospectus for the second season, bound with the Record of the Musical Union (1846).

46 Morning Post (1 April 1846).
12 years.\textsuperscript{47} Ella's 1846 benefit took place between the sixth and seventh concerts, and, as in 1845, a large number of people supported the event. The 1846 season made a small profit - thanks, presumably, to the increased revenue from subscriptions - but in spite of this a committee resolution announced at the end of the season that, in order to enable Ella to be remunerated from subscriptions, rates for the following year would be doubled in price to two guineas and the director's matinée would be one of the eight concerts. Indeed, according to Ella, from 1847 the financial health of the Musical Union generally stabilized.\textsuperscript{48}

Ella's society quickly gained an admirable reputation at home and abroad. The composer Georges Onslow, who attended the Musical Union while on a visit from France in 1846, wrote afterwards to Ella:

\begin{quote}
... let me compliment you heartily on the successful result you have obtained. The perfect performance of the eminent masters' works afforded me a pleasure which seemed completely partaken by a public continually attentive. Ladies following the music with scores in their hands \textsuperscript{[sic]} is a sight as much to be surprised at, as rarely to be found.\textsuperscript{49}
\end{quote}

The same year it was announced that Prince Albert (1819-61) was to become patron of the Musical Union (the association formally began in 1847, though was in effect nominal, for in spite of his interest in music there is no indication that Albert attended meetings). Furthermore, in June 1846 the fashionable Illustrated London News celebrated the young concert society with a highly favourable article and an accompanying half-page

\textsuperscript{47} For remarks on the acoustic at Willis's see the Daily News (23 April 1836).

\textsuperscript{48} Record of the Musical Union (1880), no.7, p.29.

\textsuperscript{49} Extract from the letter published in the Musical World, xxi, no.20 (16 May 1846), 245-6.
Fig. 3: 'Quartet party at the Musical Union' (Illustrated London News, viii, no. 217, 27 June 1846, 420; 90% of original size). Ella is fourth from the right, sitting next to the Duke of Cambridge; the Earl of Falmouth is at the extreme right of the picture.
illustration (see Fig.3). Foreign musicians had long been known as the darlings of aristocratic concertgoers, and Ella’s line-up of eminent foreign performers must have held great appeal for many of his subscribers. Indeed, for the fourth concert of the 1847 season the Earl of Falmouth lent two of his valuable instruments to Deloffre (violin) and Alfredo Piatti (cello; 1822-1901). In the course of the first six seasons quartets were usually performed by Sainton, Deloffre, Hill and Piatti. Regular ‘guest’ violinists were Sivori, Ernst, Vieuxtemps and Goffrie; the cellist Scipion Rousselot was a frequent participant until 1847; and in 1848 the pianist Charles Hallé (1819-95) began what was to be a long association with Ella and the Musical Union. Apart from Hill, the only English instrumentalist to appear regularly was the double-bass player James Howell, an old friend of Ella’s who was generally acknowledged to have become Dragonetti’s successor.

The core repertory at the Musical Union concerts of 1845-50 consisted of chamber music by Beethoven, Mozart, Haydn, Mendelssohn and Onslow. Daring programmes were rare, but in 1848 Ella oversaw the first English performance of Schumann’s piano quartet in E flat, op.47. Schumann’s music was virtually unknown in England in the

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51 Hallé’s account of his negotiations with Ella, in particular his allegation that Ella was reluctant to allow him to play Beethoven’s piano sonatas at the Musical Union on account of their being unsuitable for performance in public, has been shown to be a fictitious ploy, used to bolster Hallé’s unjustified claim to have introduced the piano recital in England; see Nicholas Temperley, Instrumental Music in England 1800-1850 (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 1959), 107-9. Hallé’s claim appears in C. E. Hallé and Marie Hallé, eds., Life and Letters of Sir Charles Hallé… (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1896), 103-4.

1840s, and in spite of a warm recommendation by Ella in the Record of the Musical Union, the piano quartet was coldly greeted by the press. Items of 'brilliant' music, when included at Musical Union concerts, were usually solo instrumental pieces, often by composer-performers such as Leopold de Meyer, Edouard Silas (piano; 1827-1909), Giovanni Bottesini (double bass; 1821-89) and Vieuxtemps. Vocal pieces were normally allowed only at the director's benefit; but in 1849 and 1850 Ella arranged for the Hungarian Vocalists, a small choir of 12 singers, to perform at many of the Musical Union's meetings.

By 1850 Ella had laid the foundations - in terms of artistic policies and social patronage - for a thriving and long-lived concert society. In the course of the next 30 years a galaxy of famous performers, among them the pianists Clara Schumann (1819-96), Anton Rubinstein (1829-94) and Hans von Bülow (1830-94) and the violinists Leopold Auer (1845-1930) and Pablo Sarasate (1844-1908), graced the concerts of the Musical Union, and a number of late 19th-century chamber works, including Brahms's piano quartet in C minor op.60 (1876), Tchaikovsky's string quartet in D op.11 (1876) and Fauré's violin sonata in A op.13 (1877), were given their English premieres. Ella managed the society until 1880 when, his eyesight failing, he decided to retire. Thereafter the Musical Union continued for only one further season, under the direction of the cellist Jules Lasserre (1838-1906).

Ella's achievement in founding and maintaining the Musical Union over a period of some 35 years was considerable. Ella was a complex amalgam of energy, musical knowledge and enterprise, who recognized an opportunity for the development of musical

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53 See for example The Atlas, xxiii, no.1142 (1 April 1848), 228, and the Daily News (30 March 1848). See also Ella's account of the first performance in the Record of the Musical Union (1869), no.4, p.16.
taste among an élite group of potential concertgoers. Although he was clearly attracted by the social benefits of mixing with the aristocracy, and enjoyed the prestige these connections gave him, there seems little doubt that Ella was initially driven by a desire to promote understanding of serious instrumental music among the class of British society that could best afford to patronize and sustain it. In addition, the repertory of Classical chamber music was Ella’s greatest musical passion; he had discovered its treasures in Paris in the 1820s, and he earnestly longed to share them with others.

Right from the start Ella tried to insist on concentrated listening during concerts. During the first season he announced that there would be ten-minute intervals between musical items so that people could come and go without causing disruption; and from 25 May 1847 programmes carried the following notice:

We entreat members unable to remain throughout the performances, to take advantage of the cessation between each movement of the compositions, to leave WITHOUT DISTURBING ARTISTS AND AUDIENCE.\(^{54}\)

Yet the fact that Ella had to keep reiterating to subscribers that they should not leave the room while music was being played indicates that the rule was not an easy one to enforce. Likewise, Ella called for total quiet during performances, and from 1846 the Record of the Musical Union regularly carried the motto ‘il più grand’omaggio alla musica, è nel silenzio’. Many biographers have told how Ella insisted on silence during concerts, though most of these stories are anecdotal and relate to episodes from the 1860s and 70s.\(^{55}\) An account by H. R. Haweis (1838-1901), however, claims to recapture

\(^{54}\) Record of the Musical Union (1847), no.5, p.21.

\(^{55}\) See, for example, Walter Willson Cobbett, comp. and ed., Cobbett’s Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2/1963), ii, 185: ‘It was a sight for the gods when Ella rose from his gilded seat, held aloft his large, capable hands, clapped them, and called for SILENCE in a stentorian voice. After this, no lord or lady present, however distinguished, dared to interrupt the music by fashionable or any
events from the early years of the Musical Union. According to Haweis:

Any attempt at talking or disturbance was promptly checked by the loud and authoritative "hush" of the Professor.\textsuperscript{56} ... The late Duke of Cambridge, during his presidency of the Musical Union [1845-50], was always present at the matinées. "Ah," he once remarked at a musical party where every one was talking; "you should get Ella here; he'd soon stop that."\textsuperscript{57}

During the early years of the Musical Union, newspaper commentators often referred to the exemplary behaviour of audiences and the intelligent way in which they listened to the music. The Record of the Musical Union played an important role in this respect, enhancing the members' reputation for diligent appreciation of the music. Likewise the powerful image published in the Illustrated London News (Fig.3), where the Duke of Cambridge and the Earl and Countess of Westmoreland are shown listening avidly, with literature (possibly scores and/or the Record of the Musical Union) to hand. Clearly, Musical Union audiences were one of (if not) the most attentive in London, and although such a measurement is a relative one (it is unlikely that total quiet was always practised), Ella's constant insistence on the value of silent and careful listening surely served as a model for many, and made a significant contribution to the development of London audiences' behaviour in the mid-19th century.

In seeking to foster the intellect, Ella went further than any other promoter of English chamber-music concerts before him. The creation of the Record of the Musical Union was a case in point. Henry Blagrove had taken a step in the same direction when, at the inception of the Quartett Concerts in 1836, he decided to include in his printed other kind of chatter'.

\textsuperscript{56} Ella became known as 'professor' when he lectured at the London Institution; see the Musical Times, xxix, no.549 (1 Nov 1888), 665 [obituary].

\textsuperscript{57} Haweis, John Ella, 1.
programmes a catalogue raisonée of the instrumental items (this normally amounted to providing keys and tempo indications of individual movements). Blagrove’s innovation met with general approval and certainly helped listeners to follow the structural outline of the music; according to the *Musical World*, for example, the provision of ‘a sort of inner bill, or contents within contents’ was ‘abundantly contenting to the musical reader’. But Ella, by producing literary analyses in which significant themes were pointed out and important compositional features discussed, attempted to educate his concertgoers to a much higher level. He even distributed the *Record* ahead of the concerts, so that members could have a chance to digest the material beforehand. Mendelssohn was apparently charmed by the pamphlets, and wrote to Ella: ‘I like your programme; it is very useful, and you ought to have a brevet d’invention for the idea’. Berlioz, in an article in the *Journal des débats* on musical institutions in England, was also enthusiastic about Ella’s attempts to educate the members of the Musical Union:

> Mr. Ella does not confine his attention to the performance of the masterpieces which figure in the programmes of these concerts; he also wants the public to understand them. Accordingly, the programme of each matinée, sent in advance to the subscribers, contains an analysis or synopsis of the trios, quartets and quintets which they are to hear; in general it is a good analysis, appealing to the eye as well as the mind, by adding to the critical text musical extracts, the theme of each piece, the most important musical figure or the most striking harmonies or modulations. One could not do more.

Ella wanted his audiences to have the opportunity of hearing chamber music played by the most illustrious instrumentalists, and chose to engage a number of different musicians

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58 *Musical World*, xi, no.157 (16 March 1839), 165.


60 A. W. Ganz, *Berlioz in London* (London: Quality Press, 1950), 92. The passage comes from an article originally published in the *Journal des débats* (31 May 1851); it was reprinted (in French) in the *Record of the Musical Union* (1851), no.4, p.36.
throughout the season. Inevitably, his tendency to engage foreign performers did not endear him to the champions of British music and musicians. Yet it must be said in Ella’s defence that throughout his life he campaigned to bring standards of music-making and musical training in Britain in line with those of the Continent and to improve the status of British musical life in the eyes of European musicians.\footnote{See for example Ella, Musical Sketches, passim, and Lectures on Dramatic Music, 35-41.} Even in his first report to the Musical Union committee (1 February 1845) he claimed:

> In affording foreign artistes of distinction, at once, an opportunity of social intercourse with the influential patrons of music, this society will do much towards rescuing this country from those reflections which musical travellers are doomed to hear in France, Italy, and Germany, on the musical taste of this country.\footnote{Record of the Musical Union (1845), no.1, p.2.}

Ella relished being surrounded by celebrated musicians and was eager to invite them to the Musical Union, either as performers or listeners. Berlioz, Hallé, Molique, Onslow and Spohr were among his personal guests at the Musical Union in the 1840s; and he frequently recounted with a blend of pride and vanity how his 1844 réunions had been attended by some of the most illustrious musicians of the day, among them Mendelssohn, Sigismond Thalberg (1812-71) and Luigi Lablache (1794-1858).\footnote{Ella, Musical Sketches, 250.} Ella was well aware of his achievement as an impresario and in later years filled his home with autographed photographs and memorabilia of the artists he had engaged. According to Haweis:

> Ella himself was a new type of entrepreneur - a good diner-out, a capital talker, a genial wit. It is this happy combination of agreeable qualities which more than anything has enabled Ella to do for the cause of music what he has done. He was welcome everywhere - always had a good story, a polished address, and an
Inevitably, as director of the Musical Union, Ella took on a position of power and patronage which did not find favour with all his fellow musicians. He was keen to take credit for his new society and to make exaggerated claims for it and for himself, mostly through the Record of the Musical Union. Some contemporary writers mocked his self-important manner in the Record; others were highly critical of his tendency to write flattering and uncritical accounts of matters associated with the Musical Union. Davison, displaying characteristic bile, described one such passage as containing 'lavish encomiums' and 'tremendous doses of eulogy'.

Many later commentators, perhaps relying too heavily on opinions emanating from Ella, have viewed the Musical Union as a starting point for, rather than as an important stepping stone in, the development of chamber-music concerts and the introduction of the Viennese chamber repertory to London. Although Ella's achievements were admirable, they were not ipso facto innovatory, and many aspects of the Musical Union can be traced back to the chamber-music concerts of the 1830s. The layout of the concert hall, for example, with the performers in the centre and the audience round about was, according to Ella, suggested to him by the arrangements at Prince Czartoryski's private...
concerts in Vienna; but the arrangement echoed practices adopted in London in the 1830s by Blagrove and especially by Moscheles, who at his 1837 concerts had 'placed himself in the centre of the room, in a sort of magic circle, with his audience all spread around him'. Likewise the artistic necessity for rehearsals, which usually took place the evening before Musical Union concerts, had been fully established by Blagrove and his colleagues ten years earlier. And although Ella boasted that his use of foreign performers meant that standards of performance were exceptionally high, this was apparently not always the case.

In addition, the corpus of serious chamber-music works presented in Musical Union concerts had already been introduced - and some of them repeatedly played - in London during the decade from 1835, and while one of the distinguishing features of Ella's society was the absence of vocal items in its concerts, even this was not an innovation, since others, most notably Dando (1835-8) and H. J. Banister (1844), had already given concerts of instrumental music only. Moreover, the occasional inclusion of 'brilliant' pieces sometimes gave Musical Union concerts a less strictly 'classical' feel than, say, Dulcken's, Lucas's or Salaman's.

Perhaps most important of all is the role played by the Musical Union in developing the intellectual appreciation of serious chamber music, in particular among the upper classes. As the Morning Chronicle observed in March 1845:

We look with pleasure on the formation of this institution. Its object, and its mode of accomplishing it, are not new in themselves, but they are new in the

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67 Ella, Musical Sketches, 349.

68 The Times (31 March 1837).

69 See, for example, critical remarks in The Spectator, no.927 (4 April 1846), 331; no.934 (23 May 1846), 499; and The Atlas, xxii, no.1094 (1 May 1847), 315.
class of society under whose auspices it has been established. Among our aristocracy there have always been some genuine lovers of music in its highest departments; but, as a body, they have justly been regarded as behind the middle classes in musical taste and cultivation.\(^{70}\)

Indeed, within a short period other aristocratic music clubs were springing up, patronized by many of the key figures behind the Musical Union. In 1847 the Amateur Musical Society, an orchestra of amateurs conducted by Michael Balfe (1808-70), was established under the patronage of Prince Albert, the dukes of Cambridge and Leinster, the earls of Westmoreland and Falmouth, and other aristocrats. The same year Ella's Musical Union was well represented at the inaugural concert (1 November) of the Brighton Musical Union, which was established by Antonio Oury and his wife, the pianist Anna Caroline Oury (née de Belleville; 1808-80). Westmoreland, Falmouth, the Hon. Lawrence Parsons (dates unknown), Captain Newbury (dates unknown) and other members of the London Musical Union were among the audience. The Ourys' Musical Union bore a number of resemblances to the London organization. In addition to borrowing its name from Ella’s society, it operated by subscription and appeared to be targeted at the same tranche of society that patronized Ella’s concerts. Performers associated with the London Musical Union, most notably Hill and Piatti, formed the nucleus of the group of artists engaged by Oury, and the society also strove to incorporate morceaux brillants into its otherwise serious chamber-music programmes.\(^{71}\) (Indeed, in the latter respect it appears to have been more diligent than the sister organization in London.) Of all provincial centres, Brighton was probably the best suited for a sister Musical Union. With the

\(^{70}\) Morning Chronicle (12 March 1845).

\(^{71}\) Information about the Brighton Musical Union is found in the Musical World, xxii, no.45 (6 Nov 1847), 712, and the Illustrated London News, xi, no.289 (13 Nov 1847), 314.
arrival of the railway link to London in 1841 Brighton had quickly overtaken Bath as the provincial capital for high society. The Brighton season ran from October to March, when wealthy Londoners hastened to Brighton for the sea air and a healthy helping of entertainments - music and concerts included.72

2. Thomas Alsager and the Beethoven Quartet Society

At about the time that Ella was trying to establish the Musical Union, another enterprising Englishman, the part proprietor and City writer of The Times Thomas Alsager, was also making preparations for a new chamber-music society. Like Ella, Alsager wanted to form a club exclusively for serious lovers of chamber music, but unlike Ella he had only one artistic concern: the promotion and intellectual contemplation of Beethoven's string quartets. Alsager, as we have already seen, was a fervent champion of chamber music and a devout supporter of Beethoven.73 In musical circles he was known as a keen amateur with an exceptionally incisive appreciation of music, and he almost certainly wrote much of the music criticism in The Times before the appointment of J. W. Davison in 1846. In spite of Alsager's importance as an impresario and music critic in early 19th-century London, his biography is sketchy and his personality - in contrast to Ella's - remains somewhat obscure.74 What is known,

72 For further discussion of Brighton as a fashionable winter resort at this period see Antony Dale, Fashionable Brighton 1820-1860 (London: Oriel Press, 2/1967), 13-21.

73 See Chapter II, pp.74-7 above.

74 The best accounts of Alsager's life are found in Langley, The English Musical Journal, 292-6, and David B. Levy, 'Thomas Massa Alsager, Esq.: a Beethoven Advocate in London', 19th Century Music, ix (1985-6), 119-27. The stigma attached to the circumstances of Alsager's death in 1846 - suicide - may well have prevented his biography from being better recorded in the 19th century.
however, is that Alsager had a wide circle of friends, including many of the most famous
literary and musical figures of the day, and that his domestic musical gatherings were
famous in the most illustrious musical circles.\footnote{See Andreas Moser, \textit{Joseph Joachim: a Biography (1831-1899)} (London: Philip
Wellby, 1901), 61: ‘He [Joachim] ... had ... frequent opportunities of quartett-playing
in private, especially at the house of Mr. Alsager of the \textit{Times}, where most of the
leading foreign artists used to gather’.
}
Many leading musicians, among them
Mendelssohn, Moscheles and Joachim, performed at Alsager’s home. His championship
of Beethoven was truly extraordinary and may, as David Levy has pointed out, have
developed out of his association with Moscheles.\footnote{Levy, ‘Thomas Massa Alsager’, 120.}
In 1832 Alsager organized the first
English performance of the \textit{Missa Solemnis} at his house in Queen Square, Bloomsbury;
and for many years he hosted private chamber-music parties, at which Beethoven’s works
were frequently performed. By 1844 his concerts had become officially known as the
Queen Square Select Society.\footnote{Alsager did not promote Beethoven exclusively: on 28 March 1834 Cherubini’s
Requiem was given its English première \textit{chez} Alsager, and at the Queen Square Select
Society’s meeting on 14 November 1844 Alsager’s guests witnessed a performance of
Schaffner’s quintet with the new basso da camera, less than a month before the music and
instrument were publicly introduced at Madame Dulcken’s concerts. See London, British
Library, Add MS 52347, ff.3-4.
}

Early in 1845 Alsager issued a prospectus for his new ‘Beethoven Quartet
Society’; membership was to be limited to 50 subscribers, all of whom would come from
‘a certain rank or station in Society’ and would possess a sincere love for and an acute
intellectual appreciation of Beethoven’s quartets.\footnote{London, British Library, Add MS 52347, f.5 [prospectus dated 6 Jan 1845]. A
revised prospectus, dated 6 March 1845, was issued later; see \textit{ibid}, f.7.
} Subscriptions were priced at five
guineas for five concerts, and each member was entitled to bring one guest to each event,
so as to limit to 100 the number of people at any one concert. Each concert would present, in chronological order, three quartets, one from each period of Beethoven’s creative life, so that the auditors could make ‘a very interesting comparison ... between the Stages in the Musical career of this great Composer’. Alsager, at whose house many eminent instrumentalists had performed, planned to engage ‘the most distinguished Professors’, and to require them to rehearse rigorously before each concert.

Shortly after issuing the prospectus - as if by way of a prelude to the activities of the Beethoven Quartet Society - Alsager ran a series of five ‘illustrative’ concerts under the auspices of the Queen Square Select Society. Two were recitals of Beethoven’s piano sonatas, poetically entitled ‘Offerings to Beethoven’ and given by Ignaz Moscheles, who took the role of ‘High-Priest’; the others, ‘Beethoven Illustrative Parties’, were quartet concerts, in which Beethoven’s opp.131, 132 and 135 were performed by Sainton, Goffrie, Hill and Rousselot.

By 6 March 1845 Alsager had secured the services of Sivori, Vieuxtemps, Hill and Rousselot for the Beethoven Quartet Society concerts; and by 12 April a council, or managerial committee, had been formed with Henry Robertson (dates unknown), a friend of Leigh Hunt, as secretary. In an ‘Address to the Members’ the council reinforced

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79 London, British Library, Add MS 52347, f.5.

80 Ibid. According to The Times (6 June 1845), seven or eight rehearsals were held prior to each performance.

81 The programmes of these five concerts are in London, British Library, Add MS 52347, ff.9-13. For further information about the Queen Square Select Society see Pamela Willetts, Beethoven and England (London: The Trustees of the British Museum, 1970), 53-5.

82 Although a list of the council members of 1845 does not survive, in 1846 the Earl of Falmouth was president, Sir William Curtis was treasurer, and Henry Robertson (secretary), Samuel Appleby, E. Benassit, Joseph Street, Karl Klingemann and Alsager
the philosophy of the society, and recommended its members to study the scores of the quartets before concerts and to peruse the music during performance.\textsuperscript{83} The five concerts of the 1845 series took place on Monday evenings at 76 Harley Street, a venue that later became known as the Beethoven Rooms (the first concert took place on 21 April).\textsuperscript{84} Sivori, whose arrival in England had been delayed, was unable to join Vieuxtemps, Hill and Rousselot in the first two meetings as advertised; his place was taken by Prosper Sainton.

In stark contrast to Ella’s policy of not issuing press passes for Musical Union concerts, the Beethoven Quartet Society council decided to distribute a number of free tickets to journalists. The gesture was rewarded publicly, for although the concerts were seen as private arrangements and thus not eligible for critical reviews, warm endorsements of the society were published in The Athenaeum, The Britannia, the Great Gun and The Times. At each concert the violinists took turns at playing the first and second violin parts, a practice which was considered highly commendable, though rather unorthodox. As The Britannia explained:

\begin{quote}
It was formerly the practice for the second violin in these marvellous compositions to be played by comparatively obscure artists; but the society aims at having every part allotted to talent of the first order, and, that the susceptibilities of artists might not be affected, the first and second violins are alternated.\textsuperscript{85}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{\textit{---}} comprised the rest of the committee.


\textsuperscript{84} The rooms were generally considered a highly suitable venue for small-scale chamber-music concerts. Performances took place in the drawing room at the back of the house, where street noise could not be heard; see The Times (6 June 1845).

\textsuperscript{85} The Britannia, vi, no.317 (10 May 1845), 299.
The sole cause for complaint among the gentlemen of the press was Vieuxtemps’ refusal to play in the final concert because of the council’s decision to invite the young Italian violinist Teresa Milanollo (1827-1904) to lead Beethoven’s quartet op.18 no.5, a task in which she apparently acquitted herself admirably.

As promised in the prospectus, in each of the five concerts one quartet from Beethoven’s early, middle and late period was performed. The fourth concert, exceptionally, included two quartets from op.18; the Grosse Fugue op.133 was not played. For each concert Henry Hill compiled an elaborate programme, under the banner ‘Honor to Beethoven’. The programmes provided quotations of poetry by Shakespeare and Milton and biographical-historical information, much of which relied heavily on the recently published English translation (edited by Moscheles) of Schindler’s biography of Beethoven.86 The third concert programme is reproduced as Fig.4. Hill wrote fully about the composition history of the quartets, but did not provide technical descriptions of the music, as Ella did; and although he provided musical incipits for each movement, he made no attempt to identify important thematic material. The programmes were initially produced by lithography.87 A complete engraved set was later (spring 1846) published by Robert Cocks and Co.; in the preface Hill was commended for showing ‘a rare felicity in establishing the mysterious relation between poetry, or eloquent thoughts

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86 Ignaz Moscheles, ed.: The Life of Beethoven...and Remarks on his Musical Works (London: Henry Colburn, 1841).

87 The lithographed programmes are in London, British Library, Add MS 52347, ff.16-17, 20-21, 24-5, 28-9 and 32-3.
HONOR TO BEETHOVEN.

The Beethoven Quartett Society;

THIRD PROGRAMME.

First Performed May 19th, 1845.

“Like precious gems richly cased, we find the most sparkling thoughts set in
the most beautiful harmony.”

Around, around, flow each sweet sound,
Then dares to the Sun,
Slowly the sounds come back again,
Now mixed, now one by one,

QUARTETT No. 4, in G Minor.

Op. 18, BEETHOVEN.

All ma non tanto.

Andante, scherzo qual Allto
Minuetto, Allto

Composed in 1791-1792 and dedicated to the Prince Lichnowsky being the fourth work of the great
Master in this class, published in Vienna 1793 and played by the Schumann's party at the musical societies
of the Prince, ... in and with those times and amongst their nobest and best (says his Biographer) lived Beethoven,
in cheerful Vienna, where his genius found thousandfold encouragement to exert his powers free and untried.
This was a splendid era of art, each an era, as perhaps may never been, and with special reference to Beethoven,
the golden age.

“Those who have studied the works of the great Beethoven and marked his successive approaches to perfection
must see that he united the closest study to the keenest observation, that he attained to the highest pitch of musical
art, and that he was a profound artist and not a blind and wildly luxuriant genius alone... The great preceptor
of Beethoven was nature; he spoke from her inspired dictates “words from the heart and faithful to its flow” and
in his disregard of classical rules pursued at will his winged way through all the labyrinth of fancy and the human
heart; these celestial flights however were regulated so we have said by profound knowledge and taste.”

Fig. 4: The first page of Henry Hill’s programme for the third concert of the Beethoven
Quartet Society’s 1845 season (90% of original size)
in prose (which are poetry), and music'.

By 1845 Beethoven's music had gained widespread acceptance in England. Even the works from his final period, including the ninth symphony, were no longer as controversial as they had once been. The programmes of virtually every chamber-music concert of the early 1840s contained at least one of Beethoven's compositions, and there was a recognizable group of devotees of the late quartets. Indeed, a cult for Beethoven and his music was becoming well established. The Beethoven Quartet Society, with its quasi-religious devotion for Beethoven, was thus planted on particularly fertile ground.

Three further seasons of Beethoven Quartet Society concerts followed the successful inaugural year. The programmes of the first season were repeated in exactly the same form each year, but from 1846 an additional three concerts were given, with the aim of placing the achievement of Beethoven in the context of his classical predecessors. A prospectus explained:

Having presented in the five fixed programmes the progress of BEETHOVEN in this class of composition in his youth, his maturity, and in his parting glory, we now show the progress of the Quartet itself, from the early efforts of its inventor, HAYDN, taken up in the midway of his career with an increased energy by MOZART, which HAYDN's later productions prove that he himself was influenced by; and closing each evening with one of the great 'Posthumous Quartets,' when the system had reached the greatest elevation and grandeur that

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89 For discussion of the ninth symphony in England see David B. Levy, Early Performances of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony: a Documentary Study of Five Cities (PhD diss., University of Rochester, 1979), 147-270; and Nicholas Cook, Beethoven: Symphony No.9 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 40-47. For a consideration of the reception of the late quartets see Chapter VII below.
it is probably destined to attain.  

The society also put on a few 'special' events: in 1846 there was a performance of Beethoven's op. 130 quartet with the Grosse Fugue op. 133 (its English première) instead of the replacement finale, and in 1847 Spohr and Mendelssohn participated in concerts in their honour (Spohr led his third double quartet; Mendelssohn played the piano in his second trio and performed Beethoven's 32 variations on a theme in C minor).

During the second season the society proudly announced, in conjunction with Robert Cocks and Co., the publication of a complete edition of Beethoven's string quartets. According to the prefatory information the editor, Rousselot, had taken great pains to ensure that 'the wretched incorrectness of all the editions that have appeared to the present day' was not carried over into his own edition. To this end he had used Alsager's 'corrected copies of the scores and separate parts'. The edition was dedicated to Alsager, whose services to Beethoven's music Rousselot saluted eulogistically; and an impressive list of subscribers was published with the preliminary matter.

Towards the end of the 1846 season the council announced the devolution of its organizational powers and financial responsibility to Rousselot, apparently at Alsager's

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90 Quoted in the *Morning Chronicle* (26 May 1846).

91 Scipion Rousselot, ed.: *Honor to Beethoven: Complete Edition of the Quartetts of L. von Beethoven* (London: R. Cocks and Co., 1846), 4. The validity of Rousselot's claim has never been examined; although the early editions of the late quartets are now known to have contained incorrect readings, the possibility that Rousselot was indulging in hyperbole for the sake of promoting his own edition cannot be ruled out.

92 Rousselot, *Honor to Beethoven*, 'Notice', p.[v].
instigation. But before the year was out, tragedy had touched the young society with the death of Alsager (15 November) following his attempted suicide. Although many obituary writers suggested that without Alsager's guiding spirit the Beethoven Quartet Society would inevitably founder, the organization continued to operate successfully under Rousselot, who was, after all, a committed Beethoven advocate.

Rousselot, like Hill, became closely identified with the Beethoven Quartet Society. Not only did both men have important non-musical roles, but they also brought continuity and stability to the music-making, by performing in every concert from 1845 to 1848. In the 1846 season a fixed quartet of Sainton, Sivori, Hill and Rousselot played at all the society's meetings; but when Rousselot took over the management of the society he resolved to invite the most eminent violinists in turn to join him, Hill and Sainton in quartets. In 1847-8 there were several guest performances by Joachim, Molique, Vieuxtemps, Jacques Steveniers (b 1817; d after 1848) and others. In 1848 the society was forced to change its concert venue on account of the bankruptcy of the French conductor Louis Jullien (1812-60), landlord of the Beethoven Rooms. The society found a temporary home at 48 Great Marlborough Street, the residence of Eugene Coulon (dates unknown), and many of the Beethoven Room's artefacts, including a bust of Beethoven,

93 Musical World, xxii, no.6 (6 Feb 1847), 82. According to The Britannia, vii, no.374 (13 June 1846), 395, Alsager was to be presented with a testimonial 'for his invaluable services in the advancement of art by the formation of the society'.

94 For an account of the coroner's inquest and possible reasons for the suicide attempt see The Times (17 Nov 1846) and The History of the Times, (London: The Times, 1935-52), ii, 22-5.

portraits of the artists and a piano, were offered for sale.96

Since account books and subscription lists do not survive, little is known about the financial health of the Beethoven Quartet Society or the identities of the majority of its subscribers. Ostensibly, the society aimed only to break even. In 1845, with subscriptions set at five guineas per person and no benefit concert to subsidize any shortfall, the society stood to collect £262 10s. Although the Beethoven Quartet Society probably had smaller overheads (such as publicity, printing and artists’ costs) than the Musical Union, its financial situation was in all likelihood little different, a viewpoint endorsed by The Times, which reported in June 1845 that the first season had made a loss. With the Earl of Falmouth as president and the commercially successful Alsager behind the scenes, however, small losses would presumably have been made good.

The situation under Rousselot was slightly different. Without the backing of the council, the Beethoven Quartet Society looked to Rousselot to ensure its financial well-being. Although the Frenchman claimed publicly to have ‘not the remotest intention of making the society a source of pecuniary profits’,97 at least one critic later suggested that he had increased the society’s prosperity.98 It is doubtful whether Rousselot made personal gains from running the Beethoven Quartet Society; he is said to have paid fees to himself as a performer only when the takings allowed. Indeed, at the end of the 1847 season Rousselot held his own benefit concert of chamber music at the Beethoven Rooms For further information on the sale see the Musical World, xxiii, no.50 (9 Dec 1848), 785-6. Eugene Coulon may well have been a subscriber to the society - he is known to have attended at least one of the concerts in 1847; see the Musical World, xxii, no.11 (13 March 1847), 167.

96 For further information on the sale see the Musical World, xxiii, no.50 (9 Dec 1848), 785-6. Eugene Coulon may well have been a subscriber to the society - he is known to have attended at least one of the concerts in 1847; see the Musical World, xxii, no.11 (13 March 1847), 167.

97 Musical World, xxii, no.6 (6 Feb 1847), 82.

98 This was the opinion expressed in the Daily News (30 June 1847).
by way of an ‘epilogue’ to the society’s concerts. Even if the benefit did not serve to make good any losses incurred during the season, it would have probably produced a subsidy for Rousselot himself.

Many commentators remarked on the large number of professional musicians who subscribed to the Beethoven Quartet Society. According to The Times, in 1846 more than 30 ‘professors’, including H. J. Banister, Julius Benedict (1804-85), W. S. Bennett, Michael Costa (1808-84), Davison, Dragonetti, Ella, Goffrie, Guynemer, Edward Holmes, Moscheles, Neate, Salaman, Lindsay Sloper and Sir George Smart (1776-1867), were members. Many other leading musicians came as guests. The Beethoven Quartet Society was not closed to high-ranking amateurs, either: as already noted, the Earl of Falmouth was president; Sir William Curtis (1782-1847) was treasurer; and Sir Andrew Barnard, Sir William Newton (dates unknown) and Sir Giffin Wilson (dates unknown) attended concerts, possibly as subscribers. Nevertheless the membership of the society contrasted sharply with that of the Musical Union. The latter boasted a large membership of aristocratic and wealthy amateur musicians, but initially attracted barely a handful of professional musicians. The Beethoven Quartet Society, in comparison, was consistently supported by leading members of the profession.

The society’s reputation increased rapidly. From 1846 most of the mainstream newspapers and periodicals carried lengthy and favourable accounts of the philosophy and achievements of the ‘Beethovenites’, perhaps as a result of the number of music journalists who subscribed or were invited to concerts. Davison, for example, devoted

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99 The Times (25 March 1846); for the names of subscribers to the 1845 season see The Times (6 June 1845).

100 Although many newspapers identified members of the audiences, it is usually impossible to tell whether they were subscribers or subscribers’ guests.
many editorials in the *Musical World* to the activities of the society. Another subscriber, Guynemer, himself an experienced chamber musician, published a pamphlet on the development of chamber music in England in which he devoted a considerable amount of space to the Beethoven Quartet Society; copies of the pamphlet were handed out at the second concert of the 1847 season.

By 1848 almost all critics agreed that the society had contributed substantially to the understanding of Beethoven's quartets, particularly the five works from his 'late' period. Some English critics suggested that the players performed the late quartets better than the early or middle ones; and many commentators were highly critical of the standards of performance *vis à vis* quartets by Haydn and Mozart, which were not rehearsed as thoroughly as Beethoven's quartets. *The Atlas* even proposed that the only way of ensuring better standards of performance was to establish a Haydn and Mozart Quartet Society.

In the spring of 1849 Rousselot issued a prospectus announcing modifications to the *modus operandi*, and information about the coming season was placed in leading journals. The decision to advertise in the press was significant, for hitherto the society had operated as a private club, and had not felt the need to attract audiences commercially. The number of concerts was to be reduced from eight to six, and the subscription rate accordingly cut from three guineas (which had itself been a reduction from Alsager's original subscription of five guineas) to two. For the first time, programmes would include piano music, and only the first three concerts in the series

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102 *The Atlas*, xxii, no.1103 (3 July 1847), 460.

103 See, for example, the *Musical World*, xxiv, no.14 (7 April 1849), 222.
would be devoted to Beethoven; the remainder would be in honour of Haydn, Mozart and Mendelssohn. Performances would take place in the Hanover Square Rooms, on Wednesdays rather than Mondays. In spite of detailed advertisements for the first concert, which was scheduled for 9 May, and claims that the subscription lists were virtually full, the concerts did not take place. The press is curiously silent about the matter and offers no explanations as to why the series was cancelled. According to George Grove (1820-1900), the break in the concert series was caused by Rousselot leaving London for Paris on account of 'increasing admiration for Piatti's superior playing' which 'withdrew attention from him'.

The credibility of Grove's explanation must be questioned on more than one account. Firstly, Grove goes on erroneously to suggest that Rousselot never returned to England after his departure in the late 1840s; secondly, his comments are not endorsed by other sources; and thirdly, the statement has a distinct air of hyperbole. By 1849 Rousselot had gained substantial respect in London as the manager of the Beethoven Quartet Society and in any case was back in England in 1850 to organize and participate in the society's concerts. Furthermore, although Rousselot may well have returned to France temporarily, causing the sudden closure of the Beethoven Quartet Society, there is no evidence that professional jealousies precipitated such a situation.

When the Beethoven Quartet Society resumed its concerts in 1850, most of the modifications that had been announced for the previous year were put into operation. Only the venue changed, and instead of giving concerts at Hanover Square (as planned for 1849), the society held its performances at 27 Queen Anne Street, a place that became

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affectionately known as the ‘Beethoven Rooms’ or the ‘New Beethoven Rooms’. Berlioz attended concerts there and wrote favourably of the society in the *Journal des débats* in 1851.

During the 1850 season quartets were performed by Ernst, Henry Christopher Cooper (violin; 1819-81), Hill and Rousselot. The new policy of including piano music in concerts meant that only a selection of Beethoven’s quartets could be performed, and op.18 nos.2, 4 and 6, op.133 and op.135 were omitted from the series. Not everyone was happy; Davison in particular censured Rousselot for violating the original rules of the society, suggesting that in future seasons Rousselot should either give more concerts or remove the piano pieces. The reasoning behind Rousselot’s decision to introduce piano repertory is unclear, though it seems likely that financial considerations were responsible. Facing increasing competition from other concert series, Rousselot may well have considered that the introduction of piano repertory was the most effective way of increasing the size of the potential audience and hence of ensuring financial success. Ernst’s decision to give his services free of charge, and the concert held for his benefit at the end of the series, should be understood in this context.

The Beethoven Quartet Society continued for two further concert seasons (1850-51 and 1851-2). Although the 1851 series saw a return to the traditional pattern of five concerts devoted to Beethoven’s 17 quartets, Rousselot also arranged four *matinées* at

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105 The house in question is now no.58. The former home of the Beethoven Quartet Society, 76 Harley Street, was also known as the ‘Beethoven Rooms’.


107 On one occasion Dando deputized for Hill.

108 Davison was especially incensed that not all of the 17 quartets were performed; see the *Musical World*, xxv, no.26 (29 June 1850), 397.
which a more catholic selection of music was performed. The following year he began 
once again to introduce works strictly outside the sphere of the society. Reasons for the 
society’s final demise are unknown. 109 There were a number of cancelled and 
rescheduled performances during the 1852 series, which might well have been indicative 
of an ailing organization. Perhaps increasing numbers of subscribers were becoming 
dissatisfied with the continued deviation from the original purpose of the society, and 
were looking elsewhere for entertainment. If so, they had several chamber-music societies 
to choose from, including some newly inaugurated concert clubs such as the Quartet 
Association and Ella’s Musical Winter Evenings (both founded 1852). Or perhaps these 
new societies were simply attracting audiences away from the Beethoven Quartet Society. 
Equally, Rousselot’s own circumstances were in flux at this period and may have 
contributed to the general situation. In the early 1850s he was in partnership with Jean 
Baptiste Arban (1825–89) as music publisher and military instrument manufacturer, at 66 
Conduit Street. 110 It is possible that Rousselot’s increased responsibilities to the 
business - Arban pulled out in about 1852 and Rousselot continued to operate alone as 
an instrument dealer - may have forced him to curtail his association with the society. 
However, it seems unlikely that Rousselot’s position alone would have caused the society

109 Confusion has long existed over the termination of Beethoven Quartet Society 
concerts. Most secondary sources, including Levy (“Thomas Massa Alsager”), do not 
document the ending of the society. Ivan Mahaim, Beethoven: naissance et renaissance 
des derniers quatuors (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1964), 91-7, claims that concerts 
ceased in 1851; and articles on ‘Piatti, Alfredo’ (by Lynda Lloyd Rees), ‘Wieniawski’ 
(by Boris Schwarz) and ‘Ernst, Heinrich Wilhelm’ (by Boris Schwarz) in The New Grove 
Dictionary of Music and Musicians, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan Publishers, 
1980) cloud the issue, suggesting that the Society was still active in 1859; this confusion 
 stems from the fact that Joachim and Piatti gave ‘Beethoven’ concerts in London in 1859, 
though under their own auspices.

110 Information from John A. Parkinson, Victorian Music Publishers: an Annotated 
List (Warren, MI: Harmonie Park Press, 1990), 239.
to disband (it had, after all, overcome the void caused by Alsager's suicide in 1846); but in the general context of a flagging organization his personal circumstances may have proved decisive.

In spite of its sudden extinction in the early 1850s, the Beethoven Quartet Society holds an important position in the developing concert scene in mid-19th-century London. Although it was not the first musical organization there to hold concerts of instrumental chamber music without the prop of vocal works, it was the first to arrange concerts of one composer's music and the first to give concerts devoted to the quartet genre alone. Like the Musical Union, the Beethoven Quartet Society quickly became identified as a forum for the engagement of eminent foreign instrumentalists, for whom London was an important port of call on their annual European concert tours. The vision and courage of Alsager in establishing the society was considerable, as was his conviction that the late quartets of Beethoven should receive regular performances. In this respect it should be remembered that Alsager essentially built on the achievements of Blagrove, who a decade earlier had given the works their English premières and had helped establish a pool of support for them.

* By 1850, both the Beethoven Quartet Society and the Musical Union had established their reputations as the leading chamber-music societies in London. Both tried, by sharply contrasted means, to promote a cerebral appreciation of chamber music: Ella sought to educate his members by encouraging them to prepare for their listening by studying his technical analyses in the Record of the Musical Union, while Alsager and his colleagues simply aimed to inculcate a quasi-religious respect for Beethoven's music in the members, and left the works to speak for themselves. Both societies operated as
Fig. 5: John Ella’s subscriber’s ticket for the Beethoven Quartet Society’s meetings for 1846 (Ella Collection, MS 80, item 39; 75% of original size)
intellectually and socially exclusive clubs; admission to their inner circles required the
demonstration of a sincere and serious interest in chamber music (in the case of the
Musical Union new members had to be nominated by existing ones and vetted in person
by Ella; until 1850 membership of the Beethoven Quartet Society was limited to known
devotees, though members could each bring one guest to meetings). Broadly speaking,
their respective members were from different social circles; as we have seen the Musical
Union's afternoon meetings attracted aristocratic and leisured amateurs, whereas the
Beethoven Quartet Society was primarily popular with professional musicians. There was
nevertheless some overlap between their respective clientèles; in particular some amateur
enthusiasts, such as the Earl of Falmouth, Sir Giffin Wilson and Henry Robertson, are
known to have been members of both organizations. Ella, as one might expect,
belonged to the Beethoven Quartet Society (his subscriber's ticket for 1846 survives; see
fig.5); Alsager, had he not been a working person, busy in the daytime, would surely
have joined the Musical Union. In addition, it should be noted that for a musician, an
invitation to play at either society was highly coveted: both organizations offered
performers an opportunity to play chamber music with others of similar leanings and
abilities, in front of discerning and appreciative listeners. Ernst, Sivori, Sainton and
Vieuxtemps were among those who played at both series.

3. Other developments from 1845

A survey of chamber-music concerts in mid-19th-century London should not dwell only
on the Musical Union and the Beethoven Quartet Society at the expense of all other

111 Precise figures cannot be given, since subscription lists for the Beethoven Quartet
Society do not exist, and the shape of the membership has been established from
newspaper reports.

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activities, since the significance of the two societies is best understood in terms of their contemporary context. As already seen, in the mid-1840s the number of serious chamber concerts increased sharply, with more than 60 concerts on offer in the 1844-5 season. This increased level of activity was maintained between 1845 and 1850, and by the end of the 1840s many concert series had become established fixtures in the season.

Many of the musicians associated with the serious chamber concerts of the early 1840s - namely Bennett, Dando, Dulcken and Lucas - continued to give chamber concerts during the second half of the decade. Bennett curtailed his entertainments in 1845-6 - possibly because 'he could not afford to give them'\(^{112}\) - but resumed the series in 1847 at the Hanover Square Rooms which, in the manner of Blagrove's first chamber concerts of 1836, were specially partitioned to create a small performance space.\(^{113}\) Bennett's concerts ran until 1856. Dando's concerts continued until 1859, Dulcken's soirées until 1847 (she also held a series of matinées in 1849, the year before she died) and Lucas's at least until 1854 (there may have been a hiatus in 1851-2). In addition, the Society of British Musicians, which in the late 1840s was in difficult straits, managed to maintain its series of chamber concerts until 1848 (the year the society moved to the Hanover Square Rooms for a short series of three concerts); two years later the concerts reappeared at a new, more public venue, the small room of the newly built St Martin's Hall at 89 Long Acre.\(^{114}\)


\(^{113}\) For a description of the arrangement at Hanover Square see Bennett, *The Life of William Sterndale Bennett*, 209.

\(^{114}\) The large auditorium at St Martin's Hall was designed especially for Hullah's singing classes; for further information see the *Musical World*, xxv, no.8 (23 Feb 1850), 111-12, and Robert Elkin, *The Old Concert Rooms of London* (London: Edward Arnold, 198)
The musical content of these five series was firmly established (and has been described earlier in Chapter IV), and only a few alterations were made during the ensuing years. One such alteration came in 1846, when Lucas expunged vocal items from the programmes of his Musical Evenings, a change which was greeted warmly by many, on the strength that the Musical Union and Beethoven Quartet Society had already proved that concerts of chamber music alone were reasonably viable concerns. The Daily News summed up the state of affairs:

Hitherto, it has been thought necessary, for the sake of the less learned part of the auditors, to introduce a few vocal pieces; this (as our readers have seen) is done by Madame Dulcken, and was done by Mr. Lucas last year. He has now discontinued it, and has probably done right; for, as the persons who attend such concerts go for the sake of hearing fine instrumental music, performed in a manner not often to be met with, they care little about a few songs which there are plenty of opportunities of hearing elsewhere.115

With hindsight we can see that this critic's diagnosis that the concert market was now ready to support a large number of specialized concerts was incorrect, since mixed programmes in which serious chamber works were relieved by vocal numbers continued to be the typical concert format for a long time to come. Many critics and concert-givers alike appear to have craved an end to the juxtaposition of serious chamber music and lightweight songs, which was often considered jarring, but the commercial realities meant that few could afford to sustain concerts of instrumental music only.116 Bennett, whose selection of music was generally considered exemplary, found a solution to this problem by attempting to choose songs that were in keeping with the taste of the rest of the


115 Daily News (20 Feb 1846).

116 The desirability of concerts without songs was expressed by The Atlas, xxii, no.1081 (30 Jan 1847), 85, and the Musical World, xiii, no.6 (5 Feb 1848), 90.
In 1845 Dulcken made a controversial change to the nature of her concerts by including in each soirée a piano concerto, to the accompaniment of a chamber orchestra. The alteration was a permanent one, and henceforth every evening concert included a concerto or similar work. Although the pieces she selected were in keeping with the serious tone of the soirées - she played concertos by Beethoven (nos.1 and 3), Mendelssohn (no.2), Hummel (a posthumously published work) and Weber (op.32), Bennett’s Caprice (op.22), Mendelssohn’s Capriccio (op.22) and Weber’s Konzertstück - many critics scorned her decision to bring music of orchestral proportions into the chamber concert. The Morning Chronicle, for example, was in no doubt that she should ‘leave to the "grand concerts" the task of supplying the effects of orchestral power - in a drawing-room the attempt can only be a parody’. In 1847 she added early 18th-century keyboard pieces to her programmes, playing excerpts from suites by Handel and Domenico Scarlatti on the piano. This alteration met with general satisfaction. The Baroque repertory had become reasonably familiar to London audiences thanks largely to Moscheles, who had, as already shown, incorporated works by Bach, Handel, Scarlatti and others into his chamber concerts of 1837-9, and to Bennett, who had continued the practice in his Classical Chamber Concerts, 1843-4.

On resuming his concerts in 1847 Bennett continued to choose repertory that remained a model of good classical taste, though some noted that he still modestly placed his own music at the end of each concert (the assumption at this period being that the last

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117 Morning Herald (30 March 1848). See also Bennett, The Life of William Sterndale Bennett, 149.

118 Morning Chronicle (22 Jan 1846).
piece in a programme could not be guaranteed a full audience). The first concert of the 1848 series came shortly after the death of his great friend and colleague Mendelssohn (November 1847) and he touchingly devoted the programme to Mendelssohn’s music.

At Crosby Hall in the City, Dando continued to introduce new and interesting repertory at his Quartett Concerts. During the late 1840s there were first English performances of a number of chamber works, including quartets by Dussek (op.60 no.3, in E flat), Fesca (op.14, in B flat), Spohr (op.45 no.1, in C) and Mendelssohn (op.80, in F minor), and Kate Loder’s violin sonata in E. Likewise, premières of works by indigenous composers - such as J. B. Calkin, C. E. Horsley, Kate Loder, W. C. Macfarren and Caroline Reinagle [née Orger] - continued to be included in the chamber concerts given by Society of British Musicians, though the organization was constantly criticized by a partisan section of the press for including too much non-British music in its programmes.

By the mid-1840s several ‘serious’ West End chamber-music concerts had become clear favourites with discerning aristocratic music-lovers, many of whom were also members of the Musical Union. Lucas, Dulcken and Bennett, in particular, received considerable support from wealthy amateurs. Although no subscription lists for their concerts survive, some information can be gleaned from press reports, which often printed the names of ‘fashionables’ in the audience. It is known, for instance, that Sir Andrew Barnard, the Earl of Falmouth, Sir Giffin Wilson, the Dowager Lady Rivers (dates unknown) and others of their ilk attended Lucas’s concerts, and that Bennett’s were often graced by the ‘the most distinguished of the metropolitan amateurs’.119 Equally

119 Morning Herald (25 March 1847).
popular with the aristocracy were Madame Dulcken’s concerts. The comfort of the
seating and the conversazioned-like atmosphere was considered exemplary by many. The
following is a typical account:

The agremens of a private drawing-room are combined with intellectual
enjoyment. An elegant salon, with a sprinkling of pretty toilettes, and a pleasant
chat between the acts over a cup of tea or a glass of lemonade, are additional
attractions, and then the artist and the amateur discuss with freedom the recondite
beauties of the compositions of the night’s programme.

The presence of members of the musical profession at these concerts was also noted by
the press. According to Bennett’s son:

It was a custom of the time for a concert-giver to send out invitations to brother-
artists. If they accepted and came in large numbers, it was taken as a sign that
the concert was important, and éclat was rightly thought to be added to the
proceedings.

The audiences for Dando’s Quartett Concerts in the City were acknowledged to have been
totally different from those of the West End soirées: they comprised ‘the intelligent City
amateurs’ and Dando’s friends. Although relatively little information about musical
activities in the City survives, there was evidently a large number of amateur musicians
and music-lovers in the mercantile district, and their support for chamber concerts was
unstinting. The professional standing of Dando’s local audiences is largely unknown,
though with subscriptions for six concerts at £1 11s 6d, and single tickets 7s each,
concertgoers would clearly have been drawn from the upper and wealthier middle classes;

120 For a list of aristocrats known to have attended one of her 1846 soirées see the
Morning Herald (19 Feb 1846).

121 Morning Chronicle (22 Jan 1846).

122 Bennett, Life of Sterndale Bennett, 209.

123 The remark about the City amateurs is in the Illustrated London News, viii,
no.197 (7 Feb 1846), 98.
many may well have been bankers and merchants. Only friends of Dando, critics and perhaps a few ardent chamber-music enthusiasts regularly travelled from the West End.

The audience at Erat's Rooms for the Society of British Musicians' concerts was different again. Although the concerts took place in the West End and at one time had been advertised in the musical press, by the late 1840s they were considered essentially private events, supported mainly by members of the society. In 1846 there were about 160 members and associates; most had links with the music profession. According to one source audiences were made up of 'professional brethren and such amateurs as may be induced to attend'. The move to St Martin's Hall - where ticket prices were much lower than other West End venues - was significant, for at long last the society appeared to be trying to attract substantial numbers of amateur musicians and music-lovers.

In addition to these established series, several more serious chamber-music concerts were introduced in the late 1840s. Most lasted only for one or two seasons. Among the hopeful concert-givers were pianists who were relatively new to the chamber concert scene in London and eager to set up concerts at which their own piano compositions could be played. Lindsay Sloper (1826-87), a pupil of Moscheles, was one such character: he first performed in chamber concerts in 1846 (his début was at the

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124 Weber (Music and the Middle Class, 23) calculates that families on the threshold of the upper middle class (£1000 per annum) could afford to spend 2% of their income on entertainment (see Chapter I, pp.33-4 above for further discussion). With the cost of patronising Dando's concerts set between 5s 3d (through subscription) and 7s (single tickets), only those earning in excess of about £500 per annum could probably have afforded regular concert-going. My calculation assumes 1.5% of a £500 income might have been sunk into entertainment and thus introduces a sliding scale to Weber's rule of thumb; it also builds on my earlier supposition that attendance at 20 concerts constituted regular concert-going.

125 The Spectator, no.962 (5 Dec 1846), 1163.

126 Dramatic and Musical Review, no.333 (1 Feb 1850), 42.
Musical Union). In 1847 he held three evening concerts at the Beethoven Rooms in Harley Street and in 1848 three at Willis's Rooms. Sloper quickly gained a reputation as an intelligent and tasteful performer - some thought him in the same league as Bennett\textsuperscript{127} - and his choice of programmes, which combined solo piano music, piano chamber music (mainly duo sonatas and piano trios) and songs, were generally commended. Solo keyboard pieces by Couperin, Handel, Lully and Domenico Scarlatti were placed alongside piano works by Bennett, Heller, Mendelssohn and Sloper himself. Sloper's concerts were especially popular with fashionable amateurs, and at the last concert of 1848 the room was so full that scarcely any standing room was to be found.\textsuperscript{128}

The Frenchman Alexandre Billet (b 1817; d after 1867), a newcomer to London, set up a similar series of concerts in January and February 1850, also at the Beethoven Rooms in Harley Street. His programmes included piano trios and quartets by Beethoven and Mendelssohn; piano sonatas by Clementi, Dussek and G. F. Pinto; piano duets by Beethoven, Mendelssohn and Mozart; and solo piano pieces by Bach, Handel and Domenico Scarlatti, as well as by Bennett, Mendelssohn and Billet himself. There were also a few vocal items. The concerts were given under the official patronage of the Duke of Cambridge, and large, fashionable audiences were quickly attracted. Indeed, according to the \textit{Musical World}, Billet's success was such that he organized two further series of concerts that season in the more spacious location of St Martin's Hall.\textsuperscript{129} His aim in these subsequent concerts was to 'give specimens from the works of all the great

\textsuperscript{127} \textit{The Athenaeum}, no.1064 (18 March 1848), 300.

\textsuperscript{128} \textit{Sunday Times} (19 March 1848).

\textsuperscript{129} \textit{Musical World}, xxv, no.10 (9 March 1850), 148.
pianoforte composers, inclusive of course of many whose compositions are seldom heard in the concert-room". The instrumental music consisted mainly of solo piano works, and a number of unusual pieces, including Dussek's Elegy on the Death of Prince Ferdinand of Prussia, were brought forward. Billet soon established himself as a sensitive pianist, uninterested in virtuosic display, and concertgoers apparently flocked to hear his performances.

Other pianists who adopted the by now standard formula of piano solos, piano chamber music and songs included George Alexander Osborne (1806-93), the young William Rea (1827-1903) and J. W. Davison. Osborne, a composer of considerable repute, divided his time between London and Paris. He was a longstanding friend of Ella, and had performed occasionally for him, and in other chamber concerts. In 1850 Osborne gave his own Matinées Musicales at the Beethoven Rooms in Harley Street, accompanied by Ernst and Piatti; his own compositions, including his piano trio in G, were presented. Rea, by comparison, was not a composer but a budding piano pupil of Bennett. He gave a series of three Classical Chamber Concerts in the Throne Room at Crosby Hall in 1847. In all likelihood Bennett was the guiding figure behind the series. Rea's programmes were closely modelled on his teacher's, and Bennett himself performed in the concerts. Davison, who had played in his and G. A. Macfarren's concerts in 1843 and 1844, gave his own series of Matinées Musicales at his rooms in Berners Street in summer 1845. Davison himself took only a minor part in the performances, preferring to engage such pianists as Bennett, Holmes, Leopold de Meyer and Moscheles. Davison's influential position in London musical life (he had become editor of the Musical World in 1843) may well have enabled him to attract large numbers

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130 Morning Chronicle (9 March 1850).
of star performers. Indeed, in 1846 and again in 1847 the *Musical World* backed a one-off chamber concert, at which many famous instrumentalists - among them Joachim, Piatti, Sainton, Sivori and Vieuxtemps - appeared. *Musical World* subscribers were admitted free of charge. Inevitably, these concerts elicited considerable criticism from other papers; some of the most vociferous remarks came from Chorley, in the *Athenaeum*, who claimed the intellectual integrity of concert criticism was being compromised, and that the *Musical World* was seeking to bribe people into taking out subscriptions.\(^{131}\)

Some pianists - notably J. B. Cramer, Holmes and Moscheles - eschewed songs altogether from their concerts. Moscheles, whose interest in serious music had been keenly demonstrated in his concerts of 1837-9, resumed a series of *matinées* at the Beethoven Rooms in Harley Street in 1845 and 1846. His programmes were restricted to serious piano chamber music and works for piano solo. Some programmes featured works by a single composer: in the 1845 series one concert was devoted to Bach (with Moscheles playing concertos on the piano, accompanied by a small orchestra) and two to Beethoven, to whom Moscheles maintained a lifelong devotion. The 1846 programmes were more varied, but remained focussed on the music of the classical masters. Only on one occasion (7 May) did Moscheles include one of his own compositions. His impending departure for Leipzig (October 1846; he lived there for the rest of his life) was lamented by the press, who saw in Moscheles the rare qualities of a pianist able to perform equally well in a variety of musical styles; this was in sharp contrast to the younger generation of pianists who, though they might outstrip Moscheles in terms of virtuosity, were

\(^{131}\) *The Athenaeum*, no.976 (11 July 1846), 715-16, and no.1029 (17 July 1847), 768.
interested only in the technically brilliant music of the modern school.\textsuperscript{132}

The veteran pianist J. B. Cramer - once something of a rival to Moscheles - came out of retirement in June 1846 to give a special concert (termed a ‘Scena Musicale’) in the Hanover Square Rooms. The programme centred on arrangements Cramer had made, and proposed to publish, of string quartets by Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven. Although arrangements of quartets for piano duet were readily available, Cramer was the first to consider arranging them for piano solo. Most, though not all, critics greeted the experiment warmly, believing that this would be an excellent way for music-lovers to gain familiarity with the quartet repertory. The concert also contained a performance of Mozart’s quintet in E flat for piano and wind, and a piano duet by Cramer himself. W. H. Holmes likewise omitted vocal music from the series of matinées which he gave at his house in Beaumont Street in 1848. Holmes selected only piano solos and duets for performance; composers ranged from Bach and Beethoven to John Field, Adolf Henselt and Johann Peter Pixis.

Not all of the new chamber concerts were devoted to or even dominated by piano music. String repertory was prominent in concerts organized by violinists. In June 1845 Henry Blagrove, whose profile as a chamber-music player had been substantially reduced since his quitting the Quartett Concerts in 1842, gave a series of four concerts at his rooms in Mortimer Street. The programmes comprised classical string quartets and vocal numbers. He led a quartet in which his brother Richard played the viola, Hausmann the cello and Edward W. Thomas (fl. London, 1838-50) second violin. Earlier that year Blagrove had also led four Concerts of Instrumental Music in the City (at Johnson’s Assembly Rooms, Doctors’ Commons). His colleagues for these concerts were Webb

\textsuperscript{132} This was the opinion of the \textit{Morning Post} (3 April 1846).
(violin; dates unknown), Weslake [Westlake] (viola; dates unknown), T. W. Hancock (cello; fl London, 1843-53) and Severn (double bass). The repertory consisted mainly of string quartets and quintets; there were no vocal items.

The German composer and violinist Bernhard Molique, who had given a series of chamber concerts during his visit in 1842, was back in London in 1848 to perform at the Beethoven Quartet Society, Bennett's Classical Chamber Concerts and the Musical Union. The following year he settled in the capital, and in the early months of 1850 was once more advertising his own chamber concerts, to be held at the Hanover Square Rooms. Although the concerts contained a large amount of Molique's own music (chamber works as well as violin pieces), they were more serious in outlook than his 1842 series. Bach's music, in particular, was well represented and the chaconne for violin (from the D minor partita, in the arrangement for violin and piano by Mendelssohn) was performed in two of the three concerts.

A further important development in London concert life came in autumn 1849, when the violinist John Willy set up a series of six chamber concerts, comprising instrumental pieces and vocal numbers, at the recently opened St Martin's Hall. Willy was an experienced chamber musician who had performed regularly in concerts since 1838, had run his own series (with Joseph Banister) in the City in 1840, and in February 1848, shortly after Mendelssohn's death, had organized a one-off concert of Mendelssohn's chamber music at Erat's Rooms. In the 1845-6 season he had established Willy's Concert Band, a small orchestra which he aimed to hire out for private concerts and other events. His programmes at St Martin's Hall were standard for classical concerts: the instrumental music was represented by Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Hummel and Bennett; there was also vocal music. Although a number of
string players were members of Willy’s Concert Band, a few high profile musicians were also engaged, most notably Ernst and Piatti. Tickets were sold singly at unprecedentedly low prices: 2s, 3s and 5s, that is, substantially less than most West End chamber concerts and closer to the cost of tickets for the theatre or large-scale choral concerts. The relative cheapness of Willy’s concerts certainly attracted large audiences - 400 or 500 people were reported on more than one occasion. More importantly, a large number of those who attended were from the less wealthy middle classes, for whom chamber-music concerts were a new experience. According to one source:

... the humble amateur has had afforded him the opportunity of listening to the same artists who have called forth the admiration of the aristocratic habitué of the Musical Union.133

The Musical World was even more emphatic:

The concerts have been invariably well attended, which proves beyond dispute that a public exists, among the middle classes, capable of appreciating and anxious to listen to that which, for the sake of a distinction, has been termed "classical" music. What the Sacred Harmonic Society has done for choral music, and M. Jullien for orchestral, Mr. Willy has begun to do for the music of the chamber; and perhaps his task is the most arduous of the three, since chamber music, from its refined character, naturally addresses itself to a smaller number than either of the others.134

These concerts signalled the beginning of a gradual change in public attitudes towards chamber music - a change which was to lead to the establishment in 1859 of Chappell’s Monday Popular Concerts at St James’s Hall.135 Indeed, the pricing policy was quickly copied, and St Martin’s Hall and one or two other venues in the area around Covent Garden became associated with low-cost concerts. Billet’s additional series of concerts

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133 Dramatic and Musical Review, no.335 (1 March 1850), 75.
134 Musical World, xxv, no.8 (23 Feb 1850), 111.
135 For an account of the Popular Concerts see Cobbett, Cobbett’s Cyclopedic Survey, ii, 232-5.
at St Martin’s Hall were far cheaper than his Harley Street concerts: tickets were priced at 2s, 3s and 5s; subscriptions for reserved seats for three concerts cost 10s 6d. Exeter Hall in the Strand, home of the Sacred Harmonic Society, was also associated with cheap concerts, and when Cooper and Hancock opened a series of Classical Chamber Concerts there in February 1850 tickets were also priced relatively low: single tickets were 5s and 3s (gallery); subscriptions for the three concerts were 10s 6d and 6s (gallery).

Cooper and Hancock had previously been associated with concerts that combined serious instrumental chamber music with solo ‘show’ pieces (fantasias, concertantes etc.), under the title ‘Quartet [sometimes Quartett] and Solo Concerts’. They gave two such entertainments in 1848 and 1849; Blagrove presented a series of four in 1848 (his concerts also included songs) and Thomas gave a one-off performance in 1849 and a set of three in 1850. In effect, ‘Quartet and Solo’ concerts were little different from the ‘hybrid’ concerts described in Chapter IV. Indeed, ‘hybrid’ concerts continued to be held in large numbers. The pianist Charles Mühlenfeldt (dates unknown), for example, gave three Soirées Musicales at Blagrove’s Rooms in Mortimer Street in March and April 1846. His programmes, like Osborne’s and Rea’s, combined solo piano music, piano chamber music and songs, though he also admitted more lightweight piano repertory. Chamber music by Beethoven, Hummel and Mendelssohn was heard alongside piano fantasias and lightweight pieces by Mühlenfeldt, Leopold de Meyer and others. Similarly, at Willis’s Rooms in 1848 Julian Adams (1824-87), a young piano virtuoso, gave a series of three concerts in which chamber music was supported by a range of solo items (some of them showpieces) and songs. There were also many one-off chamber concerts at which lightweight music played a substantial role: for example M. and Madame Goffrie’s Matinées Musicales in 1847 and 1848.
The proliferation of serious chamber concerts in London, which had begun in the early 1840s with Dulcken, Bennett, Banister and others, continued during the second half of the decade. By 1850 serious chamber concerts were an integral part of the concert season: they were no longer restricted to the months preceding the London season proper (i.e. January and February), but were spread throughout the season, even into the summer months, which were more commonly associated with benefit concerts. The increased interest in serious chamber music was reflected in the fact that concerts were now sometimes relieved of the vocal numbers which in 1836 had been crucial to their public acceptability in the West End. Moreover, popular and lightweight repertory (instrumental as well as vocal) was excluded from many concerts. The length of concerts still varied, but there is evidence that many were becoming shorter: by 1850 three or four chamber works were sufficient for many concert-givers, and concerts of about two hours' duration were becoming more common.

Chamber concerts of serious piano music (solo and ensemble) became ever more widespread in the 1840s, perhaps as a reaction against increasing public mania for the piano virtuoso. Indeed, it may be significant that the trend towards a cerebral appreciation of chamber music should have developed at a time when there was a growing populist taste for the virtuoso instrumental repertory.

By the late 1840s relatively small but committed audiences had crystallized around the serious chamber concert. To talk of one audience for chamber music is misleading, for, broadly speaking, different types of audience were drawn to different types of concert. Moreover, in effect there was a close relationship between the location of a concert, the social status of the attendant audience, and the calibre of the performers.
The most illustrious performers - typically foreigners, such as Ernst, Piatti, Sainton, Sivori and Vieuxtemps - performed either at the most prestigious West End locations (e.g. the Hanover Square Rooms, the Beethoven Rooms in Harley Street and Willis's Rooms) or at concerts given in musicians' homes (e.g. Dulcken's Soirées Musicales and Lucas's Musical Evenings). Admission to most of these concerts was by subscription, and prices were relatively high: in 1850 the cost of subscribing to Billet's, Bennett's or Molique's concerts at the Hanover Square Rooms was 21s for a series of three concerts; single tickets cost 12s 6d. Lucas likewise charged guinea subscriptions for the Musical Evenings at his house. High admission costs ensured social exclusivity, and according to newspaper accounts the clientèle for these Hanover Square concerts was made up mainly of chamber-music enthusiasts from the wealthy and aristocratic classes, eager to witness chamber music performed by the most high-ranking instrumentalists. Many of the named subscribers were members of the Musical Union. When professional musicians and critics attended West End concerts they usually did so with complimentary tickets.

The clientèle for the evening chamber concerts in the City was drawn almost exclusively from the wealthy middle classes who lived and worked there. Indeed, there is good evidence to suggest that there had long been large numbers of music-lovers in the financial district, and that many of them had a sophisticated taste in music. In 1835 Dando's Horn Tavern concerts had been held, seemingly successfully, without the prop of vocal music; yet it was nearly ten years before songs were omitted from concerts in the West End (at Banister's Quartet Parties of 1844). Chamber concerts became an established part of musical life in the City when Dando moved the Quartett Concerts there in 1842, and soon afterwards other series were springing up: the Literary and Scientific Institution had given a concert series there in 1843-4; Henry Westrop gave a
chamber concert at Crosby Hall in June 1845, and the Concerts of Classical Instrumental Music and Rea’s Classical Chamber Concerts followed in 1847. Vocal music, if present, was a subsidiary concern in City concerts. By the late 1840s at least one journal was admitting that audiences at the Quartett Concerts were probably the most attentive in London:

... the audience being exceedingly silent and attentive, the artists are encouraged to do their utmost to please. We notice this silence as a most favourable test of the audience at Crosby Hall; for from the talking which prevails at some of the more fashionable chamber concerts westward, one might fancy oneself at a club or in a coffee-room.136

At Dando’s City concerts of 1835-8 his principal co-performers were relatively unknown rank-and-file orchestral musicians: the Banisters, Case, Hill and Severn. More celebrated performers, by comparison, kept to the West End circuit. This division was largely maintained through the 1840s, though there were some exceptions; and at the Quartett Concerts in particular a number of pianists who normally appeared in the West End - among them Lucy Anderson, Madame Dulcken, Mendelssohn and Lindsay Sloper - made occasional guest appearances.

Thus, in the world of serious London chamber music a dichotomy arose between the West End concerts, which featured the most famous instrumentalists and attracted fashionable audiences, and the City concerts, which featured less well-known musicians and attracted bourgeois audiences from the City. In spite of the glamour associated with the West End concerts, the most attentive audiences, most adventurous repertory and best rehearsed ensembles were probably found at Dando’s Quartett Concerts in the City, which received only moderate attention from the West End press. With the inception of cheap chamber-music concerts at St Martin’s Hall and other venues in the 1849-50

136 The Atlas, xxii, no.1083 (13 Feb 1847), 124.
season, the social make-up of West End chamber-music audiences was poised to change, and in the course of the next two decades a wider cross-section of the public would have access to professionally performed chamber music.
PART 3: REPERTORY AND RECEPTION
CHAPTER VI: ESTABLISHING THE REPERTORY

Chapters IV and V surveyed the types of chamber-music concert on offer in London between 1835 and 1850; the current chapter, by way of contrast, focusses on the chamber-music repertory in London during that period. When public chamber concerts were first tried in the 1835-6 season a small number of chamber works were already reasonably well known to audiences, who had heard them either in public (e.g. at Philharmonic and other concerts) or in private. The repertory at this time chiefly comprised quartets by Mozart and Haydn, and early chamber works by Beethoven, with a more minor role being given to works by Hummel, Onslow, Spohr and others.\(^1\) Many of these pieces were repeatedly performed throughout the 1835-50 period, though the repertory as a whole was by no means stagnant. There was change, both in the short and long term. Short-term change was brought about by local circumstances: for example, by visiting composers giving one-off performances of their own works (e.g. Bernhard Molique, 1842), or by other factors (e.g. the only documented performance at Dando’s Quartett Concerts of Haydn’s *Seven Last Words*, which took place during Passion Week 1843). For a variety of reasons, such works were not destined to stay in the repertory. Long-term change came about either by the introduction, continued performance and

\(^1\) For a more detailed discussion of the repertory in concerts and the home before 1835 see Chapters II and III above.
assimilation into the repertory of newly composed or published works (e.g. Mendelssohn’s quartets), or by the disappearance from the repertory of pieces that eventually went out of fashion (e.g. Bach’s organ preludes and fugues arranged for double bass and piano). During the 15 seasons from 1835-6 to 1849-50 the repertory broadened considerably; a wide range of chamber music was introduced and much of it repeatedly performed, with the result that by 1850 a core chamber repertory had begun to crystallize.

This chapter deals first with practical factors that affected the choice and positioning of music in concert programmes; it then considers in detail the evolution of the instrumental repertory during the period; it also assesses the role of vocal music in concerts; and finally it addresses questions concerning the formation of a chamber-music canon in the 19th century.

1. Programmes and programming

The majority of chamber concerts were held in the evening and, like orchestral concerts of the period, were long by modern standards, comprising at least four (and sometimes six or seven) instrumental items. A typical concert lasted some three hours. Many programmes, as we have seen, were diversified by the inclusion of vocal items, the number of which varied from two (Concerti da Camera, 1835) to twelve or more (Literary and Scientific Institution concerts, 1843-4). The inclusion of vocal numbers may, initially at least, have been designed to attract large audiences to the new style of concert. In the 1830s, with both the Quartett Concerts and Classical Chamber Concerts

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See, for example, the programmes of the Classical Chamber Concerts, Moscheles’s Soirées and the Society of British Musicians’s concerts, reproduced in Exx.1, 2 and 4.

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introducing much new repertory and vying with one another for West End audiences, the presence of well-known singers performing familiar opera arias and concert ballads might well have induced potential concertgoers to attend. Although some musicians (e.g. H. J. Banister, Ella and Lucas) dispensed with singers altogether, many concert-givers continued to include vocal numbers throughout the period. Songs and duets did, after all, inject variety into otherwise long instrumental programmes; furthermore, they must have provided the instrumentalists with welcome (though admittedly brief) pauses in long and arduous performances.

Concerts were normally divided into two parts or ‘acts’, each of which started and finished with a concerted instrumental item (often a quartet or a quintet). Afternoon concerts, or matinées, offered shorter programmes, often comprising only instrumental music and usually without an interval; such were the meetings of the Musical Union and Moscheles’s concerts of 1845-6. For a selection of contemporary programmes see Exx.1-4.²

Most evening concerts began at 8 p.m. or 8.30 p.m. and finished at 11 p.m. or even later, but the custom of concertgoers to enter the auditorium late or to leave it early meant that many people (critics included) did not witness entire programmes. This practice affected the positioning of pieces within the concert, as the first and, especially, the last items in a concert were often performed to small audiences, and a concert-giver wanting to ensure that a particular piece was heard by as many people as possible (and by people in as receptive a frame of mind as possible) would avoid positioning that piece at either end of the programme. As already noted. Blagrove’s ensemble gave a number

² These programmes are transcribed diplomatically; the transcriptions do not mirror the exact typographical style of the originals.

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Ex.1: Programme for the Classical Chamber Concert, 13 February 1837

PART I.

Nonetto -- Violin, Viola, Violoncello, Contra-Basso, Corno, Bassoon, Clarinet, Flute, and Oboe -- Messrs. Mori, Tolbecque, Lindley, Dragonetti, Puzzi, Baumann, Willman, Card, and Barrett ...........................................

Canzonet -- "Despair," Mrs. Alfred Shaw ....................

Quartett -- For two Violins, Viola, and Violoncello, Messrs. Mori, Watts, Tolbecque, and Lindley ..............

Aria -- "Parto," Miss Fanny Woodham (Clarinet Obligato, Mr. Willman) ................................................

Trio -- For Violin, Violoncello, and Contra-Basso, Messrs. Mori, Lindley, and Signor Dragonetti ....................

PART II.

Septett -- For Pianoforte, Violin, Viola, Clarinet, Corno, Violoncello, and Contra-Basso, Mr. Moscheles, Mr. Mori, Mr. Tolbecque, Mr. Willman, Signor Puzzi, Mr. Lindley, and Signor Dragonetti ...........................................

Cantata -- "Adelaida," Signor Begrez ..........................

4 Source: Morning Post (14 Feb 1837).

5 Op.31 in F major.

6 Hob XXVIa/28.

7 Op.18 no.6 in B flat major.

8 From La clemenza di Tito.

9 Probably a composite trio sonata derived from music by Handel and Corelli.

10 Op.46.

11 Op.46.

Quintett -- For two Violins, two Viole, and Violoncello,\textsuperscript{13} Messrs. Mori, Watts, Tolbecque, Lyon, and Lindley ...... Mendelsshon [sic].

Conductor, Mr. Moscheles.

\textsuperscript{12} From \textit{Zaira}.

\textsuperscript{13} Op.18 in A major.
Ex.2: Programme for Moscheles's Soirée, 4 March 1837

PART I.

Grand Sonate pathétique (A flat, in 4 movements) P. F. Mr. Moscheles Weber

Song, Mr. Parry, 'Tears such as tender fathers shed,' Handel

Three Preludes & Fugues, (D major, F sharp minor, and A flat major) P. F. Mr. Moscheles S. Bach

Song, Miss Hawes, 'Know'st thou the land,' Spohr

Sonate Pastorale (D major) P. F. Mr. Moscheles Beethoven

PART II.

A selection from the Suites of Lessons as originally written for the harpsichord, and, by desire, performed on that instrument by Mr. Moscheles

D. Scarlatti

Two Preludes and Fugues (E minor and F major, as written for the organ), an Allemande and Gigue, P. F. Mr. Moscheles Handel

Duet, Miss Hawes and Mr. Parry, (Joseph) Mehul

[continued.../]

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14 Source: Musical World, iv, no.52 (10 March 1837), 184 [programme produced in prose].


16 From Deborah.

17 Op.28.

18 Title of duet unknown.
Ex. 2 continued...

Sonata, P. F. and horn,\textsuperscript{19} Mr. Moscheles and Signor Puzzi

Glee, Miss Hawes, Messrs. Vaughan, Hawes, and Parry 'By Celia's arbour,'

A selection of new MS. Studies, P. F. Mr. Moscheles

Conductor of the vocal music, Sir George Smart.

\textsuperscript{19} Op.17 in F major.

\textsuperscript{20} By William Horsley.
Ex.3: Programme for the Musical Union, 16 June 1846

PROGRAMME.

QUARTET, in F, No.82...... HAYDN.
TRIO, in D minor, Op.49 ...... MENDELSSOHN.
QUARTET, in A, No.5...... BEETHOVEN.

EXECUTANTS.
First Violin - M. VIEUXTEMPS.
Second Violin - M. DELOFFRE.
Viola - MR. HILL.
Violoncello - SIGNOR PIATTI.
Pianoforte - STERNDALE BENNETT.

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21 Source: The Record of the Musical Union (1846), no.6.
22 Op.77 no.2.
23 Op.18 no.5.
Ex.4: Programme for the Society of British Musicians, 16 February 1850

PART I.

Quartet in G. No.81, two violins, tenor, and violoncello, Messrs. Thirlwall, J. Banister, Trust, and Hatton...........

Aria, "Nobil Donna," Miss Clara Panchaud (Huguenots)...........

Ballad, "She shines before me like a star," Miss Pyne (King Charles II.) ...............................................

Quartet in E flat, Op.53, pianoforte, violin, tenor, and violoncello, Miss R. M. S. Read, Messrs. Thirlwall, Trust, and Hatton...........................................

PART II.

Quintetto, pianoforte, two violins, tenor, and violoncello, Messrs. Westrop, Banister, T. Westrop, Trust, and Hatton .......

Romance, "Spento ancor ritornerò," Miss Mira Griesbach (her first appearance in public) (Leonora)..........................

Ballad, "Constance," Miss Clara Panchaud .................

Trio, "Lift thine eyes to the mountains," Miss Mira Griesbach, Miss Pyne, and Miss Clara Panchaud (Elijah) ...........

Septuor in D minor, Op.74, pianoforte, flute, horn, oboe, tenor, violoncello, and contra-basso, Messrs. Brinley Richards, R. S. Pratten, Hornton, Callcott, Trust, Hatton, and F. S. Pratten ...........................................

Accompanist, Mr. Jewson. Director, Mr. W. Lovell Phillips.

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24 Source: Musical World, xxv, no.8 (23 Feb 1850), 115.


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of first English performances of instrumental works at the Quartett Concerts in the late 1830s, and in particular championed the late quartets of Beethoven; having given the first performance of one of these works (op. 130) at the end of their concert of 26 March 1836, the group appears to have consciously changed tack, for henceforth they consistently positioned the late quartets at the end of the first act. Likewise, in the mid-1840s a supporter of British music called for works by members of the Society of British Musicians to 'receive the most advantageous position in the programme' at the society's concerts, suggesting that British works 'should neither be placed first nor last in order, since the one exposes them to interruption from persons entering, and the other from persons quitting the concert-room'.

Instrumental works were normally performed in their entirety, though there were a few occasions, particularly at the Classical Chamber Concerts in the 1830s, when select movements only were performed. Thus the integrity of the piece of music was almost always honoured, and pasticcios were liable to widespread scorn. When two of Mendelssohn's independent quartet movements op. 81 (the andante and scherzo) were sandwiched between the first and last movements of his quartet in E minor op. 44 no. 2 at a meeting of the Musical Union on 9 April 1850, the resultant patchwork was greeted by many loud objections in the press. The Britannia, for instance, commented:

We must strongly protest against the principle of interpolating these two movements in another quartet; the mere affinity of keys is no excuse for such liberties, and there was no reason why the fragments should not be played in their detached form. Why does not Ernst compose a first and fourth movement? The co-operation of two composers in one work is not unprecedented; and we should prefer a Beaumont and Fletcher alliance to the mutilation of an accepted

26 See the programmes of the Quartett Concerts in the British Library, London, shelfmark d.483.

27 Musical Examiner, no. 110 (7 Dec 1844), 64.
Although only a few printed concert programmes of the period survive, newspaper reports clearly show that it was common practice for bills or leaflets containing information about what was to be performed to be distributed, probably free of charge, at the door. The paucity of printed programmes is not as much of a handicap to a reconstruction of the repertory as it might at first seem, for programmes were in practice only a guide to what was performed. Printed ahead of the performance, they were frequently subject to last-minute change, and thus do not necessarily document exactly what happened in the concert hall. For example, although the printed programme for Dando’s Quartett Concert of 27 April 1846 specifies a performance of Beethoven’s septet op.20, a newspaper report explains that ‘owing to the absence of the clarionet player without explanation to Mr. Dando’ the septet was not played, and Corelli’s sonata op.5 no.11 was substituted. Many singers and instrumentalists who were required for only one piece arrived at chamber concerts after performing at the opera or elsewhere, and on many occasions they did not arrive on time, with the result that the concert programme had to be changed at the last minute. The penultimate item in Sterndale Bennett’s concert of 8 January 1844 was to have been a performance by Elizabeth Rainforth (1814-77) of Mendelssohn’s song ‘Fancy’s dream’; but her non-arrival meant that a singer named Mr Cox (dates unknown) sang instead Bennett’s own ‘Lovely daughter of the May’. On other occasions, only the order of the pieces in the concert was altered. At Bennett’s

28 The Britannia, xi, no.574 (13 April 1850), 230. Similar views are expressed in the Illustrated London News, xvi, no.421 (13 April 1850), 251, the Musical World, xxv, no.15 (13 April 1850), 228-9, and The Times (11 April 1850).

29 Illustrated London News, no.209 (2 May 1846), 290.

30 Dramatic and Musical Review, no.94 (13 Jan 1844), 14.
concert of 26 February 1844 Beethoven’s piano sonata in D minor op.31 no.2, which was to have been the final item in the concert, was swapped with Bennett’s sextet, which was scheduled for the end of act 1, on account of the late arrival of one of the string players for the sextet.\footnote{Musical World, xix, no.9 (29 Feb 1844), 73-4.}

Newspaper reports are, likewise, the only record of pieces performed as encores. At this period it was still common for audiences to applaud individual movements of instrumental works, rather than to wait until the end of the last movement before applauding, and well-liked movements were often played a second time, before the players proceeded to the remainder of the piece. Vocal numbers were also frequently encored, though by the late 1840s the beginnings of a significant shift were emerging, for instead of repeating the song in question, artists were beginning to sing different works as encores - a practice that was frowned upon by some members of the press. The \textit{Musical World}, for example, had this to say of one of Lindsay Sloper’s concerts in 1848:

Mr. Brandt gave Mendelssohn’s song ['Zuleika'] with nice feeling and was encored. In its place, however, he substituted another. This is a custom prevalent now-a-days, but it is a custom more honoured in the breach than the observance. For what else does it mean than this - "the audience have encored \textit{me}, the singer, not \textit{him}, the composer - argal, they desire to hear \textit{my} voice, not \textit{his} music - so shall they have more of it than they had, \&c. \&c.\footnote{Musical World, xxiii, no.11 (11 March 1848), 169. The critic here is exaggerating slightly, as in reality it was only much later that the practice of presenting a different piece as an encore, with its implicit emphasis on the performer rather than on the piece applauded, became standard practice.}"

Vocal items were normally directed from the piano by the ‘conductor’ or ‘director’ of the concert, though there are some instances of singers accompanying themselves, or of composers stepping up to play for their own songs. At some concerts, especially those of the Society of British Musicians, both an accompanist and a conductor were engaged.
2. The instrumental repertory

(i) Documentation

It has been possible, through the collation and evaluation of concert reports published in contemporary journals and newspapers, to reconstruct the instrumental repertory from 1835 to 1850 in considerable detail. The repertory is reproduced, concert by concert, in Appendix B, and is indexed by composer in Appendix C. 510 concerts are represented in each of these appendices. Information, where it survives, for all predominantly serious concert series discussed in this thesis (e.g. the Quartett Concerts, Bennett’s concerts, Lucas’s concerts, the Musical Union) has been given for the entire period. In the decade to 1845 the few hybrid series (e.g. Neate’s and Molique’s concerts) and one-off benefit concerts (e.g. Banister’s of 1837 and Blagrove’s of 1838) that took place have been included, on the grounds that they occurred at a time when the chamber concert was establishing itself and that their repertory thus has some historical significance. In the years after 1845, however, hybrid and one-off benefit concerts multiplied vigorously (and, to the historian, dauntingly), with their repertories moving ever-further from the serious chamber-music concert which is at the heart of this thesis. Hence, with the exception of benefit concerts which formed part of serious concert series (e.g. Rousselot’s and Ernst’s benefits at the end of the Beethoven Quartet Society series) and hybrid repertory that found its way into otherwise serious concerts (e.g. Richard and Henry Blagrove’s Solo and Quartet Concerts, 1848), such concerts are not represented in the statistics, even though some of them have been discussed in passing in Chapter V.

More than 2380 pieces of music are recorded in the appendices and, wherever possible, the works are identified by composer, opus (or modern catalogue) number and key. Of the total number of works, around 400 can be identified only by composer and
genre, and a handful of pieces can be identified only by composer. The authorship of 40 works (1.7% of the repertory) remains unknown. The process of reconstruction has not been easy, and for further information concerning the methodology employed the reader should turn to the Introduction to Appendices B-E.

As research into 19th-century concert life advances during the coming years, it should be possible to identify even more compositions and to adjust and amend details in the appendices. However, there is enough information at present to be able to identify general trends and patterns in the establishment of the repertory. In the discussion and tables that follow, the 15 years from 1835 to 1850 are divided into three five-season periods: Period A, from September 1835 to August 1840; Period B, from September 1840 to August 1845; and Period C, from September 1845 to August 1850.

(ii) Overview

Table 6 presents a series of three 'league tables', in which composers are ranked according to the number of their works that were performed during Periods A, B and C. It demonstrates - among other things - the dramatic increase in the number of instrumental works performed (511 identified works in Period A, 743 in Period B and 1089 in Period C). Since the increase in the number of works performed was often concomitant with the general growth in the number of concerts being given, the information in Table 6 may be better understood in terms of the relative share of the repertory accorded to each composer; this is supplied in Table 7.\textsuperscript{33} What is perhaps most striking about these league tables is the fact that in each period the bulk of the

\textsuperscript{33} The small number of unidentified compositions (19 in Period A; 17 in Period B; 4 in Period C) are excluded from tables which calculate % shares.
TABLE 6: List of Composers whose Music was Performed at Chamber-music Concerts, 1835-50, ranked by the number of performances within each 5-season period (the number of performances is in parentheses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period A: 1835-40</th>
<th>Period B: 1840-45</th>
<th>Period C: 1845-50</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beethoven (121)</td>
<td>Beethoven (194)</td>
<td>Beethoven (271)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mozart (48)</td>
<td>Mozart (72)</td>
<td>Mendelssohn (192)</td>
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<td>Spohr (27)</td>
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34 This figure excludes 19 unidentified works, and two composite works by Corelli and Handel.

35 This figure excludes 17 unidentified works, and one composite work by De Beriot and Thalberg.

36 This figure excludes four unidentified works, and three composite works by Ernst and Heller.
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</table>
them - Beethoven, Mozart, Haydn, Mendelssohn, Onslow, Spohr and Hummel - remain at the top of the ‘league’ in all three periods, though, with the exception of Beethoven and Haydn, their respective positions in the league fluctuate over time.

The changing fortunes of individual composers are also striking, but are more easily traced in Tables 8 and 9, which list alphabetically composers who had five or more works performed between 1835 and 1850, and display the number of works performed and the percentage share of the repertory in Periods A, B and C. Indeed, by comparing Tables 8 and 9 it is possible to see that, although the number of performances of works by Beethoven and Haydn increased significantly over the 15 years, their share of the repertory stayed virtually constant, whereas although the number of Hummel’s works performed remained roughly the same, and the number of Onslow’s works increased slightly, their individual shares of the repertory declined.

Some composers’ music seems to have been subject to highly uneven exposure during the 15 years, with certain composers enjoying sudden, short-lived popularity near
TABLE 8: Alphabetical List of the Principal Composers whose Music was Performed at Chamber-music Concerts, 1835-50, ranked by the number of performances within each 5-season period

<table>
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<th>Period C 1845-50</th>
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This figure excludes two composite works drawn from the music of Corelli and Handel.

This figure excludes one work written in collaboration with Thalberg.

This figure excludes three works written in collaboration with Heller.

This figure excludes two composite works drawn from the music of Handel and Corelli.

This figure excludes three works written in collaboration with Ernst.
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^42 This figure excludes one work written in collaboration with De Beriot.

^43 This figure excludes two composite works drawn from the music of Corelli and Handel.
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44 This figure excludes one work written in collaboration with Thalberg.

45 This figure excludes three works composed in collaboration with Heller.

46 This figure excludes two composite works drawn from the music of Handel and Corelli.

47 This figure excludes three works composed in collaboration with Ernst.
<table>
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<th>Composer</th>
<th>A1</th>
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<td>.4</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The top of the league and then falling into relative obscurity. Such irregularities in the statistics are often due to localised factors, such as concerts which gave certain composers unprecedented prominence. G. A. Macfarren’s music, for example, is not represented at all in Period A, though in Period B there are 15 performances of his works (more than Bach, Chopin or Mayseder), while in Period C there are seven (fewer than Bach, Chopin and Mayseder). The dramatic increase in Period B was largely due to the existence of Macfarren and Davison’s own concerts - at which their own works were played a great deal - as well as the inauguration of the Society of British Musicians’s chamber concerts. Most fluctuations of this order can be explained in such terms. T. M. Mudie’s entry and departure from the upper half of the league in Period B should be considered in the context of his own concerts of 1843; Reicha’s seeming popularity in Period A should be understood in terms of Giovanni Puzzi’s performances of Reicha’s woodwind music in his chamber concerts of 1838; and the introduction of G. A. Osborne’s music in Period B and its increase in Period C should be seen as both a reflection of Osborne’s longstanding friendship with Ella (which resulted in performances at Ella’s concerts from 1844) and the inauguration of Osborne’s own concerts in 1850.

Most of the composers at the top of the league in Period A already had established reputations in the concert hall when chamber concerts were introduced in 1835. As we have already seen, in the seasons leading up to 1835 chamber music was given small but

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48 This figure excludes one work written in collaboration with De Beriot.

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regular exposure at the Philharmonic Society and at benefit concerts, and it is reasonable to assume that a certain number of works by Beethoven, Haydn, Mozart, Onslow and Spohr were reasonably familiar to a section of London concertgoers by the time Dando, Blagrove and Mori began their concerts in the 1835-6 season. Indeed, newspaper critics of the late 1830s were often at pains to distinguish between chamber works that were being introduced for the first or second time and those that were already reasonably well known.

Information gathered from Philharmonic Society programmes illustrates the range of composers whose chamber works were played between 1813 and 1835, and provides a context for those composers whose music was especially popular in Period A; see Table 10.\textsuperscript{49} In spite of the directors' decision to reduce the amount of chamber music in programmes from the 1820s, it is evident that Beethoven, Haydn and Mozart had a firm

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
& 1813-15 & 1816-20 & 1821-5 & 1826-30 & 1831-5 \\
\hline
J C Bach & 1 & & & & \\
Baermann & 1 & & & & \\
Baudiot & 1 & & & & \\
Beethoven & 7 & 14 & 8 & 9 & 7 \\
Boccherini & 2 & & & & \\
Bochsa & 1 & & & & \\
Corelli & 1 & 3 & & & 4 \\
J B Cramer & 2 & & & & 3 \\
Dussek & 2 & 1 & & & \\
Griffin & 1 & 2 & & & \\
Haydn & 8 & 13 & 3 & 4 & 1 \\
Hummel & 2 & 1 & 2 & 1 & \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Alphabetical List of Composers whose Chamber Music was Performed at the Philharmonic, 1813-35}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{49} For more detailed information about the chamber-music repertory at Philharmonic concerts see Appendix A.
Kalkbrenner  1  1
Klengel  1
Krommer  1
Lindley  3
Mayseder  1  9  2  1
Moscheles  1
Mozart  7  13  4  5  2
Müller  1
Neukomm  4
Onslow  3  2
Pleyel, Jr  1
Potter  1
Reicha  2
Ries  2  6  2
Rode  1
A Romberg  4  4  2
B Romberg  1  1  1
Spohr  4  2  2  3
Spohr/Mayseder  1
Viotti  2

TOTAL NO. of WORKS  42  72  40  27  29

foothold in the chamber repertory right from the Society’s inception and, unlike other composers whose chamber music was included in Philharmonic concerts in the early years (e.g. Ries and Anton Romberg), they were a stable presence right up to 1835. The table also shows that Corelli, Onslow and Spohr were becoming more familiar to audiences in the decade leading up to 1835, and with hindsight one can see that their chamber music was poised to play a substantial role in the programmes of the early chamber concerts.

Details of individual composers’ repertories, 1835-50, are laid out in Appendix C. Although much of this information speaks for itself, it may be useful to make some specific observations and tease out some general trends. In the section that follows, the works of the most popular chamber composers are considered in more detail, and their fortunes brought into relief and compared.
(iii) Composers and works

Beethoven, as already seen, dominated the chamber repertory after 1835; this mirrors his dominance over the orchestral repertory. In Periods A, B and C his music constituted 24%-26% of all works performed. The septet op.20, the op.18 quartets, at least one of the string quintets and the piano quintet op.16 - all early works which had been at the heart of the pre-1835 chamber repertory - continued to flourish in the post-1835 period. As might be expected, however, with the introduction of chamber concerts came a wider and more varied selection of Beethoven's music. Many of these new works quickly found favour with audiences and performers, and became as popular as - if not more popular than - some of his stalwarts. For an indication of Beethoven's most frequently performed chamber works in Periods A, B and C see Tables 11, 12 and 13.

During Period A the three Razumovsky quartets op.59, the 'Harp' quartet op.74 and all of the 'late' quartets, opp.127, 130, 131, 132 and 135 (with the exception of the Grosse Fugue), were introduced, and many of them repeatedly performed. Indeed, the quartets op.59 nos.1-3 and op.74 were among the most frequently performed works during this and later periods. The piano trio op.70 no.1 was also introduced early on and, along with op.97 (the 'Archduke') and the violin sonata op.47 (the 'Kreutzer'), was frequently heard. A range of piano sonatas - including op.27 no.2 (the 'Moonlight'), op.31 no.2, op.53 (the 'Waldstein') and op.57 (the 'Appassionata') - also became established during Periods A and B, being championed first by Moscheles, and later by Neate, Bennett, Dulcken and others. Other regularly performed works included the opp.5 and 69 cello sonatas, the violin sonatas opp.23, 24 and 30, the op.1 piano trios,

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and the F minor quartet op.95. By 1850 the majority of Beethoven's chamber music was firmly established in the repertory, and the figure of Beethoven loomed large over almost every concert programme.

The chamber music of Mozart and Haydn also featured prominently and consistently in Periods A, B and C. Mozart's works constituted between 9% and 10% of the repertory in all three periods; Haydn's music made up 6.3% of the repertory in Period A, 7.5% in Period B and 7.7% in Period C. Mozart and Haydn, like Beethoven, had been regularly represented in the Philharmonic repertory before 1835, and a number of their chamber works must have been familiar to audiences. Since none of their works is identified specifically in Philharmonic programmes, it is possible at present to say only that certain string quartets by Haydn and certain string quartets and quintets by Mozart made up part of the repertory immediately before 1835.51

In the post-1835 period a wide selection of Mozart's chamber music was regularly performed. His quartets and quintets became well established at the heart of the repertory, with the six quartets dedicated to Haydn and published as op.10 - K387, K421, K428, K458, K464 and K465 - becoming particular favourites, along with the three 'Prussian' quartets K575, K589 and K590, the 'Hoffmeister' K499 and the viola quintets K515, K516, K593 and K614; see Tables 11 and 12. The relatively high number of unidentified quartets, however, may mean that some works were more frequently performed than the statistics currently suggest. In addition to the string music, the two piano quartets K478 and K493 enjoyed regular airings, as did the clarinet quintet K581 (which was published as op.108), the piano quintet (with woodwind) K452, and the

51 A database containing information from Philharmonic concert programmes and contemporary reviews is in progress at the time of writing; it is mentioned in Ehrlich, First Philharmonic, 4, note 7.
### TABLE 11: The Most Frequently Performed Works in Period A (1835-40)

<table>
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<th>Composer</th>
<th>Work</th>
<th>No. of performances</th>
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<tr>
<td>Moscheles</td>
<td>Characteristic Studies op.95</td>
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<td>Beethoven</td>
<td>Quartet op.59/1</td>
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<td>Hummel</td>
<td>Piano septet op.74</td>
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<td>Quintet op.25</td>
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<td>Onslow</td>
<td>Quintet op.34</td>
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<td>Beethoven</td>
<td>Piano quintet op.16</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Piano trio op.97 ('Archduke')</td>
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<td>Beethoven</td>
<td>Quartet op.18/3</td>
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<td>Beethoven</td>
<td>Quartet op.59/3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mendelssohn</td>
<td>Octet op.20</td>
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<td>Mozart</td>
<td>Piano trio K498 ('Kegelstatt')</td>
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<td>Spohr</td>
<td>Nonet op.31</td>
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<td>Onslow</td>
<td>Quintet op.32</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spohr</td>
<td>Piano quintet (in op.52/op.53 versions)</td>
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### TABLE 12: The Most Frequently Performed Works in Period B (1840-45)

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<tr>
<th>Composer</th>
<th>Work</th>
<th>No. of performances</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Piano trio op.70/1</td>
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<td>Quartet K465 ('Dissonance')</td>
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<td>Beethoven</td>
<td>Piano quintet op.16</td>
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<td>Beethoven</td>
<td>Quartet op.74 ('Harp')</td>
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<tr>
<td>Composer</td>
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<td>Piano trio op.97 (‘Archduke’)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mendelssohn</td>
<td>Quintet op.18</td>
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TABLE 13: The Most Frequently Performed Works in Period C (1845-50)
Mendelssohn  Violoncello sonata op.58  8
Mozart    Quartet K421    8
Mozart    Quartet K465 ('Dissonance')  8
Mozart    Quartet K575    8

'Kegelstatt' trio for piano, clarinet and viola K498, which was especially popular in Period A. The clarinettists Thomas Willman and Henry Lazarus (1815-95) became strongly identified with K498 and K581. Although the works outlined so far formed the core of Mozart's contribution to the repertory, other works were occasionally brought forward, and over the 15 years a range of piano music, including a number of piano duets, along with the piano trios K502 and K542, the string trio K563 and other miscellaneous pieces, was performed.

Haydn's contribution to the repertory was almost wholly through his quartets. The piano trios and sonatas did not feature, in spite of the fact that many of them had been published in London. The opp.76 and 77 sets of quartets were among Haydn's most frequently performed works, with op.76 no.3 (the 'Emperor') and op.77 no.1 becoming general favourites (see Tables 11, 12 and 13). What is perhaps most striking about Haydn's role in the repertory in Periods A, B and C is that he was represented by a relatively wide range of quartets. Just about any quartet by Haydn, it seems, was an attractive proposition for concert-givers, especially those who were string players themselves and presumably were familiar with the Haydn quartet repertory. The Quartett Concerts (under Blagrove and later Dando), Lucas's Musical Evenings and the meetings of the Musical Union, the Society of British Musicians and the Beethoven Quartet Society were the principal forums for the performance of quartets from opp.17, 20, 33, 50, 54, 55, 64, 71 and 74.

Not all composers maintained their share of the repertory throughout the 15-year
period: Onslow is a case in point. Chamber music by Onslow had been inching its way into Philharmonic programmes in the late 1820s and early 1830s, and in Period A his string quintets in particular enjoyed widespread popularity. Onslow was a prolific composer of quartets and quintets, most of which were carefully tailored to amateur performance. The string quintets, for example, were available in versions with two violas and with two cellos. The sudden interest in Onslow’s chamber music may be related to the fact that the works were relatively new to London and were readily available from publishers: by the late 1830s Breitkopf and Härtel had issued collected editions in parts and score of Onslow’s quartets and quintets. Furthermore, their lack of extreme technical difficulties must have made them attractive choices for professional musicians seeking to prepare a lot of new repertory at relatively short notice.

In Period A Onslow’s quintets opp.25, 32 and 34 were among the 21 most frequently performed compositions; see Table 11. Indeed, their positions in this league table may actually be even higher, because of the large number of his quintets that remain unidentified in the statistics. At the Classical Chamber Concerts the quintets were habitually performed by Mori’s regular quartet with Dragonetti playing the second cello part on the double bass - a practice subsequently adopted by other groups. Onslow’s share of the repertory tailed off somewhat during Periods B and C, and no single composition managed to achieve the same popularity that opp.25 and 34 had in the previous period. By the 1840s critical opinion as to the musical merits of Onslow’s chamber music was becoming increasingly negative, suggesting that certain sections of audiences had grown tired of many of his works. Judgments such as the following were

commonplace: ‘Onslow is amazingly overrated - all he does smells of the lamp, and is rather the result of industry than the outpourings of genius’.\(^{53}\) Certainly, Onslow’s music may well have paled beside the gems by Beethoven, Mozart, Mendelssohn and others in the growing repertory. Nevertheless, amateurs remained familiar with his music, and some of Onslow’s quintets continued to hold their own in the repertory up to 1850 and beyond.

As Onslow’s fortunes declined, Mendelssohn’s began to soar, with the latter’s share of the repertory doubling between Periods A and B, and again between Periods B and C; see Table 9. Little of Mendelssohn’s early chamber music was known in England before the establishment of chamber concerts (only an orchestrated version of the scherzo from the octet op.20 had been performed at the Philharmonic), and it was the youthful Blagrove who gave the first English performances of several works, including the quartets opp.12 and 13, and the quintet op.18, at his Quartett Concerts in the late 1830s. Mendelssohn continued to compose and publish chamber music during the 1830s and 40s, and much of it was performed at London concerts. The op.44 quartets, the two piano trios opp.49 and 66, the two cello sonatas opp.45 and 58 and the Lieder ohne Worte were thus introduced into the repertory in Periods A and B, and by Period C had become firm favourites: see Tables 11, 12 and 13.

Mendelssohn, of course, spent a good deal of time in London during the 1830s and 40s, and enjoyed a special relationship with the city, its musicians and its music-lovers.\(^{54}\) His chamber music, like his orchestral works, excited enthusiastic reactions

\(^{53}\) *Morning Post* (5 Dec 1844).

\(^{54}\) For an account of Mendelssohn’s relationship with the Philharmonic Society see Ehrlich, *First Philharmonic*, 48-53.
in its listeners; and his works for solo piano - especially the Lieder ohne Worte, which were designed for an essentially amateur market - graced many Victorian homes. Mendelssohn's presence in the audience at a chamber concert bestowed gravitas and credibility on an enterprise; while his occasional presence as a performer - always playing his own music - was guaranteed to draw large crowds.\footnote{Mendelssohn frequently played the piano in performances of his piano trios: for example, at Ella's réunion of 21 May 1844 (op.49), Macfarren and Davison's concert on 7 June 1844 (op.49) and at a meeting of the Beethoven Quartet Society on 4 May 1847 (op.66).} At the end of a concert given in his honour by the Society of British Musicians in 1844 he dazzled listeners by extemporising at the piano on melodies from C. E. Horsley's op.6 piano trio and G. A. Macfarren's song 'Ah! non lasciarmi', which had been performed in the concert.\footnote{See the Morning Herald (17 June 1844).}

Mendelssohn's death in November 1847 at the age of 38 was grieved by performers and audiences alike. The cult for his music, of course, did not die with him: if anything, his status and popularity were enhanced posthumously, and Mendelssohn mania took hold. In the 1847-8 season concerts honouring the man and his music were given - as if by way of an obituary - by W. S. Bennett (23 February), John Willy (23 February) and the Beethoven Quartet Society (5 June); and between 1848 and 1850 Mendelssohn's music vied with Beethoven's for domination of the repertory.

Another foreign composer fêted by the English was Louis Spohr, who was also a regular visitor to London, and whose chamber works featured fairly prominently throughout the 15 years under discussion. Like Beethoven, Mozart, Onslow and Haydn - all of whom feature at the top of the league-table in Period A - Spohr's chamber music (namely quartets, double quartets and the famous nonet op.31) had been well represented
at the Philharmonic by the time chamber concerts were introduced in 1835. In the ensuing years Spohr's share of the repertory remained fairly constant (see Table 9), and a wide range of his music was heard, though few works assumed particular prominence. The nonet, the double quartets and the piano quintet op.52 (and in its arrangement for piano and strings as op.53) were his most frequently performed works, though they never achieved the widespread popularity of certain works by Mendelssohn. Likewise, although a large number of Spohr's quartets were played, most secured no more than two subsequent performances.

The composer-pianist Hummel, in sharp contrast, won recognition through only a small number of works, virtually all of them with piano. Hummel's music, initially welcomed by the English, had fallen from favour in the 1820s and early 1830s, but after his death in 1837 it regained its former status.\(^{57}\) Hence his piano septet op.74, which had been performed four times at the Philharmonic between 1818 and 1830, became one of the most frequently performed pieces in the repertory during Period A, and the piano quintet one of the most frequently performed pieces during Period B (see Tables 11 and 12). The remainder of his music comprised piano trios (including the E major trio op.83, dedicated to J. B. Cramer), piano duets and occasional works; the 'Military' piano septet op.114 was given only once in each of the three periods, its appearance on concert programmes being presumably limited by the fact that it calls - uncommonly for chamber music of this period - for a trumpet.

The most successful native composer of the 1830s and 40s was William Sterndale Bennett, whose chamber music achieved some prominence during Periods B and C (see

Table 9). This was due partly - though not exclusively - to Bennett's own concerts, which provided a convenient forum for the introduction of new pieces, especially his solo piano works. However, Bennett's music was also frequently included in the programmes of other concert-givers. His piano trio op.26, for instance, composed especially for Blagrove's Quartett Concerts in May 1840, was subsequently performed (with the composer at the piano) at Davison's, Lucas's, Billet's and several other concerts. Apart from the piano trio and piano sextet op.8, Bennett's reputation rested on his solo piano works, several of which seemed to endure. The Three Musical Sketches op.10, the Rondo piacevole op.25 and the romance Genevieve increased in popularity and by Period C were frequently to be found in concert programmes, complementing Mendelssohn's Lieder ohne Worte.

Most other English composers enjoyed only temporary prominence, and those who achieved performances outside the milieu of the Society of British Musicians did so, more often than not, through setting up their own concert series. Charles Neate, for example, ensured his chamber music - all of it for piano or piano ensemble - featured prominently in the repertory when he began his concerts in 1837. His piano variations on 'Rule Britannia' in particular were repeatedly performed during Period A and the first part of Period B (see Table 11). Likewise G. A. Macfarren, as already seen, introduced several of his compositions at his and Davison's concerts in 1843 and 1844, with the result that his A major quartet was among the 20 or so most frequently performed works in Period B (see Table 12). Other musicians who found prominence in this way included T. M. Mudie, G. A. Osborne, and Lindsay Sloper.

For the remainder of English composers, performances of chamber music were
generally restricted to the Society of British Musicians’s concerts. There were also occasional opportunities in concerts given by colleagues; the most notable of these were Dando’s Quartett Concerts and Holmes’s concerts. Through such channels dozens of English chamber works were heard, among them piano sonatas, violin sonatas and piano trios by W. C. Macfarren; piano quintets, a piano quartet (op.2) and other works by Henry Westrop; quartets, piano trios and solo piano pieces by Cipriani Potter; quartets, duo sonatas, a piano trio (op.6) and a piano quartet (op.9) by C. E. Horsley; and quartets and a violin sonata by Kate Loder. Likewise, G. A. Macfarren’s piano quintet and A major piano sonata chalked up a number of performances in Periods B and C at concerts organised by fellow musicians.

The music of many middle-ranking foreign composers was also to be heard during all three periods. A small number of string quartets, sextets and piano trios by Joseph Mayseder were played from time to time, in particular his *quatuor brillant* op.23 and the piano trio op.52. The Romberg brothers (Andreas and Bernhard), Friedrich Fesca, Ferdinand Ries and many other Kleinmeister appeared in the repertory to a similar extent.

Chamber music by Dussek and Weber (all of it including the piano) was more frequently encountered. Dussek was represented by his piano quartet op.53, his piano quintet op.41 and a number of piano sonatas, including the op.77 sonata ‘L’invocation’. No single piece by Weber achieved special prominence, but the clarinet and piano duet op.48, the piano quartet op.5, the piano sonata op.24 and the famous ‘Invitation pour la valse’ op.65 were all played, especially at concerts organized by pianists such as Dulcken

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58 Some chamber works were included in the Society of British Musicians’s large-scale (orchestral) concerts; for detailed information on individual composers see Nicholas Temperley, *Instrumental Music in England 1800-1850* (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 1959), 361-420.
and Moscheles. The latter used his own concerts to present many of his works, such as his Characteristic Studies op.95, which temporarily shot to fame during Period A (see Table 11). His piano duets op.92 ('Hommage à Handel') and op.112 ('Sonate symphonique'), however, proved to have occasional appeal for other concert-givers.

Naturally enough, with the increase in the number of chamber concerts hosted by pianists in the 1840s came an increase in the amount of solo piano music heard in public. In Periods B and C the repertory swelled, mainly through the performance of works by Mendelssohn and Bennett, and to a lesser extent Chopin (his studies and nocturnes in particular), Leopold de Meyer, Stephen Heller, Alexandre Billet and a number of English composers.

Although contemporary compositions were constantly entering the repertory, older music had its place as well. As shown above, the works of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven (which by the 1830s were relatively 'old' compositions) formed the core of the repertory, and were supplemented - but not replaced - by modern works. Yet there was older music still, and the fortunes of Baroque composers added a further, fascinating dimension to the chamber repertory. Composers whose music was most frequently performed throughout the 15-year period were Corelli, Handel, J. S. Bach and Domenico Scarlatti.

Corelli's music was often to be encountered in Period A, but by Period C had virtually disappeared from the repertory. Trio sonatas (from opp.1-4) and the op.5 violin sonatas, frequently in arrangements for one or two cellos and double bass, enjoyed many appearances in the first wave of chamber concerts in the late 1830s. Such arrangements had been Dragonetti and Lindley's party-pieces at the Philharmonic concerts since the 1820s, and the two men were quickly linked with the same repertory at the Classical...
Chamber Concerts (1836-9). Other string players attempted the same works, perhaps in competition - at the Quartett Concerts, Lucas and Howell were involved in many performances - but by the mid-1840s Corelli’s music was becoming something of a rarity in chamber concert programmes. Among the factors that probably contributed to this demise were the death of Dragonetti in 1846 and Lindley’s virtual withdrawal from chamber concerts in the mid-1840s (no performances of these pieces at chamber concerts are on record thereafter). Moreover, as early as 1832 Moscheles had complained of such ‘antiquated’ pieces being played at Philharmonic concerts ‘by the old matadors ... while the rest of us run out of patience’.59

Handel’s trio sonatas suffered a similar fate, although his keyboard music, along with keyboard works by Bach and Scarlatti, moved towards a different destiny. Moscheles, though opposed to the performance of trio sonatas for purposes of showmanship, showed himself to be in sympathy with the serious performance of Baroque music when he introduced movements from harpsichord suites, and preludes and fugues, by all three composers into his ‘historical’ concerts of 1837-9. Few works can be specifically identified from accounts of his concerts: those that can include the still-popular ‘Harmonious Blacksmith’ variations by Handel, the ‘Cat’s Fugue’ by Scarlatti and assorted preludes and fugues from Bach’s Well-Tempered Clavier. The curtailment of Moscheles’s concerts in 1839 caused something of a hiatus in the inclusion of Baroque keyboard music in the repertory, and in Period B there were only a few performances of such ancient music (at Bennett’s, Dando’s and Macfarren and Davison’s concerts in particular). However, the resumption of Moscheles’s concerts in 1845 and a general

increase in the number of pianists looking for repertory for chamber concerts in Period C brought about a resurgence in the amount of Baroque keyboard music being performed: Sloper, Holmes, Billet and others began to include such works in their programmes. At about this time Bach’s violin music also began to feature in the repertory, with the accompanied sonatas, in particular the E major sonata BWV1016, enjoying frequent performance.

The advent of chamber concerts thus brought about a considerable expansion in the amount and variety of chamber music that could be heard in London, and led to their taking the lion’s share of this type of music. Indeed, it is probably no coincidence that chamber music fell from Philharmonic Society programmes during the 1830s, and by the 1840s had virtually disappeared.60

Between 1835 and 1850 the chamber-concert repertory comprised more than 700 different works61 by more than 150 composers; the majority of these works were by 20 or so composers, among them Beethoven, Haydn, Mendelssohn, Mozart and Spohr. Some pieces, once introduced, maintained a stable presence in the repertory throughout the period (many of these works have, of course, remained in the repertory to this day, though some pieces, for instance Spohr’s quartets, eventually fell from favour). Others were far more transient, and by 1850 there had developed a central repertory around which there was a great deal of change: that is, a number of works that held their popularity, buoyed up by many others which, after only one appearance, either disappeared or resurfaced only very occasionally. Table 14 lists the 66 most frequently

60 On chamber music at the Philharmonic see Ehrlich, *First Philharmonic*, 46.

61 This figure is a conservative estimate only, since many works cannot be identified in absolute terms.
performed works during the period, and gives a fair indication of the shape of the central repertory; with the exception of a few works towards the bottom of the table, most works maintained or even increased their profile in the repertory season after season.

TABLE 14: The Most Frequently Performed Chamber Works, 1835-50

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composer</th>
<th>Work</th>
<th>No. of performances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beethoven</td>
<td>Quartet op.59/3</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beethoven</td>
<td>Quartet op.74</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mendelssohn</td>
<td>Piano trio op.49</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beethoven</td>
<td>Piano trio op.70/1</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beethoven</td>
<td>Quartet op.18/1</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beethoven</td>
<td>Quartet op.18/6</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beethoven</td>
<td>Quartet op.18/4</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beethoven</td>
<td>Quartet op.59/1</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beethoven</td>
<td>Quartet op.59/2</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haydn</td>
<td>Quartet op.77/1</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beethoven</td>
<td>Quartet op.18/3</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beethoven</td>
<td>Quartet op.18/5</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beethoven</td>
<td>Quartet op.130</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mendelssohn</td>
<td>Quartet op.44/1</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mendelssohn</td>
<td>Piano trio op.66</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mozart</td>
<td>Quartet K465 (‘Dissonance’)</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beethoven</td>
<td>Piano trio op.97 (‘Archduke’)</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beethoven</td>
<td>Quintet op.4</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beethoven</td>
<td>Quintet op.29</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beethoven</td>
<td>Violin sonata op.47 (‘Kreutzer’)</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beethoven</td>
<td>Piano sonata op.31/2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beethoven</td>
<td>Quartet op.18/2</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hummel</td>
<td>Piano quintet op.87</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hummel</td>
<td>Piano septet op.74</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mendelssohn</td>
<td>Quartet op.44/2</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mendelssohn</td>
<td>Quintet op.18</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beethoven</td>
<td>Piano quintet op.16</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beethoven</td>
<td>Piano trio op.70/2</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beethoven</td>
<td>Quartet op.131</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beethoven</td>
<td>Septet op.20</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mendelssohn</td>
<td>Lieder ohne Worte op.62</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mendelssohn</td>
<td>Piano quartet op.3</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mozart</td>
<td>Quintet K516</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spohr</td>
<td>Double quartet op.87</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. The vocal repertory

Although the place of vocal music in this thesis is subsidiary to that of instrumental music, it is nonetheless pertinent to consider the role of vocal music in relation to the instrumental repertory and to make some observations about the nature of vocal music in chamber-music concerts. The vocal repertory is reconstructed, concert by concert, in Appendix D, and is indexed by composer in Appendix E. 1473 vocal items are noted in each of these appendices, and wherever possible the pieces are identified by composer,
Vocal music - usually songs and duets, though occasionally trios, quartets and quintets - was of minor importance in most of the concerts under discussion. A relatively slender proportion of concerts was given over to vocal numbers, which consequently took up a proportionally smaller amount of time in performance than did instrumental works. Of a concert that took approximately three hours, for example, probably no more than 20 minutes were devoted to vocal items. Journalists reflected this balance in print, by relegating vocal music to the end of their concert reports, and often giving songs little more than cursory coverage. In effect, vocal music was limited to providing respite for the instrumental performers and to injecting variety into long concert programmes. As The Britannia pointed out: 'The vocal selection is, of course, a secondary affair, thrown in chiefly to give rest to the instrumentalists, and a little relief to the programme'.

Only in benefit chamber concerts - for example, the penultimate concert of the Musical Union's annual series - were songs elevated to a more central position, in an attempt to attract larger audiences.

Furthermore, although the total number of chamber concerts increased during the mid-1840s, many series - for instance the Beethoven Quartet Society, Lucas's Musical Evenings, Moscheles's concerts of 1845-6 - began to dispense with vocal music entirely; as a result the amount of vocal music in programmes declined between Periods B and C. 317 vocal items are recorded for Period A, 672 for Period B and only 484 for Period C.

Choice of repertory seems to have been left, more often than not, to the singers.

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62 The Britannia, iv, no.241 (25 Nov 1843), 747.
themselves and, although a small number of favourite songs and arias appeared regularly throughout the 15-year period, the selection of individual pieces was wide-ranging and seems often to have been dictated by whimsical, fashionable or pragmatic concerns. Arias and ensembles extracted from the latest opera in town were commonplace, as were recently published ballads, and new songs composed by concert-givers. As a result, the vocal repertory was much more diverse, and effectively much less coherent, than the instrumental repertory.

Although few specific items were sung over and over again, certain composers were always in demand. Tables 15 and 16 show the relative popularity of composers, calculated in terms of the number of works performed and their percentage share of the

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**TABLE 15:** List of Composers whose Vocal Music was Performed at Chamber-music Concerts, 1835-50, ranked by the number of performances within each 5-season period (the number of performances is in parentheses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period A: 1835-40</th>
<th>Period B: 1840-45</th>
<th>Period C: 1845-50</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mozart (67)</td>
<td>Mozart (77)</td>
<td>Mendelssohn (73)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beethoven (21)</td>
<td>G A Macfarren (40)</td>
<td>Mozart (40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haydn (21)</td>
<td>Spohr (33)</td>
<td>W S Bennett (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spohr (17)</td>
<td>Beethoven (31)</td>
<td>G A Macfarren (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schubert (15)</td>
<td>Schubert (31)</td>
<td>Spohr (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weber (12)</td>
<td>J W Davison (27)</td>
<td>Beethoven (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter (11)</td>
<td>Weber (27)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mendelssohn (10)</td>
<td>Haydn (25)</td>
<td>Molique (14)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neate (9)</td>
<td>Mendelssohn (23)</td>
<td>Haydn (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meyerbeer (8)</td>
<td>T M Mudie (22)</td>
<td>Handel (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Handel (20)</td>
<td>Weber (10)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

258
This figure excludes 14 unidentified works.
TABLE 16: List of Composers whose Vocal Music was Performed at Chamber-music Concerts, 1835-50, ranked by percentage share of the vocal repertory within each 5-season period (%s are expressed to one decimal place and are in parentheses)\textsuperscript{66}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period A: 1835-40</th>
<th>Period B: 1840-45</th>
<th>Period C: 1845-50</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mozart (22.1)</td>
<td>Mozart (11.7)</td>
<td>Mendelssohn (15.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haydn (6.9)</td>
<td>G A Macfarren (6.1)</td>
<td>Mozart (8.5)</td>
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<td>Spohr (5.6)</td>
<td>Beethoven (4.7)</td>
<td>Schubert (4.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schubert (5.0)</td>
<td>J W Davison (4.1)</td>
<td>Spohr (3.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weber (4.0)</td>
<td>Weber (4.1)</td>
<td>Beethoven (3.2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Winter (3.6)</td>
<td>Haydn (3.8)</td>
<td>Molique (3.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mendelssohn (3.3)</td>
<td>Mendelssohn (3.5)</td>
<td>Haydn (2.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neate (3.0)</td>
<td>T M Mudie (3.3)</td>
<td>Handel (2.3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meyerbeer (2.6)</td>
<td>Handel (3.0)</td>
<td>Weber (2.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purcell (2.6)</td>
<td>W S Bennett (2.3)</td>
<td>Czapek/Hatton (1.7)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Handel (2.3)</td>
<td>J Parry (2.3)</td>
<td>Wallace (1.7)</td>
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<td>Rossini (2.3)</td>
<td>H Smart (2.3)</td>
<td>Phillips (1.5)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cherubini (2.0)</td>
<td>Molique (2.0)</td>
<td>Richards (1.5)</td>
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<td>Keller (2.0)</td>
<td>E J Loder (1.5)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Rossini (1.5)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Balfe (1.4)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bishop (1.4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{64} This figure excludes 12 unidentified works.

\textsuperscript{65} This figure excludes 14 unidentified works.

\textsuperscript{66} A small number of unidentified compositions (14 in Period A, 12 in Period B, and 14 in Period C) are excluded from these calculations.
repertory. As with the instrumental repertory, the vocal repertory is dominated throughout Periods A, B and C by a small group of composers - Beethoven, Haydn, Mendelssohn, Mozart, Spohr and Weber. It is interesting that all of these composers also contributed significantly to the shape of the instrumental repertory, though their respective shares of the vocal repertory are less constant. As with the instrumental repertory there are temporary surges: Mozart is especially prominent in Period A, G. A. Macfarren looms large in Period B and Mendelssohn comes dramatically to the fore in Period C. Indeed, the overall picture is one of a large number of composers (69 in Period A, 116 in Period B, 127 in Period C) sharing the limelight.
The vocal repertory also embraced a variety of genres. Arias and ensembles from a number of Italian operas (especially Mozart’s *Le nozze di Figaro* and Winter’s *Il ratto di Proserpina*) were particularly favoured, but there were also many items from operas in translation; for instance, numbers from Weber’s *Der Freischütz* were usually sung in English and items from *Die Zauberflöte* were sung in Italian, reflecting current practice on the London stage. In addition, there were numbers from a few oratorios (e.g. Mendelssohn’s *St Paul*) and occasional dramatic works (e.g. Handel’s *Acis and Galatea*). A section of the repertory was given over to Lieder - by Mendelssohn and Schubert in particular - solo cantatas (e.g. Haydn’s ‘Ariana a Naxos’ Hob XXVIb/2), concert arias (e.g. Mozart’s ‘L’addio’ K Anh.245) and ballads, mainly by British composers, and there were sporadic performances of glee, madrigals etc. Occasionally vocal numbers were performed with instrumental obligatos as well as piano accompaniment, Spohr’s canzonet ‘The bird and the maiden’ and Mozart’s ‘Non più di fiori’ from *La clemenza di Tito*, both played with obligato clarinet, being two such examples.

The relationship of operatic excerpts to the London opera repertory of the time is an important issue which, if studied in depth, might go some way to explaining the constant flux of much of the vocal concert repertory. Singers arriving hot-foot from the opera house presumably preferred to sing pieces in their current repertories (and audiences were presumably eager to hear them), and with operas coming in and going out of production each season, the vocal pieces that opera singers had in their suitcases would have been constantly changing. Moreover, the performance of excerpts from a new opera automatically brought welcome publicity for composer, performer and opera.

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and it was surely in this spirit that numbers from Balfe’s recently-opened *Bohemian Girl* were sung in concerts in March and April 1844, or that items from G. A. Macfarren’s *King Charles II* were included in concerts from December 1849.68

A few vocal numbers transcended such local circumstances, and were to be heard fairly regularly throughout the 15-year period. The most frequently sung items during the period are listed in Table 17; of these only Beethoven’s ‘Adelaide’, Mozart’s ‘Dove sono’ and ‘Non mi dir’, Bennett’s ‘Gentle zephyr’ and Mendelssohn’s ‘Spring song’ were heard regularly.

The overall picture, then, is one of a thinly spread repertory in which a small group of composers achieved moderate prominence. Few specific numbers were

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68 *The Bohemian Girl* opened at Drury Lane on 27 November 1843; *King Charles II* opened at the Princess’s Theatre on 27 October 1849.
performed time and time again, although a handful of operas - notably Weber's *Der Freischütz* and *Oberon*, Mozart's *Cosi fan tutte*, *Don Giovanni* and *Le nozze di Figaro* and Spohr's *Jessonda* - were regularly plundered for effective vocal items. Unlike the evolving instrumental repertory, there is little sense of a core repertory of vocal music for chamber concerts - a situation that no doubt reflects the fact that vocal music was no more than an accompaniment to a main course of instrumental items. It remains to be firmly established whether the vocal repertory for chamber concerts was any different from that of mixed orchestral concerts, but it seems unlikely that there were major differences.

4. Towards a chamber-music canon

References to the body of music performed at London chamber concerts have so far deliberately employed the term 'repertory' rather than 'canon'. The final section of this chapter considers whether it is justifiable to talk of an emerging canon and/or of canonic values in the period and music under discussion.

Questions of musical canon were first addressed in a significant way in 1983 by Joseph Kerman in his seminal article in *Critical Inquiry.* Since then a number of scholars, in particular Marcia Citron and William Weber, have joined the debate and have sought to apply the term 'canon' to specific musical repertories, both contemporary and historical. Definitions of the term 'canon' are many and varied, though at its

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simplest the term may be taken to mean an enduring body of works that is seen to represent the summit of achievement in the field concerned, be it art, music or literature. Canonic works are often described as ‘classics’ or ‘masterpieces’. Canon should not, as Kerman was keen to stress, be confused with repertory, which simply refers to a stock of works, or ‘program of action’.71 In seeking to point up this terminological distinction, however, Kerman oversimplified the issue, claiming that ‘repertories are determined by performers, canons, by critics’,72 and many scholars, including Weber and Citron, subsequently attacked this premise.73 Nevertheless, the basic tenet of his argument - that canon involves an intellectual and critical value-system while repertory does not - is generally sound. After all, the repeated performance of a work alone does not render it canonic, even though works that are becoming or have already become canonic may be repeatedly performed. Rather, works become canonic when a succession of critical judgments bestows authority on them. Indeed, canon itself may be seen to refer to the ideology that binds such ‘classic’ works together; to quote Weber: ‘canon has ... three main components: repertory, critical judgment, and ideology’.74

Most scholars agree that the formative stages of the modern canon of classical music can be traced back to the early 19th century, when the traditions and aesthetics of


composition and performance in Europe began to undergo substantial change. Put simply, this was the period when ‘old’ music began to remain in the repertory alongside ‘new’ music, and it became no longer inevitable that ‘old’ music would drop out in favour of contemporary compositions. As Kerman observes: ‘Beethoven and Rossini were added to, not replaced. Increasingly, the repertory assumed a historical dimension’.75

In fact, in England and France the practice of performing ‘old’ music can be traced back even further, into the late 18th century, to performances of Handel’s music by the Concerts of Ancient Music in London and of Lully’s operas in Paris.76 Nevertheless, many observers consider that the real business of canon formation only came about in the second half of the 19th century, or even later - though few pin down a precise date. Citron, for example, tends towards the second and third decades of the 20th century, and describes the period from 1800 to 1850 as a time only of ‘cohering repertories’ which ‘helped foster the notion of the masterpiece’.77 Her contention here is that ‘paradigmatic repertories ... precede more formalized canons’, but even she is forced to admit that the early 19th century is ‘an important moment in musical canonicity’.78

The agencies of canon formation is another area on which scholars are divided.


77 Citron, Gender and the Musical Canon, 9; see also 31-7. This argument echoes Weber’s thesis that the development of musical canon involves two stages: ‘first, the expansion of traditional practices of performing individual old works into regularly performed repertories, and secondly, the intellectual and ritual definition of works from such repertories as canon’; see Weber, ‘The Eighteenth-Century Origins’, 11.

78 Citron, Gender and the Musical Canon, 31 and 32.
Kerman claims that canons are formed by highbrow music criticism alone, Weber that they are formed by 'a complex variety of forces, ideas and social rituals that grew out of musical culture'. While music criticism does have special influence and authority, it is an oversimplification to suggest that this alone creates canon; clearly, other interrelated factors must be addressed. Not the least of these are the contributions of performers and listeners in forming and affirming notions of canon. In the early 19th century, nevertheless, the new medium of music journalism (although of very variable quality) contributed significantly to the shaping of taste.

Where, then, does this leave the London chamber repertory of 1835-50? It would be foolhardy to use music from such a small time period to posit grand theories of canonicity for chamber music in the capital: a broader historical base is clearly needed. After all, although the music of several deceased (or 'old') composers - Bach, Handel and Scarlatti, Beethoven, Haydn and Mozart, and to some extent Hummel and Weber - was preserved in the London repertory, much contemporary (or 'new') music - by Bennett, Mendelssohn, Spohr and others - also loomed large at this period, and it is only with the benefit of a longer historical perspective that one can determine exactly when certain pieces ceased to enjoy a significant afterlife. Nevertheless, one cannot help but be struck by the fact that the 1835-50 repertory contains a large number of works that are considered chamber-music classics in the late 20th century. All the now famous quartets


81 For further discussion see Citron, Gender and the Musical Canon, 33-4, and Ellis, 'La Revue et Gazette', 84-151.

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by Beethoven, Haydn and Mozart are there, along with Beethoven's most celebrated piano trios, violin sonatas and cello sonatas, Mozart's string quintets, clarinet quintet, piano trios and so on. A wide range of Mendelssohn's chamber music - from the early octet to the op.80 string quartet - is also present. Only Schubert's quartets - virtually unknown in Europe until the 1860s and 70s - are absent from the corpus of chamber music of the Viennese Classical tradition. Of course, just because the basic shape of the modern canon is clearly discernable in the 1835-50 repertory, it does not necessarily follow that the works concerned had canonic status at the time. Conventional wisdom suggests that canons are formed over a long period and as the result of a series of critical, ideological judgments passed on them by cultural groups, and it is unlikely that such a large canon of chamber music would have coalesced within such a short period. It is nevertheless possible that some of these 'classic' chamber works were in fact going through the initial stages of canonicity. To establish whether this was in fact the case we may look at the ways in which such works were judged and valued by contemporary commentators, and establish whether there is evidence of certain works or groups of works being linked by notions of exemplary value and merit.

The large body of newspaper reports of the concerts under discussion gives a firm indication of how the repertory was evaluated by a wide range of contemporary writers. These writings leave the modern reader with the overwhelming impression that what was valued most in a piece of chamber music was the notion of 'classical' or 'serious' merit. Time and again critics endorsed or reproached the selection of music in these terms; phrases such as 'the choice of music ... was worthy of its designation as "classical"', or 'we should prefer hearing ... somewhat more classical performances', became

82 For further discussion see Citron, *Gender and the Musical Canon*, 19-22.

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Although the term 'classical' was not used exclusively of the chamber repertory - it was frequently applied to orchestral works too - the cerebral overtones of chamber music made it especially susceptible to the term. In effect, 'classical' was widely used to distinguish and defend serious music from the ever-increasing stream of popular fantasias, variations and pot-pourris.

The term 'classical' had not always had such a precise meaning. In the 18th-century it was synonymous with 'antient' music, and even in the 1830s it clearly had different shades of meaning, as an article in the *Musical Library Monthly Supplement* makes only too clear. The writer admits that works described as 'classical' may be variously 'grey with age', 'of severest purity', or even 'of his own period', but argues that the term should comprehend music from all periods, as long as it embodies the idea of excellence, saying 'No period exclusively deserves that the predicate classical be applied to its own works alone'.

Such usage is borne out by contemporary concert reports, which show that although the term was most commonly applied to chamber music by Beethoven, Haydn and Mozart, it could equally apply to the works of contemporary composers (and even, occasionally, ancient ones). In theory, then, the term 'classical' could refer as much to Bach or Bennett as to Mozart, though in practice it usually referred to the works of

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83 *Morning Herald* (29 March 1844) [report of Salaman's concert]; *Musical Examiner*, no.24 (15 April 1843), 169.


86 'What is the Meaning', 64.
Here, then, was a value system which placed the music of Beethoven, Haydn and Mozart at the summit of achievement. Concerts that did not include a reasonable amount of their music were likely to suffer at the hands of the critics. This was certainly the case at one of Dulcken’s concerts in 1844 when only Beethoven was represented, and then by only one piece. Furthermore, critics often devoted the lion’s share of their columns to the works of these three masters, and to others (for instance Mendelssohn and Spohr) who were also deemed to embody ‘classical’ values.

Reverence by performers and audiences for such figures was evident from the dedication of whole concerts to their music. The establishment of the Beethoven Quartet Society was the most obvious example of this, but there were others, including the concerts given by the Society of British Musicians in honour of Spohr (1843) and Mendelssohn (1844), and the inclusion of works by Haydn, Mozart, Mendelssohn and Spohr in concerts given by the Beethoven Quartet Society itself (1846 onwards). As noted earlier, one critic even called for a bespoke Haydn and Mozart Quartet Society.

Beethoven, Haydn, Mozart (and, to some extent, Mendelssohn and Spohr) were therefore the classical masters against whose music all other chamber works were measured. Compositions by native composers were frequently compared to the oeuvres of these masters; at the Society of British Musicians’s concerts, for example, classical works by foreign composers (in particular, Beethoven) were deliberately included for

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87 See The Atlas, xix, no.969 (7 Dec 1844), 826: ‘The programme on this occasion did not please us so much as former ones. There was nothing by Haydn or Mozart, and but one piece by Beethoven; all the rest [Onslow quintet, Mendelssohn quartet, Schaffner quintet] was mediocre’.

88 The Atlas, xxii, no.1103 (3 July 1847), 460.
purposes of comparison. The *Morning Herald* explained:

> The admission of foreign works of excellence into the programmes has been and is of great service; it does not injure the opportunity of the British artist to get the public hearing he craves, while the constant presence of first-rate chamber models must necessarily improve his taste and encourage his emulation.\(^9^9\)

Not everyone in the pro-British camp thought this a good idea, as British music rarely fared well under such comparisons - the critic for *The Spectator* claimed it exposed 'the "home-made" to an ordeal which for the most part it is ill able to bear'\(^9^0\) - though the Society took such criticism in its stride and did not flinch from its principles.

Veneration of 'classical' music was central to the way in which the emerging chamber repertory in London was described and judged. Music described as classical - most commonly compositions by the Viennese trinity - was acknowledged to represent the summit of achievement in the field, and the term 'classical' effectively conferred canonic status. This usage was not unique to England, or to chamber music: Katharine Ellis has shown that in France 'les grands maîtres' and 'la musique classique' were widely used to describe Beethoven, Haydn and Mozart and their music, and according to Weber, 'during the 1830s the term became standard in almost all European countries to designate the canon of great [orchestral] works'.\(^9^1\)

Yet although Beethoven, Haydn and Mozart were seen to embody classical values, it was the general compositional style and technique of their chamber-music outputs - taken as a whole - that was deemed canonic, rather than any specific works themselves. There was little discrimination about the works that were performed - Beethoven's now

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\(^9^9\) *Morning Herald* (22 March 1844).

\(^9^0\) *The Spectator*, no.962 (5 Dec 1846), 1163.

largely forgotten quintets opp.4 and 29 were ranked alongside his op.59 quartets and op.70 piano trios, for example - and few pieces were unanimously and consistently considered exemplary, or worthy of being elevated above all others. Furthermore, much criticism at this period was characterized by the diversity and range of its opinions, and many journalists pleaded for the introduction of new works, rather than the repetition of old ones. It seems, too, that with some notable exceptions most people were drawn to concerts by the names of the composers announced on the programme, rather than by a specific set of works; indeed, many concertgoers may have been unable to identify works precisely. True, certain works were performed more frequently than others, and a core repertory was emerging by 1850; but there is no proof that this is anything more than an evolving body of music that contributed to the early stages of canon formation.

The chamber music introduced and performed in London, 1835-50, was therefore not a fully-fledged canon; it was much more what Citron calls a ‘cohering’ repertory of masterpieces. At the same time, certain chamber-music composers were accorded canonic status through the designation ‘classical’, which was used to identify the ‘serious’ compositional style most commonly associated with Beethoven, Haydn and Mozart. It is, of course, difficult to pinpoint precisely when the chamber canon coalesced in England - one suspects it took place towards the end of 19th century. However, London during the period in question clearly witnessed an important embryonic stage in the formation of a chamber-music canon in this country.
CHAPTER VII: 'LATE BEETHOVEN' IN LONDON: A CASE-STUDY IN MUSICAL RECEPTION

For the modern reader surveying the repertory of chamber music introduced to London in the 1830s and 40s, one group of works holds special appeal: Beethoven's 'late' string quartets opp.127, 130, 131, 132 and 135, which were boldly brought before audiences by Henry Blagrove and his colleagues between 1836 and 1840, i.e. during the first five seasons of chamber concerts in London. Considered by many to be consummate masterpieces of Western art music, these quartets are among the most frequently studied of Beethoven's works, attracting analysts, bibliographers and historians alike. Their notorious difficulties, of appreciation as well as performance, are well known, and many scholars have attempted to chart early critical reactions to these works. Since responses to the London premières - for reasons that will be discussed later - have so far escaped scrutiny, it is appropriate and timely to consider them in the context of this thesis; moreover, an exploration of contemporary critical judgments allows questions of reception to be examined in the context of concert life in early 19th-century England.

Before the chapter turns specifically to the late quartets, it may be useful briefly

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to review aspects of reception theory and its application to music, and to outline the methods used for measuring the reception of chamber music in London in the 1830s and 40s.

1. Musical reception: definitions, problems, methodologies

(i) Origins of reception theory

In many respects musical reception represents a branch of musicology whose theories, definitions and boundaries are still at an early stage of evolution. The discipline leans heavily on the field of literary criticism and on the theories developed, initially by German scholars of the Konstanz School, since the late 1960s and early 1970s. Musical reception initially attracted German scholars in the 1970s, and has recently become increasingly popular among British and American musicologists, with the result that a wealth of scholarship under the umbrella term ‘reception’ has been produced. Few have attempted theoretical discussion of what may be meant by ‘musical reception’, and Dahlhaus’s essay of 1977 (translated into English in 1983) remains probably the most


penetrating examination of problems associated with the discipline.⁴

An understanding of ‘reception’ as it developed in the field of literary theory is important, since many studies in music reception borrow terms and theories from the sister discipline - though, of course, models from literary criticism have only limited relevance to music, due to fundamental generic differences between literature and music. The term ‘reception’ (or ‘reception theory’) is notoriously difficult to define precisely, and even among literary theorists opinions vary.⁵ ‘Reception theory’ was first proposed as a term by Hans Robert Jauss in the late 1960s, and has been much debated by German theorists since then.⁶ Important aspects of the theory include the distinction, at times blurred, between Impact (Ger.: Wirkung), which centres on the work and its effect upon subsequent generations, especially authors; and Reception itself (Ger.: Rezeption), which focusses on the reader, and the effect of the work upon him/her.⁷ Jauss stressed the importance for the reception scholar to act as historian and to reconstruct the expectations of original readers, thereby fusing what he termed the ‘horizon of expectations’ of past audiences with that of the standpoint of the modern scholar.⁸ Expectations of course

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⁵ Holub, Reception Theory, xi.


⁷ Definitions of Impact and Reception are discussed in Holub, Reception Theory, xii.

⁸ The concept of ‘fused horizons’ stems from Jauss’s teacher, Hans-Georg Gadamer; see especially Gadamer’s Truth and Method, trans. William Glen-Doepel (London: Sheed
change over time, and a theory of reception inevitably overlaps with a theory of reception history, one definition of which is ‘the changing but cumulative way that selected texts are interpreted and assessed, as the horizons of its successive readers alter with the passage of time’.  

An alternative approach to the evaluation of literary works, Reader-Response Criticism, has been developed principally by American scholars, including Stanley Fish and Jonathan Culler. It focusses on the role of the reader in determining the meaning of a text. The term, however, does not designate one distinct school of thought; rather, it represents ‘a shared concern with a set of problems involving the extent and nature of readers’ contribution to the meanings of literary works, approached from various positions including those of structuralism ..., psychoanalysis, phenomenology, and hermeneutics’. Scholars active in the field of reader-response criticism represent a multitude of approaches, and according to Susan Suleiman this diversity is in fact the lifeblood of the discipline.

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12 Suleiman and Crosman, The Reader in the Text, 7: ‘a combination of approaches is not a negative eclecticism but a positive necessity’.
Although Holub chooses to distinguish reception theory from reader-response criticism on the basis of schools (the former centring on Konstanz, the latter on the USA), and although differences of substance between the two approaches do exist, a good deal of crossover will nevertheless be found. Reception theory is defined by Abrams as ‘an historical application of a form of reader-response theory’; and Wolfgang Iser is considered by Holub an exponent both of reception theory and reader-response criticism. Likewise, in her survey of literary reception theory the musicologist Marcia Citron sees the difference between reception and reader-response criticism in the following terms:

Reception theory usually deals more specifically with aesthetics. It pays greater attention to history and to collectivity in the sense of a public or an audience. Response theory, in contrast, appears to be more ahistorical and focused on the individual. Nonetheless, these are broad generalizations, and I often found the distinctions reversed in the sources consulted.

Indeed, the common ground between the two approaches is vital.

(ii) Applications of reception theory to music

As noted earlier, what obtains in the sphere of literary criticism may not necessarily translate elegantly or naturally into the domain of music; and it is essential to recognize the differences. One important distinction between literary reception and musical reception concerns the nature of the exposure of the genres themselves. For most people (be they listeners or performers) the ‘reading’ of the musical text is achieved through

13 Abrams, Glossary, 234.

14 Holub, Reception Theory, xiii.

being present at a ‘performance’ (be it the trying out of a piece on a keyboard, attendance
at a concert or listening to a recording). Although a highly skilled musician may, on
looking at the musical text, be able to ‘hear’ a performance of the work in his/her head,
this is true for only a minority of individuals, and for a limited musical repertory.
Therefore between the reader and the musical text there often stands the artist, as
intermediary, whose interpretation may affect the reader’s understanding of the musical
text. For readers of a literary text (especially novels and poetry), there is normally no
such intermediary - the relationship is simply between the reader and the text. In music,
only when the roles of reader and artist are taken by the same person - for instance when
the reader plays a piano sonata in private - does the role of intermediary recede. With
spoken drama, where actors and actresses perform the intermediary role, literary
reception slides closer to musical reception; but even so, intrinsic generic differences
between literature and music remain, making it undesirable (if not impossible) to view
the terms and theories of literary criticism as a blueprint for music.16 Literary reception
theory is, rather, best used as a springboard, not a prescription, for developing a theory
of musical reception. Some aspects of literary reception theory and response theory work
reasonably well in the context of music, though they may have developed in musicology
independently. The concepts of Impact and Reception are a case in point. As Dahlhaus
observes, the influence of earlier pieces on later ones has always had a place in music
histories;17 and impact history has in fact played a large role in musicology for many

16 The inapplicability of Jauss’s reception theory to music has been discussed by
Kristin Knittel (From Chaos to History, 14-18); in particular she questions the emphasis
he places on reception aesthetics and his suggestion that masterpieces are by definition
only gradually understood.

17 Dahlhaus, Foundations, 151.
years (e.g. in questions of influence between generations of composers, the use of compositional models etc.). Equally, the tendency of musicologists increasingly to study music in terms of geographical centres has naturally brought them into contact with the responses of defined groups of individuals, and by extension into the realms of reception history.

Reception history as the tracing of changing attitudes to musical works over a long period of time, including what Jauss terms the 'intersubjective dialogue' between successive readers, clearly owes a debt to literary theory, and it is surely significant that interest in this aspect initially flourished in Germany, birthplace of literary reception theory. Hans Heinrich Eggebrecht's 'Zur Geschichte der Beethoven-Rezeption' of 1972 was an early attempt to chart a history of changing responses to musical works, thereby establishing a tradition of critical thought.18 Most scholars, however, tend to concentrate on smaller areas, constrained by historical, social (and even geographical) boundaries and focusing on one work or group of works; from such building blocks full histories of musical reception may one day be written.19

A distinction may also be drawn between those reception historians who chart trends in the critical appreciation of a musical work (or body of works), often through the most authoritative writers of the period - for example Kristin Knittel's study of the reception of Beethoven's late quartets during the 19th century - and those who focus on the reception of a musical work (or body of works) through one particular audience in one particular place at one particular time - for example Jean Mongrédién's investigation

18 For a discussion of Eggebrecht see Knittel, From Chaos to History, 19-20.

19 For further discussion of issues raised by the writing of overviews of reception history see Dahlhaus, Foundations, 161-3.
of the French performance of *Die Zauberflöte* as *Les mystères d’Isis*. 20 The first approach I have termed ‘critical’ reception history, the second (which in a sense forms a sub-set of the former) ‘localised’ reception history. ‘Localised’ reception is at the heart of what follows in the course of this chapter. Like all reception studies that focus on reactions to performances, it raises many issues well known to the ‘reader-response’ critics - and I would suggest that this strain of musical reception produces some of the most meaningful parallels with literary criticism.

The responses of those who encountered a work at the time of its composition or first performance hold a special fascination for the reception historian, and many studies have focussed on early reactions to musical works. 21 Dahlhaus urges caution here, pointing out that quoting opinions of the audience that first heard a work does not automatically give those views a special seal of authenticity, or some form of ‘privileged historiographical status’. 22 To counter such criticism, it is incumbent on reception historians to weigh their sources with care, consider the origins and validity of opinions, and examine to what extent an opinion may be representative of that of a larger group. One possible reason for the popularity of reception studies that focus on premières is the easy identification of the starting point for a tradition of critical writing.


work journeys through time, responses become far more complex, with individuals reacting not only to the musical performance itself, but to earlier critical pronouncements of the work’s value, as well as to their own previous experiences of the work (in score, in concert, through recordings). In the following passage, taken from Abrams’s *Glossary*, ‘musical work’ could easily be substituted for ‘literary work’:

Since the horizons of readers change in the course of time, and since later readers and critics have access not only to the text but also to the published responses of earlier readers, there develops an evolving historical "tradition" of critical interpretations and evaluations of a given literary work.²³

Many of the issues outlined above are pertinent to a consideration of the first English performances of Beethoven’s ‘late’ quartets. My sources for measuring reception are varied (see pp.283-7 below), though the principal body of material to be used is that of written critical responses in the daily and weekly press. The rationale for using such materials centres on the notion that the contemporary music critics who wrote them may be said to represent - to some extent - the collective understanding of their cultural group; however, there is a strong sense of individuality in each of their responses, and this makes it difficult to posit one collective reaction. As Citron points out:

... response of the individual and reception of the group are not easily distinguished. The critic, who plays an important role in formal reception, is after all an individual. While he or she represents the group and is steeped in cultural understandings of music, the critic responds on many levels as an individual. ... Furthermore, this architect of formal reception replicates or substitutes for the individual responses of numerous audience members. It is a collectivity born of individuality. Speaking for many individuals, the critic also speaks to many individuals and helps shape their individual responses.²⁴

Hence the tendency to discuss audience reaction as a unified response paradoxically makes a generalization out of circumstances which by their very nature comprise a host


²⁴ Citron, *Gender*, 166-7.
of individual, personal reactions. No two people listening for the first time to Beethoven's quartet in B flat op.130 would have experienced or articulated identical feelings, although some may have been influenced in their spoken (even published) opinions by the utterances of others. Reactions may be similar but, presumably, never identical. (This distinction becomes more vital when music that engendered controversy is discussed.) However, once a large enough body of material has been assembled and examined, it may be possible to identify broad similarities of response or general trends of reaction - and in this sense it becomes possible to posit one or more normative responses.

A further caveat rests on the fact that it is ultimately impossible to recapture the intensity of response or complete range of reactions that accompanied and followed the performing 'event'; we can only aim to come as close as possible to those reactions by stripping away historical debris, such as those myths of music history which, based on a non-critical sampling of popular invective, may suggest certain works were generally poorly received.25 It should also be remembered that the words of the most famous or vociferous of commentators do not necessarily encapsulate general reactions; there is often, in the quotation of a contemporary source, the tacit assumption by the scholar that the source in question somehow sums up all that was to be said at the time. Sources of opinion, in particular those taken from the periodical press, should be used with caution, and when cited need to be placed in an appropriate critical and historical context.

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(iii) Measuring the reception of chamber music in London, 1835-50

Methods of measuring the reception of chamber music (and in particular Beethoven’s late quartets) in London may be divided into four categories, as follows: (a) contemporary journalism; (b) individuals’ personal responses; (c) number of performances; and (d) miscellaneous evidence. These categories are discussed in turn, below. In addition to gaining an understanding of these tools, it is also vital for the reception historian to acquire a solid appreciation of the historical context; this is a requirement implicit in Jauss’s theory of ‘horizons of expectations’. In practice, anyone investigating responses to musical performances should ally to his/her understanding of the chosen ‘reception tools’ a knowledge of local performance history and traditions, the composer’s reputation in the locale, and an historical and textual understanding of the music itself.

(a) Contemporary journalism

The press is an important, though notoriously problematic, tool for the reception historian. Not only are there the theoretical difficulties of defining collective responses discussed above, but there are also problems connected with the source material itself. Concert reports in early 19th-century newspapers and periodicals form a largely untapped and potentially rich source of intellectual appreciation of chamber music; but like all source materials they must be consulted with caution and require an understanding of the background to the medium. During the period in question the frequency and amount

26 For a study in musical reception based closely on the ‘horizons of expectations’ model see Everist, ‘Lindoro’.


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of musical reporting varied between papers and, within one title, between issues. Similarly, the quality of musical writing was rarely consistent. Most mainstream dailies and weeklies employed specialist writers and carried accounts of many of the performances in question; accordingly, these sources provide much valuable material. But few papers (dailies in particular) managed to maintain a consistently high standard of reporting, and occasionally one finds insubstantial notices written either by someone with no knowledge of music, or by someone who plainly did not attend the concert. It should also be borne in mind that although West End chamber-music concerts were at this time something of a novelty, were patronized by fashionable society, and often commanded a prominent position on the printed page, not every performance was reported, particularly if there were pressures on space in an issue (arising, for example, from extended parliamentary reports or pressing foreign news), or if there had been other demands on the writers on the evening in question. The music periodical had an ever increasing amount of intelligence to report; yet, like the general newspaper, it was also susceptible to external elements affecting the inclusion and/or length of items. Notices in the specialist music journals were written by musically literate people, though not always by those with strong sympathies towards chamber music, and items were often less substantial - in length as well as content - than the pieces in the general press.

In accordance with convention, notices were normally unsigned, and only rarely carried contributors' initials or pseudonyms. This is frustrating, since the identification of personalities can contribute substantially to an understanding of the spectrum of critical opinion. Most music critics worked peripatetically, and few records survive to enable us to reach watertight conclusions about the authorship of individual notices; nevertheless much can be conjectured through the use of documentary evidence alongside the internal
clues and stylistic traits in the texts themselves.\textsuperscript{28}

It must also be appreciated that a number of external influences - personal, political or editorial - may have affected or 'distorted' the sentiments expressed by the critic. For example, the music critic and composer John Parry (1776-1851), who wrote for the \textit{Morning Post} from 1834 to 1848 and may have been responsible for some of the paper's notices of chamber music concerts, had personal associations with Blagrove's Quartett Concerts - his son, the singer John Orlando Parry (1810-79) performed in Blagrove's Quartett Concerts and was related by marriage to Blagrove - and this fact must be taken into account when considering his reviews.

(b) Individuals' personal responses

To counter the problems of bias and idiosyncrasy in journalistic sources, one can turn to responses written for personal consumption only, namely diary entries, private letters, memoranda and so on. Some of the most useful private responses are found in John Ella's unpublished diaries. For a short period in the late 1830s Ella kept a detailed log of his daily musical activities, including his impressions of compositions (as demonstrated earlier, he first encountered an enormous amount of chamber music in private music-making sessions with his friends and colleagues).\textsuperscript{29} These notes may well have served him later as an \textit{aide-mémoire} when selecting programmes or writing his 'analytical notes' for the Musical Union in the 1840s. Other sources of first-hand personal responses include letters to and from Thomas Alsager, as well as the correspondence of prominent

\textsuperscript{28} For further discussion of journalistic conventions at this period, and for an example of a conjectural identification of a music critic see Langley, 'Italian Opera', 4-6.

\textsuperscript{29} The diaries are in the Ella Collection.
London musicians.30

Private responses published at a much later date (diaries, memoirs, autobiographies) can also play their part, though there is no guarantee that they are immune from inflections in meaning or changes of emphasis brought about by an editorial pen or by the rosy glow of hindsight. In this respect Ella’s diaries are more immediate and vibrant than his Musical Sketches or (to some extent) his anecdotes in the Record of the Musical Union.31 The published diaries of Ignaz Moscheles, the biography of W. S. Bennett, and William Gardiner’s memoirs are other important sources in this category.32

(c) Number of performances

Although written evaluations are extremely important tools for the reception historian, there are, as Citron rightly points out, a number of other ways in which reception is expressed.33 Long-term ‘critical’ reception, for example, intersects with canon-formation; ‘localised’ reception intersects with questions of repertory. At a simple level,
the repeated performance (or lack thereof) of individual works in chamber music concerts gives clues to the relative popularity and acceptance of certain compositions. But when taken alone, repeated performance is a relatively crude method of measuring the taste of the concert-going public, since music may have been included in concert programmes for a number of reasons other than public popularity. The composer or publisher may have had influence over the concert-giver (e.g. Wessel's concerts); the concert-giver him/herself may have taken advantage of the opportunity of performing his/her own compositions (e.g. Davison and Macfarren's concerts); the popularity and/or familiarity of certain works to musicians whose chamber concert engagements were rapidly increasing may have affected questions of programme planning; and so on. Nevertheless, statistics based on frequency of performance - as long as they are accompanied by an understanding of context and are sensibly applied - can provide a further gauge for a work's acceptance, popularity with, and reception by, audiences.

(d) Miscellaneous evidence

Into this category falls a variety of evidence - circumstantial as well as documentary - that underpins the methods of measuring reception outlined above: for example, the foundation of a specialist society to promote a specific repertory or repertories (most notably the Beethoven Quartet Society and the Society of British Musicians), or information relating to private performances of a specific repertory (e.g. the domestic activities of Thomas Alsager). Also relevant is the publication and dissemination of a composer's music (e.g. Cocks's 1846 edition of Beethoven's quartets), or critical or historical discussion in journals, books and programmes (e.g. special articles on specific works or programme notes for the members of the Musical Union).
2. The reception of Beethoven's 'late' quartets in the early 19th century: overview

(i) Performance history

As noted earlier, the quartets from Beethoven's 'late' period - with the exception of the Grosse Fugue op.133 - were heard publicly for the first time in London between 1836 and 1840. Brought forward initially by Blagrove at his Quartett Concerts, the works were also played by Mori's group at the Classical Chamber Concerts (though more out of a sense of rivalry than musical vision). There was also one performance at the Philharmonic concerts; see Table 18.

For reasons that will be explored later, performances of the late quartets were curtailed after 1840, and four years elapsed before the works were again brought before

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TABLE 18: Performances of Beethoven's 'Late' Quartets in London, 1836-40

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quartet</th>
<th>Date of performance</th>
<th>Concert series</th>
<th>Performing group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Op.130</td>
<td>26 March 1836</td>
<td>Quartett Concerts</td>
<td>Blagrove</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op.132</td>
<td>7 April 1836</td>
<td>Classical Chamber Concerts</td>
<td>Mori</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op.132</td>
<td>16 April 1836</td>
<td>Quartett Concerts</td>
<td>Blagrove</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op.130</td>
<td>23 May 1836</td>
<td>Philharmonic Society</td>
<td>Blagrove</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op.131</td>
<td>9 March 1837</td>
<td>Quartett Concerts</td>
<td>Blagrove</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op.135</td>
<td>13 April 1837</td>
<td>Quartett Concerts</td>
<td>Blagrove</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op.130</td>
<td>22 March 1838</td>
<td>Quartett Concerts</td>
<td>Blagrove</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op.130</td>
<td>28 Jan 1839</td>
<td>Classical Chamber Concerts</td>
<td>Mori</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op.131</td>
<td>7 March 1839</td>
<td>Quartett Concerts</td>
<td>Blagrove</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op.127</td>
<td>20 April 1840</td>
<td>Quartett Concerts</td>
<td>Blagrove</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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34 Three movements only.
the public. Then, through the establishment of the Beethoven Quartet Society and performances by other concert-givers, the profile of the late works was raised once again.

The introduction of the late quartets to London concertgoers came long after the first public Viennese, Paris and Berlin performances had taken place, and long after first editions of scores and parts had been issued by Schott, Schlesinger and Artaria.\(^{35}\) To a large extent this simply reflects the fact that public concerts of chamber music were instituted in Austria, France and Germany many years before they were established in England. Ignaz Schuppanzigh (1776-1830) had introduced quartet concerts to Vienna in 1804; Pierre Baillot set up quartet soirées in Paris in December 1814, and Carl Möser (1774-1851) did likewise in Berlin during the 1813-14 season.\(^{36}\)

The occasions of Viennese premières are well known: in 1825 Schuppanzigh's quartet publicly performed op.127 (6 March) and op.132 (6 November); in 1826 (21 March) they gave op.130; and in 1828 (23 March) op.135.\(^{37}\) In Paris, Baillot and his

\(^{35}\) Schott published op.127 (Mainz and Paris, 1826) and op.131 (Mainz and Paris, 1827), Schlesinger op.132 (Berlin and Paris, 1827) and op.135 (Berlin and Paris, 1827), and Artaria op. 130 (Vienna, 1827) and op.133 (Vienna, 1827). Several pirated editions were also issued. In Paris, in late 1827, Schlesinger introduced his 'Collection Complète des Trios, Quatuors & Quintetti', the so-called 'Paris' edition. See Alan Tyson, 'Maurice Schlesinger as a Publisher of Beethoven', Acta Musicologica, xxxv (1963), 182-91.


colleagues introduced the adagio of op. 135 in 1828 and the whole of op. 131 on 24 March 1829. Further performances followed there in 1830 and 1831, when the late quartets (with the exception of op. 133) were given by the Bohrer brothers’ quartet, and in 1835, when op. 132 was played by the Tilmant brothers. By 1834 opp. 127, 130, 131 and 132 had been brought forward in Berlin, in performances by Möser’s quartet and by a group led by Möser’s pupil Zimmermann (dates unknown).

Foreign editions of some (if not all) of the late quartets were available in London shortly after their first publication abroad, so the delay in presenting the late quartets to English audiences can hardly be ascribed to performers not having access to the music. Maurice Schlesinger’s Paris editions of opp. 132 and 135 were imported and sold by Clementi, Collard and Collard (the quartets were entered at Stationers’ Hall on 11 October 1827), and an ‘inauthentic’ edition of op. 127 was published by Clementi and Co. in or after 1827.

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38 Baillot’s programmes are discussed in detail in Fauquet, Les sociétés, 51-4.

39 For further information on the Bohrer and the Tilmant brothers’ quartets see Fauquet, Les sociétés, 115-22.


41 For further information see Alan Tyson, The Authentic English Editions of Beethoven (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), 128-30, and Paul Hirsch and C. B. Oldman, ‘Contemporary English Editions of Beethoven’, Music Review, xiv (1953), 1-35. Schlesinger’s publications were certainly used in the London performances of the 1830s - there are many contemporary references to the ‘Paris’ edition and to Schlesinger’s numbering system - though it is not known whether the performers bought the music abroad or obtained it through a London agent.
(ii) Reception studies

Much that has been written about the early reception history of Beethoven’s late quartets has centred on the critical writings (most of them German) that were spawned by the Viennese performances of the 1820s. This is understandable, given the proximity - temporal and geographical - of these events to Beethoven’s life, as well as scholarly inclinations to investigate premières per se. But it should also be remembered that many of these early 19th-century German notices are not concert reports embodying aural reactions to performances of new works; rather, they are considered reviews of the published musical text itself - often appearing in ‘house’ magazines and commissioned, one imagines, to supply readers with evaluations of newly available publications. As such, they represent the earliest intellectual attempts to understand the quartets of Beethoven’s final period.

Reactions by the English to the first performances in London of the late quartets are conspicuously absent from modern performance and reception studies, for a number of reasons. First, the relatively late introduction of the quartets to England distances them from the Viennese and Paris premières: by the time the works reached London, the quartets had become reasonably familiar in other European centres, and first-time reactions were already plentiful and well documented. Modern scholars have presumably felt no compulsion to include additional material from English sources.

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42 See Wallace, Beethoven’s Critics, Kunze, Ludwig van Beethoven, and Knittel, From Chaos to History.

43 These studies include Mahaim, Beethoven; Wallace, Beethoven’s Critics; Kunze, Ludwig van Beethoven; and Knittel, From Chaos to History. Mahaim attempts comprehensively to document performances of Beethoven’s late quartets from the very first performances into the 20th century, but mentions the English premières only in passing, preferring to concentrate on the activities of the Beethoven Quartet Society.
Second, English music periodicals of the time carry only a modest literature on the late quartets. To investigate English critical reactions one must instead dig deep into the newspaper and general periodical press, which, although providing a rich variety of responses to the new works, is bibliographically uninviting. The tendency of musicologists to rely on the substantial critical writings in German musical periodicals - notably the Leipzig Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung, the Berliner allgemeine musikalische Zeitung, the Allgemeine Musikzeitung and Cäcilia - has perhaps led them to look at the English musical press rather than the general press and, because of a perceived lack of material, to dismiss England from reception studies. Third, with one exception, relevant 19th-century English writings are concert reports - often lengthy and discursive - and generally made without recourse to the printed score. The exception occurs in the Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review for 1826, which published a review of Schott’s edition of op.127 with music examples. Since scholars who have tackled the reception of the late quartets (most notably Robin Wallace, Stephan Kunze and Kristin Knittel) have focussed mainly on German reviews of printed music - as opposed to concert reports - it is not surprising that English reception has remained neglected.

This distinction between concert reports and music reviews is in fact central to an understanding of what may be meant when we talk of the ‘reception history’ of the late quartets, since approaches appear to be divided by a reliance on either the concert report or the music review. Lack of precision in modern usage increases the need to define

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44 Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review, viii (1826), 480-84. This issue (no.32) was probably published in March 1827; see Langley, The English Musical Journal, 229.

45 Questions remain as to what lies undiscovered in the pages of the German newspaper and periodical press.
clearly what is meant by each term, and in the discussion that follows I shall refer to writings that appraise the music in public performance as concert reports, and those that appraise the music by the independent intellectual study of the score as music reviews.

Music reviews are, typically, assessments of recently published works; they are rudimentary technical essays, often with musical exemplification. They contrast sharply with concert reports, which may or may not have been written with prior access to, or an understanding of, the score. Reception historians who seek to trace developing strands of critical musical understanding of, and writing about, Beethoven over a long period depend on the music review for early 19th-century source material (the work of Wallace and Knittel falls into this category). Concert reports, by comparison, may give immediate clues to the atmosphere at early performances, as well as supplying a variety of fresh responses to music that was being experienced for the first time. They may also address intellectual issues and may attempt to convey a sense of musical structure, but normally with less rigour than the music review. When used intelligently, concert reports can offer insights into the reactions of musical audiences in one locale at one time, and the reception historian who investigates the musical responses of localized communities is best able to build up a realistic picture of how a musical work or repertory was received and understood by consulting concert reports (see for example the work of David B. Levy or Christoph-Helmut Mahling). It is worth stressing, however, that these two contrasting approaches - already referred to above as 'critical' reception history and 'localized' reception history - are simply different facets of the same area of study, and that they effectively complement one another; certainly, neither concert reports nor music reviews should be considered the exclusive property of either approach.
3. The first English performances of Beethoven’s ‘late’ quartets

To assess how London audiences responded to the first performances of Beethoven’s late quartets the four categories of evidence outlined in section 1 (above, pp.283-7) will be considered in turn. First, however, it is worth reviewing Beethoven’s reputation in London in the mid-1830s, and in particular the profile of others of his ‘late-period’ works there.

(i) Beethoven in historical context

By the mid-1830s the time was ripe for the introduction of the late quartets to England. During his lifetime, Beethoven had developed a special relationship with London:46 several of his works were published there between 1799 and 1827, many in what Alan Tyson calls their first ‘authentic’ editions, by a variety of publishers including Monzani, Birchall, and Clementi.47 Beethoven also had a number of friends and advocates in London, some of whom acted as go-betweens in his negotiations with publishers, or furthered his interests in other ways: among them were J. P. Salomon (who had known Beethoven in Bonn), Ferdinand Ries (Beethoven’s erstwhile pupil and later his biographer; 1784-1838), Charles Neate (who met Beethoven in Vienna in 1815 and was one of the directors of the Philharmonic Society) and Sir George Smart (conductor at the Philharmonic, whose seriousness of purpose prompted him to visit Beethoven in 1825 to ascertain tempos for the ninth symphony).

Public performances of Beethoven’s works became increasingly frequent during


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the first three decades of the 19th century, most notably through the Philharmonic Society, whose active relationship with Beethoven resulted in the commissioning of two new symphonies (of which the 'ninth' was the first), an invitation to Beethoven to visit London, and the Society's gift of £100 to the ailing composer just before his death. By the early 1830s all the symphonies but the ninth had become mainstays of the repertory, and many others of Beethoven's works (including some of his early chamber music, as described in Chapters III and VI above) were regularly heard.48

Beethoven's reputation in England was established largely on the strength of these frequently performed works. By the mid-1830s he was acknowledged - even by those who had serious doubts about the merits of the ninth symphony or others of his later works - to be a great genius and master of his art, and as a composer he was rapidly acquiring canonic status. Indeed, many late-period works had recently begun to come to wider public attention. After unsuccessful performances in 1825, the ninth symphony was re-establishing itself, with performances in 1830 (26 April; Neate's benefit), 1835 (20 June; Royal Academy of Music) and 1836 (24 March and 15 April; Società Armonica and Royal Academy of Music), and was re-embraced by the Philharmonic from 1837.49 A private performance of the Missa Solemnis, conducted by Moscheles, took place at Alsager's house in 1832 (six and a half years later it received its first public performance in England by the Choral Harmonists50), and the amount of literature sympathetic to the


49 These performances are discussed in detail in Levy, Early Performances, 180-86.

50 On 1 April 1839; see Levy, 'Thomas Massa Alsager', 122.
late music was growing.\footnote{See, for example, the essay on Beethoven's late style in the \textit{Foreign Quarterly Review}, viii (1831), 439-61 [attributed to Edward Holmes]; the essay was subsequently reprinted in \textit{The Harmonicon}, ix (1831), 291-3, and in the \textit{Musical Library Monthly Supplement}, no.12 (March 1835), 14-16. See also Henry John Gauntlett, 'Characteristics of Beethoven', \textit{Musical World}, i, no.2 (25 March 1836), 21-5; no. 4 (8 April 1836), 53-8; no.8 (6 May 1836), 117-22; no.13 (10 June 1836), 197-202; and Cipriani Potter, 'Recollections of Beethoven, with Remarks on his Style', \textit{Musical World}, i, no.7 (27 April 1836), 101-6. Numerous contemporary English writings on the ninth symphony are reprinted in Levy, \textit{Early Performances}, 180-241.}

Reports from abroad concerning the performance or publication of new works, or of events in Beethoven's life, were frequently inserted in the 'foreign intelligence' columns of newspapers and periodicals, and the announcement on a concert bill of the first performance of one of Beethoven's 'posthumous' quartets would certainly have provoked interest. They had been known about for many years and, according to some sources, were feared by the musical profession for the immense difficulties they presented. So, how did London audiences react to hearing the late quartets for the first time? The case study below attempts to answer this question; in doing so, it looks at all the known London performances in the five seasons from 1836 (including, for the sake of completeness, the performance of op.130 that was given by Blagrove's quartet at the Philharmonic Society in May 1836), according to the four categories of material defined above.

(ii) Contemporary journalism

Table 19 lists the newspapers and periodicals in which concert reports for the late quartets have been found. Taken \textit{en masse}, the reports (which are reproduced in full in Appendix G) present a blurred picture, inasmuch as the responses to the same performances are vastly different, some writers espousing the transcendental qualities of...
TABLE 19: Newspapers and Periodicals containing Concert Reports of Performances of Beethoven's 'Late' Quartets

I: Dailies

   The Morning Chronicle
   The Morning Herald
   The Morning Post
   The Standard
   The Times

II: Weeklies

   The Athenaeum
   The Atlas
   The Britannia (1839-42; as The Britannia and Conservative Journal, 1843-56)
   The Court Journal
   The Literary Gazette
   The Musical World
   The Spectator
   The Sunday Times
   The Theatrical and Concert Companion

III: Monthlies

   The Musical Library Monthly Supplement

the quartets, others struggling to comprehend what they have heard, and many falling between the two extremes. Taken individually, concert reports frequently reveal more about the personality and preferences of their unidentified author than they do about general tastes. Only when writers' personalities have been examined and a range of opinions has been established can we move into the realms of generalities. For this reason, the trail through the journalistic jungle begins with a consideration of the reactions found in each publication in turn (section (a)). Thereafter, the discussion considers common critical threads (section (b)) and analyses the influence of the press on
concert audiences (section (c)). Reports are numbered throughout in accordance with their location in Appendix G, using the formula [R].

(a) Individual papers

The Athenaeum. Six performances of the late quartets were reported in The Athenaeum between 1836 and 1840, during which period the tone of the notices slowly changed from a seemingly genuine inability to comprehend the musical form and style, to the more thoughtful assertion (first made in connection with op. 130, the most frequently performed 'late' quartet) that one must listen to the music more than once to appreciate it fully, and to a positive appreciation of movements whose formal structure was most accessible. Although these reports of the late quartets offer few technical or critical insights, their writer has enough experience to realize that the initial inability to comprehend Beethoven's late music reflects a shortcoming on his own part, rather than on Beethoven's.

Music criticism and reporting in The Athenaeum is strongly associated with Henry Chorley, who was principal music critic from 1834 to 1868.\textsuperscript{52} Chorley was a man of wide musical experience but limited vision - his strong prejudices are well known - and was probably responsible for the reports of the late quartets; internal stylistic evidence supports this conclusion.\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{52} For further information on music criticism in The Athenaeum see Langley, The English Musical Journal, 539-42; and Leslie A. Marchand, The Athenaeum: a Mirror of Victorian Culture (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1941). The publishers' file copies of the Athenaeum (held at City University, London) contain several contemporary annotations relating to the authorship of articles, but the reporters of the concerts in question are not identified.

\textsuperscript{53} The self-conscious, occasionally sarcastic tone is particularly characteristic.
The Atlas. It is highly doubtful that the six reports in The Atlas were written by the same person. Two, if not three, voices can be discerned. The notices for the 1836 and 1838 concerts suggest one particular writer: evincing appreciation of Beethoven’s late music, they refute the charge that the posthumous quartets are ‘wild’ and ‘extravagant’, and suggest that effort on the listeners’ part will reap rewards. These qualities, as well as analogies to sacred or ‘antiquated’ music (in particular, a reference to Palestrina in the report of 10 April 1836) point towards Edward Holmes, the regular music writer on The Atlas from 1826. Holmes had published a far-sighted essay on Beethoven’s musical style in the Foreign Quarterly Review in 1831; there he predicted that ‘time will dispel the mists which yet envelope the composer’s meaning in his posthumous quartets, his last grand mass, and his symphony with a chorus’, observing in the quartets and the Mass ‘a mind brooding over more ambitious designs, and deviating yet more extraordinarily from the common track’, a mind which Holmes maintains was completely in control of what it was creating.

Holmes left The Atlas in late March 1838; his successor was the organist and composer Henry Smart (1813-79). The report of the 1839 performance of op.130 [R50] presents a shift in opinion from that of 1838; its tone, content - the author found ‘some of the most disagreeably inscrutable matters we ever encountered’ - and literary style suggest Smart. The short, undistinguished notice of op.127 (1840) [R63] avoids critical discussion of the quartet; the literary style could well be Smart’s.

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56 See in particular the report of the remainder of the concert; the pompous prose is particularly suggestive of Smart. Smart’s contributions to The Atlas are outlined in
The Britannia. Founded in 1839, The Britannia reported only the performance of op.127 in 1840 [R64]. The report in question lacks musical insight and was in all likelihood 'confected'; the reference to the Paris edition is probably borrowed from The Times.57

The Court Journal. This fashionable magazine carried a good deal of musical intelligence and some lengthy concert and opera reports.58 The reporter of the 'late Beethoven' concerts almost certainly did not attend them, but culled material from handbills and the daily papers (his report of the 1839 performance of op.130, for example, is based closely on that of the Morning Post). His remarks on the 1839 performance of op.131, however, are highly inventive: 'the introductory movement might give no very unlively idea of a conversation carried on in growls among the four-footed pupils of Mr Van Amburgh' [R58];59 and although the metaphor seems original, it is nevertheless possible that it, too, was 'borrowed' from another paper.

The Literary Gazette. Concert reporting in the Literary Gazette was perfunctory; although several of the concerts in question were reported, only one account refers - albeit briefly - to the presence of a 'posthumous' quartet in the programme, suggesting that the reports


58 I have unfortunately been unable to examine a set of issues for 1838; the Court Journal files at the British Library Newspaper Library are incomplete.

59 Isaac Van Amburgh (1801-62) was an animal trainer who frequently exhibited his collection in England.

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were manufactured editorially and were not the work of a regular music critic.°

The Morning Chronicle. The longest accounts of the early London performances of Beethoven’s late quartets are found in the Morning Chronicle, whose regular music critic and reporter at this period was the Scotsman George Hogarth (1783-1870).°° The six Chronicle reports show striking similarities of content, literary style and opinion which may be closely identified with other of Hogarth’s known published writings.°°°

Hogarth found the quartets difficult to comprehend - more so than any other informed London critic - and battled with his intellect and conscience in trying to come to terms with them. The reports are characterized by their honesty and earnestness, Hogarth often going to great lengths to explain his standpoint. For him the basic dilemma is that his sincere reverence for Beethoven - ‘the great master’ [R1] - is being tested to its limits. Here is someone who sincerely tries and longs to understand the workings of the music, but who fails on every attempt: ‘Every different part of the picture is drawn and coloured with a beauty and strength of which BEETHOVEN alone is capable; every part, too, taken by itself, is full of the author’s characteristic breadth and simplicity; but the whole appears (we speak for ourselves) utterly incomprehensible’ [R1]. Hogarth’s own integrity leads him frequently to distance himself from critics who


°° Hogarth wrote for the Morning Chronicle from 1834 until the mid-1840s; see Langley, ‘Italian Opera’, 4.

profess an understanding of the late music (see the *Morning Post*, the *Musical World* and *The Times* below), producing at times a vein of sarcasm in his prose: 'This quartet, and others written by BEETHOVEN in his latter days, must, we suppose, be productions of consummate excellence; because many profound critics extol them to the skies. We, unhappily, are not sufficiently acute to discover the meaning of these compositions, or to discern their beauties' [R22].

In all the reports there is a desire to understand the formal design of the quartets, especially op.130, the multiple-movement structure of which caused many problems. When he first encountered the work in 1836 Hogarth had clearly not studied a score: 'It is written with a disregard of the established forms of this kind of composition; consisting of no less than seven or eight (we think) different movements, some of which are very brief; but which form an aggregate of great length' [R1]. On a further hearing (in 1838) he could only say: 'Some design doubtless existed in the mind of the author, and may be perceptible to those who have the gift of entering into his high imaginings. But we must confess, however much we may lower ourselves by the admission, that we are not among this gifted number' [R44].

Although Hogarth appreciates isolated episodes - even movements - within the quartets, he is never able to make sense of the formal architecture, complaining frequently that there are too many transitions ('the total absence of any sustained tone of feeling' [R44]); of op.130 he also laments: 'It contains no harmonies, no phrases of melody, that are at variance with the established rules of the art, and no individual passage, consequently, that offends or even perplexes the ear; but, as a whole, it is so incoherent, so full of violent transitions from the extremes of opposite expression ...' [R1]. At the Philharmonic performance of op.130 the 'beautiful' fifth movement of
op. 130 is singled out as an exception (‘a green spot in a desert’ [R22]); in 1838 the scherzo receives similar praise (‘the diamond of the desert’ [R44]). These are the only occasions on which Hogarth talks in specific terms. His use of imagery here is typical, and seems to help him to express himself when confronted with such difficult works. Metaphors of natural phenomena are woven into every report: in 1838 op. 130 is ‘a chaos of sounds, void of either melody or harmony, intermingled every now and then with the most exquisite touches of both, the beauty of which is enhanced by contrast, like green spots in a barren waste’ [R44]; in 1839 it is ‘a strange mixture, showing, as it were, occasional gleams of sunshine lost amid clouds and darkness’ [R52]. Sunshine and clouds are also used in respect of op. 135 [R38].

Hogarth also tries to explain Beethoven’s new style by drawing a comparison between Beethoven’s final compositions and contemporary German literature, and by proceeding to compare them to ‘the most fantastic flights of HOFFMANN’ [R1]. More frequently, he attempts to vindicate Beethoven by suggesting that his deteriorating health had an adverse effect on his mind, and declares, for example, that the quartets represent ‘the ravings of delirium’ [R44] or ‘evidence of a great mind in ruins’ [R22].

Between 1836 and 1840 there is little change in Hogarth’s comprehension of the late quartets; what does alter is his attitude towards his contemporaries. Initially he chastises them for affecting understanding of Beethoven’s late music, but by 1838 he is humbler, acknowledging that the quartets do have designs and that, although he cannot understand them himself, others may genuinely be able to [R44]. In 1840 he even suggests that greater familiarity with op. 127, on the part of both listeners and performers,

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63 The idea that Beethoven’s sickness resulted in his losing control over the music he wrote is designated by Knittel as a ‘passive plot’; see Knittel, From Chaos to History, 22–6.
may lead to a proper appreciation [R66].

The Morning Herald. Musical reporting in the Morning Herald in the late 1830s is undistinguished; furthermore, the identities of the regular writers are unknown. Reports of only three concerts were published, one (op.130, 1839) making only passing reference to the presence in the programme of a late quartet. Neither of the remaining notices is written with much technical comprehension - suggesting that they come from a non-musical critic (perhaps the drama critic covered concerts?). The reporter is clearly confused by the music he has heard, and describes op.131 (1837) as 'one of the most fantastic and curiously-laboured productions', with an apparent 'total absence of general design beyond the artful connection of a great number of movements' [R32]; similarly, op.130 (1838) contains 'six movements of as wayward and complex a character as ever came from the composer in his most eccentric mood' [R45]. What is interesting here is that in spite of the reporter's inability to comprehend the formal innovations of the quartet, Beethoven is not blamed or reprehended for producing music such as this; rather, the tone towards the composer and his works is constantly reverential. He is 'that mighty master' [R32]; op.131 is 'a wonderful work requiring the nicest skill' [R32]; and op.130 is a 'daring' piece for a programme, requiring great study on the part of the performers to 'convey any thing like a just notion of its general meaning to any audience, however competent to judge' [R45].

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64 The identity of critics is largely confined to later decades: David H. Hastings (1809-90) and Desmond Ryan (1816-68) were active on the Herald in the 1840s and 50s. See Ella Collection, MS 79, item 35a [identification of Hastings]; and Desmond Lumley Ryan, 'Ryan, Michael Desmond', A Dictionary of Music and Musicians, ed. George Grove (London: Macmillan and Co., 1879-89), iii, 206-7.
The Morning Post. Some of the most enlightened reports of the late quartets are found in the Morning Post. All but one of the performances (op.127, 1840) were reported, frequently at great length, and most accounts are distinguished by a reasonably adequate technical knowledge and a considerable familiarity with the works themselves (most probably through the Schlesinger edition, which the writer describes in his account of op.132, 1836 [R15]). Typical is the way in which the reporter highlights a passage towards the end of the first movement of op.132 (bars 210-14) in which 'the first violin retains the B for five bars', describing it as 'so eminently beautiful and new as to haunt our imagination ever since' [R15]. There is a firm grasp of the complex movement structures, and a full knowledge of individual movements, which are often described by key or character (see for example the 1838 account of op.130 [R46]). The writer frequently uses a series of adjectives to characterize the music: the third movement of op.132 is 'so natural, so elaborate, so pointed, so fantastic - and withal so serious, and yet so elating - that cold indeed must the heart be who could not sympathise with the calm, holy, grateful, and yet joyous feelings of the composer' [R15]; and he constantly stresses the severe technical difficulties that the quartets present to performers, suggesting that in all likelihood he had played (or had close experience of) the music.

John Ella worked regularly as a critic on the Morning Post and other papers, and is the person most likely to have written these reports.65 As already demonstrated, Ella was passionately interested in chamber music, and often played quartets and quintets privately with many London musicians; he is also known independently to have attended

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65 Ella wrote opera and concert reports for the Athenaeum from 1831 to 1834 (see the marked files at City University, London); a series of his 'Musical Recollections' appeared in the Court Journal in 1836, and he also wrote occasional articles for the Musical World in its early years. He worked for the Morning Post from 1828 to 1842.
some of the performances in question. What is more, Ella was a frequent traveller to Paris, and in 1827 had witnessed performances (most probably in private) using Schlesinger’s complete edition of Beethoven’s chamber music as soon as it came off the press. In December 1836 he attended performances in Paris by the Tilmant quartet; at least one performance included one of the late quartets. It is also possible that he was familiar with an article published in Schlesinger’s Gazette musicale de Paris in 1835 on Beethoven’s compositional method in his ‘late’ quartets.

Conscious of his readership, Ella does not attempt to articulate the formal workings of the quartets; this is most noticeable in his report of the première of op.131, where he suggests that readers should understand the ‘difficulties’ as a manifestation of the composer’s genius. Chastising those who scorn the late quartets because Beethoven ‘dared to depart from the received rules’, he claims the work should not be measured in conventional terms, and considers that its wildness, its ‘unconnectedness’ and its extravagance constitute the quartet’s beauty; that it does not matter that Beethoven breaks traditional compositional rules; and that the work’s peculiarities are in fact proof of Beethoven’s originality and skill: ‘His was not an ordinary mind, and the means by which he conveyed his meaning could not be achieved through the ordinary channel’ [R33]. There is even the bold statement ‘if we are pleased we know not why and care not

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66 Ella, Musical Sketches, 401.

67 John Ella, unpublished diary, entry for 15 December 1836: ‘Went to Tilmant’s quartet Party. Was enchanted with a quintet of Onslow’s and one of the Posthumous Quartets of Beethoven’.

68 François Stoepel, ‘Beethoven et ses derniers quatuors’, Gazette Musicale de Paris, ii, no.25 (21 June 1835), 205-7. Stoepel argues that Beethoven did not abandon traditional rules of sonata composition in his ‘late’ quartets; to justify this standpoint he includes a comparison (which had been produced by Georges Onslow) of the expositions of op.132 and op.18 no.4.
wherefore'; clearly, Ella was encouraging readers simply to trust his judgments.

Ella was not the sole music critic working for the Post, nor the only sympathetic one. The report of the first performance of op.130 (1836), for example, refers approvingly to H. J. Gauntlett's perceptive article in the Musical World on the characteristics of Beethoven's late style, and, by producing a vivid metaphor of a bolting horse [R2], the author focuses on the way in which Beethoven creates uncertainty. This notice also gives details about the individual movements and hails Beethoven as the greatest composer of instrumental music; but for circumstantial reasons there are doubts as to whether it comes from Ella's pen. Similarly the reports of op.132 (1836) [R8] and op.130 (1839) [R53], but for internal reasons: Ella attended both performances, but the former report does not ring true with his personal dissatisfaction with the slow movement, documented elsewhere; the latter presents details of individual movements and describes the quartet as 'a splendid production', but the account of the rest of the concert is highly inconsistent with his private remarks.

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69 Gauntlett, 'Characteristics of Beethoven', 21-5. This issue of the Musical World (no.2; 25 March 1836) was published in the same week that one of the late quartets was publicly performed in London for the first time.

70 See Ella, unpublished diary, entry for 26 March 1836: Ella played in the band at the King's Theatre on the night in question and recounts the events of that performance in detail; he makes no mention of the quartet concert. Although Ella could have written all or part of the report without attending all or part of the concert, it seems unlikely on this occasion, for the muddling of the third and fourth movements of op.130 is uncharacteristic of him.

71 Ella, unpublished diary, entry for 7 April 1836: 'I was much disappointed in the effect of two [sic] movements of Beethoven's posthumous Quartet (including) the ringraziamente. The Trio I liked - the other was a dull termination of the evening's entertainment'. See also his account of the rest of the concert in the entry for 28 January 1839: 'The concert of Mori's had no novelty to surprise. Miss Birch should go to Italy for "enunciation & dramatic expression - Lazarus on the Clarinet is exquisitely beautiful"' [punctuation as in original source].

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John Parry, who wrote concert reports for the *Post* regularly from 1834 to 1848, may well have been responsible for these pieces. In the two reports of the concerts in which op.130 was played the writer comments favourably on the playing of Blagrove’s ensemble. Such remarks may point to Parry’s authorship, since Parry himself was an experienced performer (he played a number of instruments, and often commented on instruments and instrumentation in his reviews). Moreover, as already noted, Parry’s son had family connections with Blagrove, and it is possible that a favourable disposition towards Blagrove’s group coloured Parry senior’s judgments of the music they performed; however, the positive tone in the report of Mori’s rendition of op.132 [R8] suggests that, if the reports are by Parry, his musical sympathies extended beyond personal connections. Parry may also have reported Blagrove’s performance of op.130 at the Philharmonic [R23]; this favourable account is unlikely to be the work of Ella.

Two reports stand apart: those for op.135 (1837) [R39] and op.131 (1839) [R59]. They are relatively short, present no technical understanding, and show little sympathy for the music. Op.135 is considered ‘beyond our comprehension’, ‘a thing of itself, appertaining to no class of composition with which we are acquainted’; and the writer firmly suggests that Beethoven’s declining health adversely affected his late works. The reporter, recounting his impressions of op.131, acknowledges the technical difficulties of the quartet and the consequent achievement of the performers, yet judges it ‘a musical

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72 For evidence of Parry’s journalistic style see the scrapbook of his newspaper reports of the Ancient Concerts in London, British Library, Department of Printed Books, shelfmark 7900.d.2.

73 The men married two sisters, Anne and Ethelred Combe.

74 Ella’s unpublished diary for 7 March and 25 April 1836 records much dissatisfaction with reports of the Philharmonic concerts in the *Morning Post*.
curiosity more than a production calculated to please’. Authorship of these reports is
difficult to determine; they were almost certainly not written by Ella, but may
conceivably have come from Parry or, perhaps even more likely, another critic.75

The Musical Library Monthly Supplement. The Musical Library (a serial publication of
music) and its adjunct the Musical Library Monthly Supplement were in many ways a
continuation of William Ayrton’s Harmonicon, which closed in 1833. Ayrton was editor
of the new publication, which ran from 1834 to 1836.76 The journal reported all
performances of the late quartets in 1836, though not at great length or in particular
detail. The reports appear to come from the pen of one person, and are characterized by
their caution and unwillingness to pass judgment on unfamiliar works. Typical are the
comments that ‘Their beauties are not all disclosed on the first view’ (op.130) [R3] and
‘it would be rash to speak at large without further acquaintance, and even a view of the
score’ (op.132) [R9]. Such remarks in fact disguise an inability instinctively to appreciate
the music: in the report of the complete performance of op.132 [R16], the writer
confesses his doubt that the outer movements ‘will ever work themselves into favour’,
and in his account of the Philharmonic concert at which op.130 was performed [R24] the
writer identifies ‘abortive attempts at originality’ and complains of the work’s extreme
length. Internal evidence in the reports suggests the style and personality of Ayrton. If

75 The sympathies demonstrated in the two groups of reports are markedly different.
If Parry did write the reports of op.131 and op.135, it seems unlikely that he could have
written the two ‘unattributed’ reports of op.130 and op.132 discussed above. It seems
more likely that Parry wrote the op.130 and op.132 reports, but not the two examined
here, and that in all probability at least three authors were responsible for the Beethoven
reports in the Morning Post.

76 The history of this journal is charted in Langley, The English Musical Journal,
554-9.
this is so, it indicates that Ayrton had learnt from experience that unsympathetic judgments of Beethoven’s music would eventually be questioned and overturned, and was exercising prudence.\textsuperscript{77} He may also have been exercising caution in the light of his friendship with the pro-Beethoven Alsager family.

\textit{The Musical World}. The first issue (18 March 1836) of this specialist magazine was published eight days before the first of the late quartets was brought before the London concert public. Reports of this and subsequent performances were open-minded and generally favourable, in keeping with the sympathetic treatment of late Beethoven elsewhere in the first volume.\textsuperscript{78} The six reports of 1836 and 1837 exhibit a preference for opp.132 and 135 over opp.130 and 131; but they tend to lack solid musical discussion, relying instead on descriptive, evocative language. Of the slow movement of op.132 the reporter declares: ‘we never felt so strongly the full force of the spirit of poetry entering the very marrow of his [Beethoven’s] soul ... It is one of the most appealing homilies that the mind of man ever poured forth’ [R10]. The innovative movement structures of opp.130 and 131 appear to baffle the writer, op.131 forcing him to confess: ‘we have not been able to perceive any distinctness or continuity of design in this singular composition’ [R34]. But he proceeds to acknowledge that ‘The fault probably lies with ourselves, and most willingly would we prefer it should be so, than that a great man should underwrite himself’. Such avowed admiration for Beethoven is characteristic of all six reports, even those that struggle or fail to explain the music. The

\textsuperscript{77} Ayrton’s reviews of Beethoven’s symphonies in \textit{The Harmonicon}, 1823-32, are discussed in Craig, ‘The Beethoven Symphonies’, 84-91.

writer and poet Charles Cowden Clarke (1787-1877) is acknowledged to have been the first editor of the *Musical World*, and his distinct literary style is evident in the 1836 and 1837 reports of the 'late Beethoven' concerts.79

The remaining three reports (for 1838-40) maintain the sympathetic tenor of previous ones; the report of op.131 (1839) [R60] is the most perceptive. Almost certainly the work of the (then) co-editor of the *Musical World*, Egerton Webbe (1810-40), it draws attention to the keys of the individual movements and their remoteness from the tonic, and discusses the element of humour in Beethoven's music.80

**The Spectator.** Only two of the concerts were reported in *The Spectator*. The coverage of the Beethoven quartets is highly cursory, showing little sympathy towards the music or any desire to come to terms with it - 'We regard it as a kind of musical experiment' [R18]. Edward Taylor (1784-1863) was the regular music critic of *The Spectator* from 1829 to 1843.81 His preference for sacred vocal music rather than instrumental music is well known and his personality seems to lurk behind these reports.82

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80 Enthusiasm and wit, and a tendency to include Latin references and to underline words for emphasis, are suggestive of Webbe. His observations of the audience's faces could be significant, since Webbe was himself deaf. I am grateful to Leanne Langley for drawing elements of Webbe's style to my attention.


82 Taylor's adoration of Spohr and his inclination to be hypercritical are especially evident in his accounts of the other items in the concerts or in his general musical articles in *The Spectator*’s columns. For conservative remarks published in *The Spectator* about the 9th symphony see Levy, *Early Performances*, 221-7.
The Standard. Published in the afternoon, this daily paper carried only limited amounts of musical news, frequently reprinted from or based on accounts in the morning newspapers. The coverage of the late Beethoven quartets is typical. Four concerts received attention from The Standard; of these, two notices [R54 and R68] are reprinted from The Times, and one [R27] from the Morning Post. The fourth [R35] carries no critical comment, but simply describes the bill of fare as 'recherchée'. Obviously there was no music critic on the editorial staff of The Standard at this period.

The Sunday Times. In keeping with its generally liberal coverage of music and drama in London, the Sunday Times carried short reports of six of the 'late Beethoven' concerts. But it is doubtful that a knowledgeable music critic contributed them: the two reports of the 1836 performances of op.130 [R5 and R28] echo comments made by The Times and the Morning Post respectively; the report of op.132 [R11] mistakenly identifies the quartet as op.130 and, believing the work to have been criticized the previous week, makes no comment. The 1839 reports [R55 and R61] are by contrast independently conceived, though they lack musical understanding, as is demonstrated by the weak musical metaphor in the report of op.131 [R61].

The Theatrical and Concert Companion. The report of op.130 [R56] which appeared in the eighth issue of this ephemeral publication, which looks rather like a playbill, is a reprint (without acknowledgment) of the account in the Morning Chronicle.\(^{83}\)

\(^{83}\) For further information about this publication see Langley, The English Musical Journal, 590-93; a complete set of this periodical is difficult to trace, and I have consequently been unable to ascertain whether the Theatrical and Concert Companion published a report of the performance of op.131 on 7 March 1839.
The Times. The very first 'posthumous' quartet to be performed in London (26 March 1836) was greeted by The Times as 'one of the greatest master-pieces of this wonderful composer', comprising six movements, all 'perfectly original, varied, and beautifully contrasted with each other' [R6]. This eulogistic language is typical of most of The Times's reports; they are peppered with superlatives and such words as 'wonderful', 'genius', 'beautiful' and 'sublime'. The writer is clearly familiar with the music, and frequently refers to the 'Paris' (i.e. Schlesinger's) edition. As with the reports in the Morning Post, there is an understanding of the technical difficulties that the quartets present to the players; but in this case the difficulties in Beethoven's music are felt to be different from those in the music of 'almost any other composer', in that 'they always add to the effect, and when surmounted leave no sense of difficulty' [R6]. Opinions are firmly stated; not once does the reporter admit to being even moderately puzzled by any of the music.

The most obvious candidate for the authorship of these highly sympathetic reports is Thomas Alsager, part-owner of The Times and its city correspondent. Alsager was, as has already been shown, a keen amateur musician and powerful advocate of Beethoven's music (in particular the 'late period' compositions and the chamber music); he is also known to have contributed musical reports to The Times at this period. For more information on Alsager's contributions to The Times see Langley, The English Musical Journal, 291-6; and The History of The Times (London: The Times, 1935-52), i, 415-16; ii, 443. For a full profile of Alsager see Chapter V, pp.180-88 above.

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In these reports, however, Alsager displays a general unwillingness to enter into technical detail when discussing the quartets: his description of the second and fifth movements of op. 130 as simple but inventive [R6], or the third movement of op. 135 as 'in a beautiful strain of harmony, clear and intelligible' [R41] are characteristic. This may be due to Alsager's own lack of technical knowledge, or to his awareness of the limited musical knowledge of his readership. His most detailed remarks include a definition of the Lydian mode (op. 132/3) as the 'termination of the key, without a dominant seventh' [R19], and his criticism of Mori's bad taste in performing op. 132 with cuts and omissions [R12]. Alsager's responses seem often instinctive, even prophetic: reporting the first performance of op. 127 he declares 'if chamber music is ever to acquire a decidedly great character, it will be through the later compositions by Beethoven' [R69].

The reports of later performances of op. 130 (1838, 1839) [R48 and R57] make only brief mention of the Beethoven quartets; but although the remarks are relatively uninformative, they create a positive impression - suggesting that while Alsager probably did not write them, he may have maintained some editorial influence over the reporting of chamber music in The Times.

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To summarize, the most substantial sources of contemporary comment on the first

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85 Alsager wrote in a simple, matter-of-fact style and used an especially laudatory vocabulary in connection with Beethoven. See the letters from MSS in Oxford and London reproduced in Levy, 'Thomas Massa Alsager', 120, 121, 123; and the prospectuses for the Beethoven Quartet Society in London, British Library, Add MS 52347, ff. 5-7.
performances of the late quartets are the *Morning Chronicle*, the *Morning Post*, *The Times*, the *Musical World* and to some extent *The Atlas*. More modest, but no less interesting, amounts of material are found in *The Athenaeum*, the *Musical Library Monthly Supplement*, *The Spectator* and the *Morning Herald*. The remaining journals frequently echo or reprint reports published in the dailies, notably in the *Morning Post*, *The Times* and (on one occasion) the *Morning Chronicle*. *The Post* and *The Times* were the most popular morning newspapers: in the 1830s the circulation of *The Times* outstripped that of any of the other daily papers, and the *Post* was for many the preferred chronicle of fashionable events.\(^6\) *The Chronicle* also prided itself on a ‘quality’ readership.

As we have seen, few papers can be identified exclusively with one critical reaction. Most papers used more than one music writer to report on the ‘late quartet’ concerts during this five-year period, and it would be a mistake to seek to interpret the material solely in terms of individual newspapers. More useful is an understanding of individual writers. A number of critical voices are clearly detectable and, as we have seen, can be matched to distinct standpoints. The conjectural identification of journalists is helpful in this respect, but should be used primarily to underpin an understanding of writers’ critical personalities. It should be understood that, in the discussion that follows, references to writers are at all times speculative, being based on the conjectural

\(^6\) The circulation of the *Times* increased dramatically between 1800 and 1860. By 1841 it was selling 28,000 copies per day, which was almost as many as were sold by all its competitors put together; see Brian Lake, *British Newspapers: a History and Guide for Collectors* (London: Sheppard Press, 1984), 63-74, and Lucy Brown, ‘The British Press, 1800-1860’, *The Encyclopedia of the British Press, 1442-1992*, ed. Dennis Griffiths (London: Macmillan Press, 1992), 24-32. *The Morning Post*’s reputation as the newspaper of fashion was maintained through the 1830s, although it declined at the end of the following decade; see Wilfrid Hindle, *The Morning Post, 1772-1937: Portrait of a Newspaper* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1937), 165-78.
attributions outlined above.

The most enthusiastic reports are those believed to have been written by Alsager and Ella, both of whom had practical experience of the quartets. Holmes and Egerton Webbe take a serious, sympathetic approach towards the music, while Cowden Clarke writes more superficially about it, though maintaining a profound respect for the composer. Chorley has only a limited understanding of the late quartets, and initially seems unwilling to make special efforts to come to terms with them. Henry Smart, Edward Taylor and George Hogarth show little appreciation of the works, and go to varying lengths to explain the reasons for their antipathy. Clearly there was a broad spectrum of critical opinion. But although the critical sympathies of the above groups of authors are discrepant, the language they use to discuss the late quartets, and the points that are stressed, reveal a number of common traits.

(b) Common critical threads

Even in the most sympathetic reports the level of technical understanding of Beethoven’s style and structure appears unsophisticated, and relies either on figurative, descriptive language or on relatively superficial observations of the printed score or parts. It is probable, however, that the more enlightened critics (notably Alsager, Ella and Holmes) tailored their musical criticism to the level of their readerships. Most other writers, however, lack knowledge of the musical texts and base their assessments on aural impressions. It would of course be foolish to expect a writer of a concert report (as opposed to a music review) to attempt to supply readers with a detailed map of the musical landscape, though it may be significant that no music reviews of the quartets per se appear to have been published contemporaneously with the first London performances,
leaving anyone unfamiliar with the works with few means of orientation.\textsuperscript{87} Gauntlett’s essays on Beethoven’s late style are perhaps the only detailed critical material that was readily available; even so, they appear to have been taken seriously only by certain members of the musical establishment. The \textit{Morning Post} \footnote{R2}, for example, quotes the essay on Beethoven’s late style as a way of explaining the element of ‘uncertainty’ in op.130, but this is an isolated occurrence.\textsuperscript{88}

The difficulty of comprehending the musical structure of the late quartets by aural means alone was an overwhelming problem, which caused many writers to admit defeat. Chorley, on hearing op.131 for the first time, described it as a ‘long, mysterious, and overcharged work’ which ‘though full of ideas, high-soaring and original, has left little impression on our minds, owing to the singular, and (it seems to us) perplexed manner in which they are worked out’ \footnote{R30}. Others, for example Ayrton in the \textit{Musical Library Monthly Supplement} \footnote{R9}, were able to admit the folly of passing judgment on the quartets without consulting a score. The continuous structures, the episodic treatment of ideas, the abrupt transitions - the ‘stop-start’ element in particular - made it virtually impossible for listeners to grasp the formal plan of the music: the well-weathered signposts of traditional sonata movements were nowhere to be found. The \textit{Morning Herald} could describe op.131 only as a ‘curiously-laboured’ production, and commented: ‘There appears in it a total absence of general design beyond the artful connection of a

\footnote{See the review of op.127 in the \textit{Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review}, viii (1826), 480-84. See also Henry John Gauntlett, ‘Beethoven and the Philharmonic Society’ \textit{Musical World}, v, no.59 (28 April 1837), 97-103; this review of the 9th symphony is a perceptive, technical analysis, the like of which had never appeared in English; the quartets were not rewarded in the same way.}

\footnote{Levy (Early Performances, 269-70) assigns considerable importance to the role played by Gauntlett’s essay on the 9th symphony in developing audience appreciation in London.}

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great number of movements, all dissimilar, and all competing for supremacy of fanciful combinations' [R32]. Many echoed this opinion, including Cowden Clarke in the *Musical World*, who confessed himself to have 'not been able to perceive any distinctness or continuity of design in this singular composition' [R34].

Outer movements seem to have presented particular challenges: the last two movements of op.132, the Alla Marcia leading into the Allegro Appassionato, seemed, according to Cowden Clarke, not to be 'a connected part of his plot' [R17], while Ayrton doubted 'whether the first and last movements will ever work themselves into favour' [R16]. The first movement of op.130, when played with its exposition repeat, presents 19 changes of tempo, many in quick succession. Small wonder, then, that readers of The Athenaeum were advised by Chorley in 1838 that the movement was 'confused in its meaning and treatment beyond the power of human ingenuity and aptitude to make clear' [R42], and later (1839) that 'No familiarity, we fear, could clear up the strange, and, in places, aimless, confusion of the first movement' [R49]. Hogarth, too, was in no doubt that it was written:

... with a disregard of the established forms of this kind of composition; consisting of no less than seven or eight (we think) different movements, some of which are very brief; but which form an aggregate of great length. These numerous movements, too, are filled with the most startling transitions. The mind is never left in repose, or allowed to follow for more than a moment any train of imagery or feeling; but is transported in an instant, as it were, from the flowery plain to the rugged wilderness, and made to listen, in quick succession, to solemn strains of devotion, tender complaints, bursts of wild laughter, and the dark mutterings of despair. [R1]

Indeed, it was the abrupt transitions of the B flat quartet that led the *Morning Post* to produce its evocative image of the bolting horse, in a passage subsequently reprinted in the *Musical World* [R4]:

This quartett is replete with these uncertainties, and the composer might be likened to a fiery steed broke loose, galloping onwards until he comes to four
cross-roads; there he halts for a moment, neighing and snorting, while his pursuers are totally at a loss to imagine which way he may take, and if they fancy he inclines to the right it is a hundred to one but that, by a sudden start, off he turns to the left; so it was with BEETHOVEN, who seemed to take the greatest delight in deceiving his hearers, by an unlooked for transition, or the introduction of a simple, lovely melody, after a series of discordant phrases. [R2]

Others did not articulate their misapprehension in such terms: of op.130 Edward Taylor (in The Spectator) merely commented: ‘our notions of musical excellence must undergo an "organic change" before we can derive unmingled pleasure from such a composition’ [R26]; and Henry Smart (in The Atlas), using stronger language, declared that the quartet ‘contains some of the most disagreeably inscrutable matters we ever encountered. It has, undoubtedly, many wonderful beauties, but they are thinly scattered over a large surface of eccentricity, to say the least of it, of the most doubtful order’ [R50].

Some writers found the length of the quartets hard to accept. This was a common complaint regarding much of Beethoven’s later music - the symphonies in particular - and reflects the fact that concert audiences were simply not used to listening attentively to a single movement (let alone a whole work) over such a long timespan. The Musical Library Monthly Supplement admits as much, when it complains about the placing of op.130 as the third item of the second act of the Philharmonic concert: ‘This was most injudiciously placed; on account of its extreme length, it ought at least to have been heard while the ear was unfatigued, and when it could have been listened to without that impatience which was ill concealed by many’ [R24]. Other striking features for those experiencing the music for the first time include the unusual harmonic progressions, which are described with words such as ‘rare’, ‘unexpected’, ‘uncouth’, ‘wondrous’, or ‘abstruse’ - though never with any technical discussion of keys, modulations, suspensions or the like.

Reverence for Beethoven, however, prevents even the most disgruntled writers
from condemning him out of hand, and almost every report - sympathetic or not - displays deep respect for Beethoven's genius. Indeed, those who confess their difficulties in understanding the work try to 'sugar the pill' by drawing attention to the parts of the composition that pleased. Hence although Chorley describes op. 135 as 'incomprehensible', he goes on to praise the slow movement 'which is very rich in its harmonies' [R36]; and parts of op. 130 (1836), are 'of a delicious fantasy', even though he considers the work 'too thoroughly odd ... to be comprehended at once' [R20].

Inability to understand the music at its initial hearing is frequently diagnosed as an inadequacy on the part of the listener rather than as shortcomings on the part of the composer. At the same time, some writers (most notably Hogarth) seek to vindicate Beethoven by turning to the story of his declining health in later years. The Morning Post, finding op. 135 'beyond our comprehension', announces that 'the question was, whether his [Beethoven's] health and mind might not be so affected as to cast a shade on his latter works' [R39]. Hogarth in the Morning Chronicle is in no doubt that the late quartets 'give evidence of a great mind in ruins' [R22], and frequently suggests that Beethoven's mind (and consequently his music) have been adversely affected by his deafness, producing 'the ravings of delirium' [R44]. He goes one step further in 1839, triumphantly announcing: 'We have always considered these posthumous quartets unworthy of their reputed author; and it now appears that very serious doubts are entertained of their paternity' [R52]. This is presumably a reference to the rumour that was circulating at about this time (and was subsequently published in the Penny Magazine) that the late quartets had been put together, after Beethoven's death, by an
enterprising publisher who had found scraps of manuscript among Beethoven’s papers.89

There is also widespread acknowledgment, quite possibly based on previous experience, that listeners have to work hard to understand Beethoven’s music, and/or that they must expect to listen to it several times before being able to make an informed judgment. The Musical World (1838), for instance, foresees that although op.130 ‘may be generally described as of a fantastic character’, ‘the more deeply it is studied, the more "method" will be discovered in its apparent aberrations’ [R47]; and Hogarth in the Morning Chronicle (1840) concedes that op.127 ‘must be much better understood, both by the players and hearers, than it has yet been in this country, before its merits as a work of art can be appreciated’ [R66]. But Holmes in The Atlas, writing of the first three movements of op.132, refutes the remark that the ‘posthumous quartetts of BEETHOVEN are of a nature so wild and extravagant as scarcely to be intelligible at first hearing’, and declares ‘all is new indeed, but not beyond the capacities of well trained hearers’ [R7].

The most appealing portions of the late quartets were movements based on dance forms, or were andantes and adagios. This is presumably a reflection of a greater prominence of lyrical melody and of Beethoven’s use of simple, folklike tunes.90 The second movement of op.130 was regularly encored, Chorley describing it as ‘tricksy and joyous’, Ella as ‘grotesque and delightful’. The two slow movements of op.130 were also singled out: the cavatina (fifth movement) drew admiration from two of the more

89 ‘Beethoven’, Penny Magazine, no.499 (11 Jan 1840), 14-15. See also Hogarth, ‘Beethoven’, Polytechnic Journal; the source of the rumour is uncertain, but it apparently originated in Germany.

sceptical writers. In 1839 Chorley declared ‘the adagio (called a cavatina, and almost vocal in its expression)’ was ‘only too short’ [R49]; and Hogarth twice pronounced it beautiful, being for him the ‘green spot’ or ‘diamond’ in the ‘desert’ [R22 and R44]. The third movement of op.132, the ‘Heiliger Dankgesang’, with its modal, contrapuntal passages and contrasting sections marked ‘Neue Kraft führend’, produced some of the most eloquent statements of all, perhaps because here at last was something vaguely programmatic, onto which the listener could latch; or perhaps because the direct reference to Beethoven’s illness brought out sympathies for the composer, and thus provided emotional access to the work. ‘In the language of counterpoint, it is the subdued, yet yearning effusion of a heart prostrate, grateful and adoring’, said the Musical World, ‘It is one of the most appealing homilies that the mind of man ever poured forth’ [R10]. The Atlas preferred a more academic approach: ‘The slow movement moves chiefly in the most simple chords, but in the severe style of PALESTRINA, and the hearer may fancy himself listening to an old ecclesiastical motett while absorbed by the devotional harmonies of this poetically conceived adagio’ [R7]. According to the Morning Post, ‘It was listened to in the stillest silence, and looks and murmurings, rather than certain and defined indications of applause, from the audience testified how surely and completely the magic art of the composer had touched the deepest recesses of the hearts of his hearers’ [R15].

The difficulties facing performers of the late quartets are stressed by many writers, including those who, lacking practical experience, rely on conventional wisdom. A mystique seems to have developed around the quartets, for The Times tells us that op.132 has ‘shared the common fate of all the master-pieces of this unrivalled genius, of being condemned by the great majority of our professors, for the most unanswerable of
all reasons - that they were unable to play them' [R19]. The *Morning Post* refers to 'frightful' and 'immense' difficulties, the *Musical World* calls them 'all-but-insurmountable', and so on. Could fear of the difficulties of ensemble, musicianship and technique have contributed to the relatively late introduction of the quartets? Op.127 waited until 1840 for its first airing in London; *The Times* considered it 'extraordinary considering the acknowledged great reputation of the composer, and that it has been 12 years in print, but the difficulty of it is extreme, and the attention to music of this description by the English musical profession is still a novelty' [R69].

Contemporary performing standards are of course linked to the question of audience reception; poor performances would naturally have obscured Beethoven's intentions, and added or contributed to the reservations of unsympathetic listeners. But although there can be little doubt that the quality of quartet playing in the 1830s - ensemble, intonation, unity of bowing, expression and so on - would not have approached those of the late 20th century, it should not be assumed that standards of performance were unacceptably low (by 19th-century yardsticks at least), or that the performers merely played the quartets at sight, with chaos the inevitable result. The argument that bad performances were responsible for audiences not understanding the late music is all-too-convenient, and ignores important evidence. For a start, not all reporters responded unenthusiastically; some, as we have seen, hailed the quartets as the apogee of Beethoven's creative output. It is hard to imagine that either Alsager or Ella would have been insensitive to, and unremarking of, atrociously bad performances. Furthermore, many writers refer to the unprecedented amounts of rehearsal that were put into the
quartet concerts, most especially by Blagrove's group. The rehearsal of a string quartet, unlike a symphony, required the commitment of only four people and would consequently have been relatively easy and cheap to organise and carry out. Holmes remarks in The Atlas: 'The performers, we suppose, had assiduously practised this [op.132], and in some degree trusted to their skill for the other [works in the concert] - at least such is generally the case when the difficult is better rendered than what is comparatively facile' [R13]. George Dubourg, in his book The Violin, also tells how the Blagrove quartet practised assiduously.

What is perhaps most striking about press reports of the 'late quartet' concerts is the fact that, in spite of differences of opinion as to the merits of the music, there are a number of underlying, unifying elements. There is, for instance, a freshness and candour in the writing and a sense in which all critics, regardless of their opinion of the quartets, constantly struggle to describe a type of music that was more original than anything they had ever encountered. There is little technical description, but a preoccupation with the design of the music is clearly felt. It matters not whether the writer looks in vain for a 'design' or whether he declares that - but does not prove how - one exists; here the bonds of classical form were breaking, and the most important issue was not how to describe

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91 Rousselot, in the introduction to his edition of the quartets ('A Brief Memoir of Beethoven', Honor to Beethoven: Complete Edition of the Quartetts, London: R. Cocks and Co., 1846, p.4), claims: 'We can easily conceive how they have been pronounced unintelligible by persons who have judged them according to their confused execution, which has been the necessary result of the wretched incorrectness of all the editions that have appeared to the present day'. However, there may well be an element of puffery at work here, and a thorough examination of Rousselot's edition alongside those of Schlesinger, Schott, Artaria etc. is needed before Rousselot's statement can be accepted without reservation.

92 George Dubourg, The Violin: Some Account of that Leading Instrument and its most Eminent Professors (London: Robert Cocks and Co., 4/1852), 301; Dubourg's remarks are quoted in Chapter IV, p.120 above.
what was happening, but rather to establish whether or not Beethoven was in control of what he was doing. Some believed that he was; others felt he was not, and, lamenting that he had literally gone mad, made his health the scapegoat. Beethoven could never be blamed directly. The deification of Beethoven, the occasional use of religious metaphors, and the cult of the romantic genius are powerful forces behind much of the writing. Whatever viewpoint is held à propos the musical value of the quartets, the image of Beethoven the artist, the genius, the magician, the god, is ever present.

The reporting of the late quartets also reveals something of a rift - part intellectual, part social - between members of the journalistic community. Those who have played the late quartets and write sympathetically about the music make veiled attacks on those who do not, and vice versa. Ella in the Morning Post, for example, remarks:

The latter compositions of this immortal writer have given rise to much controversy as to their intrinsic merits - a controversy, be it recollected, now only confined to a few dilettanti in this country - there is no difference of opinion on this subject in the classic schools of Germany and France. It is reserved for English amateurs to enjoy the enviable distinction of calling his last magnificent musings the emanations of a deaf dotard, a musical madman, or a melancholy misanthrope. [R33]

- while Alsager in The Times points the finger at conservative professors who apparently condemn the works because of their own inadequate technical abilities [R19]. On the other hand, the writer in The Atlas (probably Smart) comments:

For the last ten years, at least, the notion that BEETHOVEN "wrote before his time," has worn the shape of a truism, and has been considered by musicians a stronghold upon which to retreat, when compelled to give judgment on that which was difficult to understand. [R50]

Similarly, Hogarth in the Morning Chronicle attacks both those who are able to explain the late music (there is a direct reference to Gauntlett’s account of the ninth symphony), as well as the ‘humbler class of his admirers, who say, that, though his depths are
beyond the reach of the present generation, yet they will be fathomed by our grand-
children’ [R1]. Even more irksome to Hogarth appear to be amateurs who profess
understanding. Could Alsager, whose profound admiration for the quartets is never
backed up in print by technical knowledge, be the target of Hogarth’s following remarks?

But any amateur of the present day who professes to comprehend this
composition, or to be delighted with it, is guilty of gross affectation. [R38]

Hogarth was not alone in decrying amateur appreciation of the late music. Cipriani
Potter, in an essay in the Musical World, notes that Beethoven’s music is listened to with
attention and delight, yet is compelled to observe:

Not unfrequently, indeed, these feelings border on prejudice, since it is impossible
that amateurs generally can appreciate those portions of his works, which the
cultivated Professor is often at a loss to understand.93

But Potter is a sympathetic supporter of the late music and does not condemn such
behaviour:

... nevertheless, it is gratifying to witness the anxiety with which the uninitiated
endeavour to comprehend what is termed classical writing, emanating from so
great a man; exerting their auricular and intellectual faculties, to admire that
which, in all probability, is far from being congenial with their predisposed taste
and ideas.94

Although it is interesting to consider audience reaction towards the first London
performances of the late quartets in terms of acceptance and rejection, or of favourable
and unfavourable reports, to think solely in these terms is to bypass some of the most
interesting aspects of this material. There are, as we have seen, a number of critical
traits common to several sources, and we should perhaps think less about sympathetic and
unsympathetic responses, and more about the way in which all writers are attempting to


94 Ibid.
establish a new critical language, through which the works may be discussed. Indeed, the way English writers of the 1830s articulate the ‘romantic’ elements in the quartets, their understanding of the structure of the music, their reliance on the image of the genius-composer, or the developing myth of the ‘difficult’ quartets are all important elements in the larger picture of the reception history of Beethoven’s music in all countries over two centuries.

(c) The press and the concert audience

The extent to which the press may have played a role in establishing a taste for late Beethoven among amateur concertgoers is worth further consideration. How much influence did the press have over its readers? Can the press be said to have led musical taste? Is there any connection between the growth of a Beethoven clique and the fact that The Times, which had by far the largest circulation of any of the London daily papers, presented some of the most enthusiastic accounts of the late quartets? How many ‘late Beethoven’ supporters were there? We can only speculate on these issues. But there are indications that many ‘fashionable’ concertgoers relied on the press to provide them with critical opinions that they could assimilate and discuss with their friends. Alice Diehl, reflecting on the period when Davison was the music critic for The Times (1846-78), declared that many musical amateurs, ‘believing in the opinions of the cognoscenti, read their Times before hearing the artists or compositions criticized’.95

As we shall see, the number of devotees was in all likelihood quite small; and it is probable that not all amateurs absorbed the highly favourable stances of The Times or the Morning Post. Certainly the press seems to have believed it could exert influence

95 A. M. Diehl, Musical Memories (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1897), 141.
The taste of concertgoers, rather than that of the critical establishment, is hard to determine from press reports. Alongside the qualitative generalities extracted from the press reports may be placed the more objective reporting of the reactions of the concert-room audience. Such detail is important, because in the absence of other evidence it gives some indication as to whether the opinions of the London critics reflected those of the rest of the audience. We are told, for example, that certain movements were encored - from which we may infer a general appreciation of certain parts of the quartets; and the *Musical World* recounts that in 1837 the scherzo movements of opp. 131 and 135 set the audience ‘on the titter’ [R34], and that on encountering the scherzo of op.131 in 1839 it is ‘impossible, physically, to preserve a grave countenance, while this delightful sally is made’ [R60].

More revealing are reporters’ attempts to summarize the ‘spirit’ of the concert room, because these provide clues to overall audience reaction. The *Morning Post* reflects on op.135: ‘It is a thing of itself, appertaining to no class of composition with which we are acquainted. This appeared to be the general feeling of the room’ [R39], and even *The Times*, in an otherwise favourable report, is forced to admit that ‘when thoroughly understood by the performers, as well as the public’, it ‘will be much better liked than it seemed to be on this occasion’ [R41]. Remarks of this nature must be treated with caution, for it seems that writers were often tempted to interpret audience

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96 The *Athenaeum*, no.494 (15 April 1837), 268, suggested at the end of the 1837 season of Quartett Concerts that the managers should consider playing Ries’s chamber music for stringed instruments; the first concert of the following season included the first English performance of Ries’s quartet in F sharp minor, op.70 no.3.
reaction as a reinforcement of their own opinions. Compare for instance the claim of the Morning Post that the slow movement of op.132 was listened to ‘in the stillest silence, and looks and murmurings ... from the audience testified how ... the composer had touched the deepest recesses of the hearts of his hearers’ [R15] with the Spectator’s assessment of the same performance (here referring to the whole quartet) that ‘Great pains must have been taken with it by the performers; for they, like their auditors, must have often been at a loss for any key to its author’s meaning and intention’ [R18].

(iii) Individuals’ personal responses

We can, of course, never know exactly how most members of the audience, which probably numbered about 600,97 reacted in the concert room to the late quartets; or whether - or to what extent - they were influenced by what they read in newspapers and journals. Private accounts of the concerts are a useful way of sampling individual reactions, but few surviving memoirs record these specific performances, and those that do come from the established musical figures of the day.

John Ella, in his unpublished diary, notes his attendance at three of the performances. Of Mori’s rendition of movements from op.132 he writes:

I was much disappointed in the effect of two [sic] movements of Beethoven’s posthumous Quartet (including) the ringraziamente. The Trio I liked - the other was a dull termination of the evening’s entertainment. I did not like vastly, Ries’s Quintet [op.74 in B minor, for piano, violin, viola, cello and double bass] - it does not bear the unavoidable Comparison with Beethoven & Onslow here.98

Here is someone whose expectations of the late quartets - probably stemming from his

97 For discussion of audience sizes see Chapter IV, pp.122-5 above.

98 Ella, unpublished diary, entry for 7 April 1836; the ‘Trio’ is presumably a reference to the two andante sections, since the performance terminated with the slow movement.
experiences in Paris - were high. Ella is more enthusiastic about Blagrove’s concerts than he is about Mori’s, and on witnessing a performance of op.130 declares: ‘Was delighted with Beethoven’s Opera’, though he goes on to complain that ‘As in all the Quartets I have heard in Public there wanted passion in the performance’. 99

Though Ignaz Moscheles does not record attending the concerts in question, it is clear from his published diaries that he had a profound admiration for Beethoven’s late quartets. Moscheles was a progressive, always keen to introduce new or ‘modern’ works; he conducted the London première of the Missa Solemnis in 1832, and was central to the resuscitation of the ninth symphony between 1837 and 1843. 100 In the early 1830s, when the principal forum for the public performance of chamber music was the Philharmonic Society, he chided the society for its conservatism, remarking that ‘None of them would dare to tackle Beethoven’s last quartets’. 101 He was also active in Alsager’s Beethoven enterprises of the 1840s.

By contrast, William Gardiner was less receptive to the late music; in the second volume of Music and Friends (published in 1838) he remarks of Beethoven’s quartets: ‘my friend, M. Sleisinger [sic], of Paris, has published six posthumous ones, which, probably, may be understood fifty years hence’. 102 He also recalls being in London in about 1837 and attending performances, both in public and in private. At one of Dr

99 Ella, unpublished diary, entry for 22 March 1838.

100 Moscheles conducted six performances of the ninth symphony in London and developed a fruitful partnership with the violinist J. D. Loder, who regularly acted as leader of the orchestra; see Levy, Early Performances, 187-241.


102 Gardiner, Music and Friends, ii, 508.
Elliotson's private soirées: 'I heard one of the posthumous quartets of Beethoven, which are so difficult to be understood, played with consummate skill by Eliason, Guynemer, Ella, and Lucas'.

Referring to the public performances of the late quartets, he says:

Mr. Blagrove, who studied under Spohr, was the first, I believe, who introduced these unheard and mysterious compositions. So new are the ideas, and so inefficient are the notes to represent the author's design, that it requires a combination of talent and mind, little short of that of the composer, to bring out the intended effect. If the leader understands the author, it is requisite also that the second violin, tenor, and bass, should be equally sensitive, or the picture will never be shadowed out.

Gardiner was an experienced amateur chamber musician with a sincere reverence for Beethoven's chamber music, but was in his late 60s when he encountered the late quartets. To what extent Gardiner's reactions are typical of dilettante listeners cannot be determined; we may suppose that older concertgoers were generally less receptive to the late music than younger ones, but without further evidence we cannot test the theory. The existence of Gardiner's comments is important: they give at least one indication of one amateur's reactions to the late quartets, even though their embodiment in a published source may have served historiographically to feed the myth of the misunderstood late quartets.

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103 Gardiner, Music and Friends, ii, 688.
104 Gardiner, Music and Friends, ii, 691.
105 Gardiner claimed to have been one of the first in England to appreciate Beethoven's music; he played the viola in a performance of Beethoven's string trio in E flat, op.3, in Leicester in 1794, three years before the work was published in London (see Music and Friends, i, 112-14; iii, 142-7). Speaking generally of Beethoven's chamber music, and probably referring to the early-period works, he says: 'The quartettos of Beethoven, and sonatas for the piano-forte, contain the most refined instances of this author's imagination. In these pieces such new, deep-hidden, and holy thoughts occur, such perfect images of blessedness, such rare glimpses into the music of another world, that they cannot be appreciated or enjoyed but in private' (Music and Friends, ii, 690).
One further piece of evidence deserves evaluation: a letter from Alsager to Mendelssohn written in 1842, two years after performances of the late works had ceased at the Quartett Concerts. In the letter Alsager outlines his plans to present the late quartets at his private Sunday matinées, and describes the termination of performances at Blagrove's concerts in brutal terms. Clearly upset by the cessation of performances of the late quartets after 1840, he refers to a 'rejection by the public', and claims the quartets 'have never made any impression whatever, so much so that all intention of bringing them forward seems to be abandoned'.

He writes:

It is a sort of standing reproach to the English metropolis in my opinion that some of the greatest works the art of music has ever produced, not only meet with no sort of public encouragement but are nearly unknown to the members of the profession generally. I allude more particularly to the quartetts of Beethoven No.12 to 17, Schlesinger[']s Edition, published after his death & to the greater part of the Solo Sonatas for the piano forte of the same composer.

These remarks seem to contradict the suggestion made in other sources that the late quartets were not rejected out-of-hand, but were sympathetically received by a number (albeit a small number) of concertgoers. Alsager, of course, was one of those very sympathizers; but he seems to have taken little heart from knowing there was a nucleus of followers of 'late Beethoven' in London. As we know from his later achievements, his vision for the appreciation of Beethoven's music was extremely grand, and he may have had unrealistically high hopes for the Blagrove scheme. Moreover, the purpose of

106 The myth is perpetuated in many places; see for example David Ian Allsobrook, Liszt: My Travelling Circus Life (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1991), 78.

107 Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Dencke Mendelssohn, d.41, f.331; reproduced in Levy, 'Thomas Massa Alsager', 123.

108 Ibid.
Alsager's letter was to secure the services of Mendelssohn at his experimental 'late Beethoven' entertainments, and it is understandable that Alsager might have exaggerated the situation to make his own enterprise appear attractive and worthy, and to recruit Mendelssohn to his cause.

(iv) Number of performances

The reception of the late quartets in London can also be measured to some degree in terms of performance statistics (see Table 18 above). The attempt to bring forward one of the late quartets in March 1836 was followed by three further ventures that season, including the performance of op.130 in the less rarefied milieu of the Philharmonic. Furthermore, the quartets continued to be played in the ensuing four seasons. All of this suggests that there were sufficient indications of appreciation (or potential appreciation) among listeners for the performers to continue with their project.

By 1840 each of the late quartets, with the exception of the Grosse Fugue, had been presented. Opp.127 and 135 had been performed only once; op.130 had been performed four times (three times at chamber concerts), and opp.131 and 132 twice. These figures may point to the relative popularity of individual works, though pragmatic considerations - performers' preference for (or greater familiarity with) certain compositions, or the Mori-Blagrove rivalry - should be also borne in mind. At the same time, although it could be argued that the statistics do not indicate a huge groundswell of support, it should be remembered that during the period 1835-40 no single chamber work was performed more than eight times in all.109 What is curious is that after the première of op.127 in 1840 the late quartets ceased to be included in the Quartett

109 See Chapter VI, Table 11 above.
Concerts’ programmes.

(v) Miscellaneous evidence

The miscellaneous evidence gathered for this section of the case study underpins a discussion of why the late quartets were omitted from Blagrove’s programmes after 1840, and to what extent this was related to levels of reception. Looking at the break in performances and at Alsager’s letter to Mendelssohn quoted above, one is tempted to suggest that poor audience reception caused Blagrove to forego his project. However, although the break in performances suggests the works had insufficient general appeal among audiences, this alone cannot prove that the works were ill received; likewise, Alsager’s letter must be viewed with an understanding of its context. To reach a reasoned conclusion, a number of other factors need to be considered.

Audience behaviour is one such factor, as it might reasonably be assumed that if concertgoers had disliked the late quartets, they would have voted with their feet and stayed away from concerts that included those works. Since the Quartett Concerts were financed by the players themselves, economic factors could thus have influenced Blagrove’s decision not to include the late quartets in future programmes. But although records of concert receipts do not survive, the press states unanimously that attendances at the concerts in question were no different from attendances at others - all were given to full and crowded rooms. Furthermore, there is no suggestion that people temporarily vacated the concert hall during performances of the ‘late’ quartets - though Blagrove had, it seems, deliberately chosen to position the works centrally in programmes, to minimize disturbance and to capitalize on the attention levels of the listeners.

One possible explanation for Blagrove’s abandonment of the late quartets is that
the loss of the spirit of competition after 1839 (the year of Mori's death and of the subsequent cessation of his concerts) affected his choice of music and made the need to include progressive repertory less pressing. But this argument is only moderately convincing, for although Blagrove brought forward only one new work in 1840 (the op.127 quartet), 1841 and 1842 saw the first performances in England by his group of a number of new works, including Mendelssohn's D minor piano trio op.49 and instrumental pieces by Fesca, Onslow and Reber.

A more convincing explanation, backed up by a number of sources, is that Blagrove had expected enthusiastic appreciation from all quarters, and when this did not occur, lost heart. Looking back at the situation from 1844, The Times (in a piece possibly written by Alsager, though speaking here in a more positive tone) attributes Blagrove's renunciation of the late quartets to his lack of backbone in the face of criticism from a section of the audience; congratulating the Blagrove group for establishing the trend for chamber music concerts, the writer recalls that the players:

... produced, we believe, two or three of them [the late quartets], played at least in a tolerably correct manner, but the musical dandies of that time, who had taken their model of excellence from the "ancient concerts," and who shrunk from all music which cost them an effort to comprehend it, pronounced them a "bore," and the timid, sensitive Blagrove, who was not, moreover, on the best terms with his associates, gave up his original, admirable design, first as concerned these quartets, and then the whole system for the improvement of chamber music.110

Amateur detractors, it seems, outnumbered amateur devotees, and Blagrove had not sufficient vision or determination to continue with the project. As we have seen, the late quartets were not unequivocally praised, but nor were they unequivocally condemned; yet

110 The Times (18 May 1844); the final sentence refers to the break-up of Blagrove's quartet in 1842. See also comments on Blagrove's weakness of character in the obituary in The Athenaeum, no.2356 (21 Dec 1872), 818; Blagrove was acknowledged to have had great potential as a young man, but flaws in his temperament and a coldness in his playing were said to have prevented him from becoming a truly first-rate violinist.
the support of only certain members of the London press was not enough to buoy up the
deflated Blagrove. The decision not to continue with performances of the late quartets
after 1840 may therefore be attributed to a number of factors, one of which was the
adverse reaction of a section of the musical public, whose size remains to be determined.
Nevertheless, it is to Blagrove’s credit that the performances of 1836-40 kindled an
enthusiasm for the late quartets among a group of Beethoven advocates; their interests
were to be satisfied by the formation of the Beethoven Quartet Society a few years later.

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Overall, reactions of London audiences to the late quartets were clearly varied, making
it impossible to conclude an exclusively good reception or an exclusively bad one - but
the previously accepted wisdom that the works were badly received at their first
performances proves to have as limited applicability to the situation in early 19th-century
England as it does to the situations in Austria, Germany and elsewhere. As suggested
earlier, the perceived ‘success’ or ‘failure’ of the late quartets is in fact not the principal
issue here: far more interesting are the ways in which English listeners responded to the
music and, in particular, struggled to articulate what they had heard. The performances
themselves spawned a healthy and vigorous literature in the contemporary press and other
sources; it is a literature in which all writers were groping towards a new critical
language, and a literature which provides the modern historian with an intriguing
barometer of critical opinion and ‘localised’ reception.

4. Postscript: the ‘late’ quartets in London after 1840

With hindsight, we can see that the break in performances of the ‘late’ quartets after 1840
was only a temporary one, for they returned to concert rooms from the middle of the
decade, usually in performances led by famous foreign violinists. In May 1844 Beethoven’s C sharp minor quartet op.131 was performed by Ernst, Goffrie, Hill and Lucas at one of Macfarren and Davison’s chamber concerts. Two months later Sivori, Sainton, Hill and Rousselot gave the B flat quartet op.130 at their special concert at Hanover Square. The same quartet was also played during the third of Ella’s 1844 réunions at the ‘expressed wishes’ of Ella’s friend, the conductor Michael Costa; the performers on this occasion were the young Joseph Joachim, Goffrie, Hill and Hausmann. With the inauguration of the Beethoven Quartet Society the following year, the number of performances increased further, and by the end of the decade the quartets had worked their way into a number of concert series, including Lucas’s Musical Evenings, Cooper and Hancock’s concerts and the Musical Union matinées. Indeed, in the five seasons from 1845-6 to 1849-50 opp.127 and 130 were among the 30 most frequently performed works in the repertory; see Table 13 in Chapter VI above. Even the Grosse Fugue op.133 received its first English airing, at a special meeting of the Beethoven Quartet Society in June 1846. The final section of this chapter supplies an overview of reactions to the late quartets in London between 1844 and 1850. Like the preceding case-study it draws on various types of evidence, though here synthesized and presented in summary.

Overall, evidence points to a greater acceptance of the late quartets by audiences and critics during this second phase of performances. Not only are far more performances on record, but there are also indications in the press that the late works were no longer considered controversial, and that more and more people appeared to be

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111 See the Morning Post (1 May 1844).
coming to terms with them. As the decade progressed and the works’ novelty value declined, the amount of newsprint devoted to them began to wane: no longer could a performance of one of the late quartets guarantee a full critical account, in either the mainstream daily papers or specialist music journals.

Even so, some critics continued to express their reservations about the quartets, though there were, overall, fewer unfavourable reports than there had been in the 1830s. As before, those who found the works ‘difficult’ shrank from blaming Beethoven, insisting instead that their own musical or intellectual limitations prevented them from appreciating what were undoubtedly compositions of genius. Indeed, the critical language of later press reports was markedly similar to that of the preceding decade. An account of op.132 in the *Morning Post* ended thus: ‘It is not for us to presume to speak of the compositions of Beethoven otherwise than in a spirit of humility and investigation’. However, by the late 1840s the majority of critics had witnessed several performances of the late quartets, had written and/or read initial criticisms, and freely acknowledged that the quartets were becoming more comprehensible to concertgoers as well as themselves.

The foundation and subsequent success of the Beethoven Quartet Society, which was established largely to promote the late quartets and to lay prejudices about them to rest, contributed to and reflected this increasing acceptance by audiences. In particular, the society’s decision to issue press tickets in 1846 led to a temporary increase in reporting of its activities; that year the *Musical World*, under the editorship of Davison

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112 See, for example, the *Literary Gazette*, no.1579 (24 April 1847), 324; the *Morning Chronicle* (21 March 1848) and *The Times* (12 March 1848).

113 *Morning Post* (9 Feb 1850). The critic responsible for this report may be C. L. Gruneisen, or even Morris Barnett (1800-56).
(himself a member of the society), carried a series of lengthy leader-articles on the society's concerts, with musical examples and information taken from Hill's recently published programme notes.\textsuperscript{114}

Contemporary writers gave a number of reasons for improved audience reception. The most popular explanation was that the works had hitherto suffered from inadequate performances, and that only in the hands of the new generation of foreign virtuosos could the quartets be properly understood. This line of argument seems to have owed more to critics' predilection for foreign performers than it did to sound reasoning, since the performances of the preceding decade were, by general agreement, tolerably good. Only the writer in \textit{The Spectator} (almost certainly Holmes, who replaced Taylor in 1843), seems to have given a balanced account of the situation:

> It was a good idea to direct the talents, and especially the great execution of celebrated solo-players, into a channel so favourable to the art as Beethoven's Posthumous Quartets; for it is scarcely an exaggeration to say, that, with inferior execution or musical perception, the secret of these wild imaginings, and of the order and beauty which dwell in them, could never have been satisfactorily explained. The greatest difficulties are of course for the pioneers in this extraordinary style of music; but its capacity of being rendered intelligible and interesting once demonstrated, others may well be induced to follow in the same track, and the ideal of quartet-playing and composition must perforce advance.\textsuperscript{115}

There were also many claims that repeated hearings were in themselves leading to a more widespread acceptance of the quartets, and that 'the reading of a score while the music...
proceeds' was 'an aid to its due appreciation'.

Although aural familiarity with the music probably played a significant part in enhancing audience appreciation, the extent to which score-reading was actively and intelligently pursued is debatable. Berlioz, on witnessing a Beethoven Quartet Society concert in 1851, wrote:

Each evening's programme consists of three [quartets]; never less, and nothing else. Generally they belong to one of the three different periods of the composer's work; and it is always the last, that of the third period (the period of Beethoven's compositions alleged to be incomprehensible) which excites the greatest enthusiasm. You see there English people following the fanciful flight of the composer's thought in little pocket scores printed in London for this purpose, which might mean that several of them can read the score after a fashion. But I confess to doubts about the knowledge of these enthusiasts since I looked over the shoulder of one of them and caught him with his eyes fixed on page four while the performers were at page six.

Berlioz's testimony certainly appears more credible than the typical journalistic generalization - often made to reinforce a critic's own standpoint - that the late quartets were now fully understood by audiences. After all, even by 1850 few attempts had been made to explain the structure of the late quartets in technical terms. The Beethoven Quartet Society's official programmes were given over more to anecdote than to analysis, and the only technical account in English came from Ella, who published a rudimentary analysis of op.130, in which movements were described and their principal themes illustrated, in the Record of the Musical Union in 1845. Here he claimed:

In the latter works of Beethoven, the obstacle to a clear understanding of their meaning arises from the crowded state of their scoring, and the frequent introduction of contrapuntal forms incessantly changing their position, and distracting the attention of the listener.

Indeed, throughout his 'analysis' he principally sought to explain why passages might

\[116\] The Atlas, xxii, no.1087 (13 March 1847), 200.


\[118\] Record of the Musical Union (1845), no.8, p.56.
appear 'unfathomable at a first hearing'. The following is typical:

    This is also a delightful subject, clothed in a profusion of harmony that is apt to become too powerful for the leading melody, if not delicately subdued.\textsuperscript{119}

It thus seems likely that, even among devotees, levels of intellectual appreciation were relatively shallow, and that intense enthusiasm for the late quartets stemmed largely from listeners' instinctive appreciation of the music, or from the overwhelming cult for the composer in England at this period. At the same time it should be remembered that attendance at Beethoven Quartet Society concerts was small and select (probably between 100 and 150 people), and that outside the organization true enthusiasts were probably few and far between. In other words, the late quartets remained an acquired and sophisticated taste even among chamber-music audiences, and genuine comprehension of their technical construction was still some way off.

Most importantly, the 1840s saw the continuation of the deification of Beethoven, and the further reinforcement of an ideology of awe and reverence in respect of the late quartets. In this, the Beethoven Quartet Society played a crucial role: the language of its literature and the conduct of its meetings - at which Beethoven's stylistic journey from the early to the late quartets was emphasized - strengthened the image of the man and the late music. The expensive edition of the quartets, entitled \textit{Honor to Beethoven} and issued by Robert Cocks in 1846, made a further contribution. In addition, claims by certain critics of having gained a true appreciation of the late quartets only after initially living in darkness and misunderstanding had the overtones of a religious conversion experience. Indeed, the testimony of these neophytes can only have added to the emerging tradition that the works had been totally misunderstood at their first performances.

\textsuperscript{119} Record of the Musical Union (1845), no.8, p.57.
CONCLUSION

The foregoing discussion has been concerned with establishing a detailed picture of the rise of chamber concerts in London in the 1830s and 40s, and the development of a taste among concertgoers for the core Classical chamber-music repertory. The historical perspective of that picture, though, is ultimately limited, for although my research has revealed a growing and hitherto undocumented profusion of chamber concerts, it would be arrogant to claim that it can provide an absolute and quantitative reckoning: there are enough indications that certain events went unreported to suggest that the number of public chamber concerts was somewhat greater than that for which documentation is extant. As early as February 1836, for example, The Athenaeum reported that there were 'no less than four Quartett Concerts in different parts of this one city on Wednesday last';¹ but of two of these concerts no further documentary trace survives. In addition, entertainments in City taverns or suburban venues frequently went unnoticed in the (predominantly West End) press, and those that were occasionally reported in print provide tantalizing hints of what else may have been taking place in these areas of the capital. After all, lack of documentary evidence does not necessarily mean lack of activity. Nevertheless, the picture is clear enough for general patterns to emerge and preliminary conclusions to be drawn.

¹ The Athenaeum, no.433 (13 Feb 1836), 130.
The rapid growth in the number and type of chamber concerts in London came at a time when several new species of concert were entering the musical scene, and the number of musical entertainments on offer was increasing dramatically. Several of them, for instance the Sacred Harmonic Society’s oratorio performances at Exeter Hall (from 1836), Philippe Musard’s Promenade Concerts at the Drury Lane Theatre (1838) and Louis Jullien’s Concerts d’hiver at the Lyceum Theatre (1841), offered tickets at low prices and looked to the lower middle-classes for their patronage. Chamber concerts, whose appeal was probably always more limited, stood apart from such developments. With one or two exceptions, admission prices for chamber concerts in both the West End and the City remained relatively high throughout the period, ensuring social and intellectual elitism, since only wealthy music-lovers and those interested members of the profession who could afford tickets or, as often happened, were given free admission, attended. In many respects musical élitism was linked to social élitism, particularly by the highly manipulative press, which stressed the sophistication of musical taste while indicating that the concerts were patronized by ‘rank and fashion’, and often named individual aristocratic subscribers.

Although the motives that brought a certain number of people to chamber concerts may well have been social rather than musical, it is reasonable to suppose, given the interest among amateur musicians for chamber music and small-scale music-making, that most attended because they craved musical enjoyment and edification. Indeed, the crystallization of a small group of serious chamber-music-lovers, familiar with the core repertory of ‘Viennese Classics’, is one of the most striking developments of the period. Yet even this serious-minded audience had its sub-groups. In the West End the cult-like
meetings of the Beethoven Quartet Society, at which three of Beethoven’s quartets were performed in succession, appear to have attracted several trained musicians, including composers, leading orchestral musicians and concert pianists, whereas the concerts of the Musical Union, also involving three serious chamber works, drew their support mainly from the leisured classes. These West End chamber-music-lovers were complemented by a similar group of City devotees, whose appetite for serious music had first been whetted by the enterprises of Dando in 1836 and were sustained by the Quartett Concerts and other City entertainments in the 1840s. Inevitably there was some overlap between these different audiences, though overall they were probably fairly discrete social groups that simply shared similar musical tastes and values.

It is also worth stressing that in the space of 15 years not only had the main corpus of Classical chamber music been introduced and absorbed into the London repertory, but there had been numerous efforts to heighten audiences’ familiarity with, and understanding of, much of the music. Many pieces were repeatedly performed. Concentrated listening was encouraged at Musical Union and Beethoven Quartet Society meetings, and intellectual discourse during intervals was promoted at many other concerts (for example those given by Madame Dulcken and by the Society of British Musicians). At the Musical Union and Beethoven Quartet Society musical literature was provided, both before and after the event, to reinforce listening and nurture understanding. The message was clear: chamber music was an acquired and sophisticated taste that gave rich and boundless rewards to all who persevered with it.

The majority of serious chamber concerts were organized and promoted as subscription series by the musicians themselves, usually under the leadership of one or two key performers (e.g. Mori and Lindley’s Classical Chamber Concerts; Lucas’s
Musical Evenings). Only a few concert series, such as the Musical Union and the Beethoven Quartet Society, were directed by non-performing managers; in the case of Ella and Alsager, both men had strong personal missions to promote the repertory itself. Although it is undoubtedly correct to recognize motives of musical altruism among concert-givers, the role of the marketplace cannot, in most cases, be ignored. It is true that in founding the Beethoven Quartet Society Thomas Alsager was interested in establishing a private and select club and was motivated mainly by musical considerations; but the majority of concert-givers were musicians who - their intense enthusiasm for the repertory notwithstanding - were almost certainly guided by more humdrum concerns: namely, self-promotion and profit. This appears to have been the case with composers such as Bennett, Molique, Neate and Osborne, whose concerts served to promote their own music and reputations as performers, while for most orchestral musicians the possibility of being hired for specialized concert work in the winter months must surely have been welcomed with relish. Indeed, by mounting his/her own series of chamber concerts a musician could also stand to gain publicity for his/her teaching practice, in addition to modest ticket receipts.

The group of enterprising young musicians, including Blagrove and Lucas, who lit the touchpaper in 1835-6 had certainly sensed a 'concert market' that was ready to be exploited; in doing so they appeared able to balance musical considerations with commercial ones. Their enthusiasm for the repertory itself is demonstrated by the zeal with which they introduced so many new and demanding works, including Beethoven's late quartets, in their initial seasons; but they were careful not to alienate audiences and maintained a varied programme formula that included a liberal dose of songs and duets and occasional popular instrumental items, such as trio sonatas by Corelli or quintets by
Onslow. In other words, musicians' own enthusiasm for chamber music - while a potent and important force, especially among string players - was only one part of the concert-giving equation. Most people who put on concerts were freelance musicians whose financial well-being depended on their success in the marketplace; and financial gain or any number of ulterior motives were also critical forces behind their activities in the concert hall.

Ella’s motives for establishing the Musical Union are especially interesting and complex. His deep-seated love of chamber music and his desire, which bordered on a sense of mission, to witness it well performed to sympathetic and intelligent audiences was underpinned by a strongly ambitious streak and an ability to manipulate his connections with the aristocracy to improve his own social and musical status. The Musical Union proved to be the way forward for Ella’s artistic and personal desires and eventually - after initial teething troubles - it became a profit-making concern that brought him a good deal of power and influence; most importantly, Ella’s chamber-music club enabled him to make a significant contribution to the shaping of musical taste in England.

By the late 1840s the shape of the modern chamber recital - a concert containing no more than three ‘serious’ instrumental items and no vocal music - had begun to emerge. The period as a whole, however, was characterized more by the diversity of its programming than by a trend towards one uniform format. Mixed concerts continued to flourish well up to 1850, and were particularly popular with the ever-increasing number of pianists giving chamber concerts; at the same time, concerts entirely of solo piano music inched their way into the concert season. Some concerts contained occasional lightweight items, some did not. In addition there was much experimentation: at Dulcken’s Soirées Musicales piano concertos were introduced and works that involved
a new type of double bass, the basso di camera, were played, while at Willy's Classical Concerts string quartets and quintets were performed by members of his string band, with three players to a part.

In spite of this diversity of genres and programme formats, works by the Classical trinity of Beethoven, Haydn and Mozart formed the bedrock of the serious chamber repertory, and by 1850 almost all the works that now comprise the Classical chamber canon had been assimilated into the London repertory. Beethoven's name, in particular, featured on just about every concert programme, and the overwhelming cult for his music in England produced the right conditions for some of his most challenging works, most notably the 'late' quartets, to be introduced and gradually absorbed.

The tradition of including songs and duets in any type of concert was a longstanding one, and it seems that the majority of concert-givers simply accepted the need to include a few vocal items in every programme; indeed, this policy may well have made the crucial difference between making a loss and securing a profit. Moreover, the billing of works involving the piano, novelty repertory and, in particular, lightweight items were important parts of any strategy for attracting a wider audience; likewise the announcement that a famous visiting violinist - such as Joachim, Ernst or Vieuxtemps - would lead quartets was sure to broaden a concert's appeal. Certainly, the advertised presence both of famous singers and instrumental soloists playing intellectually undemanding repertory seems to have continued to be the only guarantee of attracting substantial numbers of concertgoers to a chamber concert; at the Musical Union, the director's annual benefit concert became a predictable pot-pourri of songs and short, often flashy, instrumental items executed by a galaxy of famous names.

It is clear therefore that even by 1850 concerts of ensemble chamber music alone -
in particular Lucas's Musical Evenings, the Beethoven Quartet Society and the Musical Union - were considered recherché entertainments by many London concertgoers, and that the broad base of audiences who attended serious chamber concerts preferred a mixture of musical styles; in particular many were attracted to concerts given by pianists and/or to those that were relieved by a sprinkling of songs or even an occasional light instrumental item. Nevertheless, the more erudite concerts managed to function with relatively small audiences, and their organizers evolved their own methods of subsidizing or increasing limited subscriptions. For Lucas this meant giving concerts at his home and perhaps adopting other measures; for Ella it meant creating an image of social and intellectual desirability, so as to whip up and sustain demand for subscriptions, as well as the holding of an annual benefit concert; for Rousselot, left to manage the Beethoven Quartet Society after Alsager's death, it eventually meant reducing the cost of subscriptions and broadening the repertory.

That such concerts were the exception rather than the rule at this period should not be seen as an indictment of English musical taste. Nor should the serious enterprises of Puzzi, Moscheles, Dulcken, Bennett, Willy and many others be glossed over simply because, by containing songs and duets, they do not conform to modern notions of a chamber recital. They are as important a part of the picture - both in terms of the music played and the audiences they attracted - as those shorter recitals without vocal items. In this respect it is unfortunate that so many previous surveys have isolated the Musical Union and the Beethoven Quartet Society at the expense of most other concert series, perhaps for the very reason that the former concerts are closest in design to late 20th-century chamber recitals. However, in an age when financial insecurity was the norm for most professional musicians, the need to ensure commercial success was a vital factor for
any potential concert-giver. That is not to deny the passion for chamber music that informed these concert-givers’ activities; but to view their enterprises without the perspective of the marketplace is to misunderstand the context of musical life in early Victorian London.

Future considerations

The patterns and conclusions established in this dissertation are, of course, only preliminary and will, I hope, eventually be set in a wider historical context. Questions of audience constitution and the economics, programming and press reporting of chamber concerts, for example, could usefully be considered in relation to other London concert organizations of the period. In particular, it would be instructive to see how the evolving chamber repertory compared with other identifiable local repertories (orchestral, operatic etc.), and to review the contemporary reception of Beethoven’s late quartets in terms not only of his remaining chamber works but also of his other output, especially the symphonies. Furthermore, one could extend the study of Beethoven reception to other composers whose works made a significant contribution to the London chamber repertory, such as Mozart, Haydn, Onslow - the last is an interesting case in view of his declining popularity in the 1840s - and Mendelssohn.

Inevitably, curiosity begs the question ‘What happened after 1850?’, and it would be worthwhile to extend this investigation of the growth of chamber concerts into the second half of the century to see how trends developed and changes came about. The success of Chappell’s Monday and Saturday ‘Popular’ Concerts at St James’s Hall (1859-94) and the broadening of the social base of chamber-music audiences offers one fascinating avenue of inquiry, as does the sustained activity of the socially élite Musical
Union, which continued until 1881. In addition, there are many issues surrounding the evolving chamber-music repertory and its reception in England that could meaningfully be addressed. Much late-19th-century chamber music was slow to gain an established place in the repertory, and the reception of works by German composers such as Schumann and Brahms may well provide further insights into English musical taste. Similarly, a discussion of the unfolding ‘critical’ reception history of Beethoven’s late quartets - with emphasis on the ways in which later generations reacted to earlier critical judgments of the works - would enable the ‘localised’ reception study presented in Chapter VII to be set in a fuller historical context. The gradual evolution of a chamber-music canon, and in particular the role of critical opinion and value judgments (not just in concert reports but also in programme notes, essays and reviews) in establishing which works were to be given special value and authority, also merits further scrutiny.

My hope is that the work presented here will stimulate others to increase our knowledge and understanding of concert-giving in 19th-century London and of contemporary attitudes towards music. The growing number of serious, historical studies of musical life in 19th-century England, coupled with the recent trend among musicologists to treat matters of musical canon and reception, provides a convenient historical springboard and an appropriate intellectual context for further research and reflection.
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