



# Beethoven: The Music and the Life

*Lewis Lockwood*

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## Beethoven: The Music and the Life Lewis Lockwood

This brilliant portrayal weaves Beethoven's musical and biographical stories into their historical and artistic contexts. Lewis Lockwood sketches the turbulent personal, historical, political, and cultural frameworks in which Beethoven worked and examines their effects on his music. "The result is that rarest of achievements, a profoundly humane work of scholarship that will—or at least should—appeal to specialists and generalists in equal measure" (Terry Teachout, *Commentary*). Finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. "Lewis Lockwood has written a biography of Beethoven in which the hours that Beethoven spent writing music—that is, his methods of working, his interest in contemporary and past composers, the development of his musical intentions and ideals, his inner musical life, in short—have been properly integrated with the external events of his career. The book is invaluable." —Charles Rosen "Lockwood writes with poetry and clarity—a rare combination. I especially enjoyed the connection that he makes between the works of Beethoven and the social and political context of their creation—we feel closer to Beethoven the man without losing our wonder at his genius." —Emanuel Ax "The magnum opus of an illustrious Beethoven scholar. From now on, we will all turn to Lockwood's *Beethoven: The Music and the Life* for insight and instruction." —Maynard Solomon "This is truly the Beethoven biography for the intelligent reader. Lewis Lockwood speaks in his preface of writing on Beethoven's works at 'a highly accessible descriptive level.' But he goes beyond that. His discussion of the music, based on a deep knowledge of its context and the composition processes behind it, explains, elucidates, and is not afraid to evaluate; while the biographical chapters, clearly and unfussily written, and taking full account of the newest thinking on Beethoven, align closely with the musical discussion. The result is a deeply perceptive book that comes as close as can be to presenting the man and the music as a unity." —Stanley Sadie, editor, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* "Impressive for both its scholarship and its fresh insights, this landmark work—fully accessible to the interested amateur—immediately takes its place among the essential references on this composer and his music." —Bob Goldfarb, KUSC-FM 91.5 "Lockwood writes like an angel: lucid, enthusiastic, stirring and enlightening. Beethoven has found his ablest interpreter." —Jonathan Keates, *The Spectator* "There is no better survey of Beethoven's compositions for a wide audience." —Michael Kimmelman, *The New York Times Book Review*

## Beethoven: The Music and the Life Details

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# **From Reader Review Beethoven: The Music and the Life for online ebook**

## **Angela says**

Still reading - very good so far

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## **Daniel says**

It's not Soloman, but it is very good. I remember the part on the 9th being really great. I think I never enjoyed that symphony so much as when I listened to it after reading Lockwood. Though I have never heard a good performance live. Just one in New York at Lincoln Center- sounds like a good start right?- in which people were bolting for the door during the finale.

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## **James F says**

Not really a biography, although it has biographical chapters; basically, a chronological discussion of the works.

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## **Christopher says**

Good textbook for a course on Beethoven. Lots of detail on his life and stuff.

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## **David says**

This book is a great achievement and will be of interest to people who want to further their knowledge of music and the possibilities in music and all of what music can be when its in the hands of a genius like Beethoven. One particular quote i like is "its bones (Beethoven's music) have a strange ability to regain flesh and blood when new generations are given access to its best works and are moved by the intelligence and humane values they embody.

Another great quote in the book is by ETA Hoffman - "Since it became fashionable to employ music only as a secondary amusement, to drive out boredom, everything now has to be light, pleasing, enjoyable - that means, without any significance and depth. Unfortunately there are enough composers walking the earth who go along with the spirit of the times, and so there are plenty of easy treats to be had. Also many fairly decent musicians complain about the difficulty of understanding Beethoven's works, and even Mozart's, this however is due to a subjective imbecility which does not permit them to perceive and grasp the whole in its parts. Instead they praise the clarity of weak compositions". That quote above could easily be said about todays music, and the way people today praise the clarity of weak music.

The best thing about this book is that it will implore you to go to your CD collection and listen to the music that he's referring to and discover something new about Beethoven, and if you don't have any Beethoven why the bloody hell don't you.

I must also make a special mention for the last 140 pages or so when it deals with Beethoven's late period, the holy grail of music, the last 5 piano sonatas, Missa Solemnis, the 9th and the 5 late string quartets. Timeless music and as it states in the book music that hasn't been equaled since. Beethoven was right when he said it was music for another age.

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## **Robin Friedman says**

Lewis Lockwood's "Beethoven: the Music and the Life" (2003) is an outstanding introduction to Beethoven, aimed at the nonspecialist rather than the scholar. Those readers who are new to Beethoven's music will find this book a guide to his major work. Readers familiar with Beethoven's music and life will find much to learn and enjoy as well. I found this a book to be savored. Reading the book, I think, will encourage the reader to explore further the inexhaustible richness of Beethoven's music.

Lockwood concentrates on Beethoven's compositions and on their historical and musical contexts. He does not offer a full biography of Beethoven but rather offers only sufficient broad outline of Beethoven's life to give a sense of the composer and to allow the reader to reflect upon the relationship between the life of Beethoven and his music. Lockwood himself has some interesting things to say on various views of this relationship. (pp 17-21)

Lockwood sees Mozart and Bach as Beethoven's primary musical influences. As a young composer, Beethoven both set out to learn from Mozart without becoming an imitator. His early works are greatly influenced by Mozart, Lockwood argues, until Beethoven breaks away and finds his own voice in what Lockwood terms Beethoven's second maturity. As Beethoven continued to compose, his work becomes more influenced by the counterpoint of Bach. (Beethoven had played Bach's "well-tempered clavier" as a boy of twelve.) Bach's influence becomes increasingly apparent in the close-textured and fugal works of Beethoven's third maturity.

Lockwood basically organizes his book in terms of what he describes as Beethoven's first, second and third maturities of musical development. In each case, he begins with brief details of Beethoven's life, followed by a substantial overview of Beethoven's work and influences in each period, followed by a description of some of the major individual works of the period. For the period of Beethoven's first maturity, Lockwood finds the apex of Beethoven's work in the six opus 18 string quartets.

For Beethoven's first and third maturity Lockwood approaches the works chronologically. Interestingly, for the second maturity, Lockwood organizes Beethoven's work by type: the symphonies, concertos, piano sonatas, string quartets, to account for Beethoven's tendency during this time to work on many various compositions simultaneously.

Some of the individual works receive little discussion in Lockwood's approach, but this is more than balanced by his excellent overviews of Beethoven's varying styles. Of the early and middle maturity works, Lockwood discusses well Beethoven's third through eighth symphonies, particularly the Eroica. But he does not see Beethoven's work at this time as predominantly "heroic" in tone. Unlike some writers, Lockwood gives good attention to Beethoven's lyrical, melodic, and reflective writing during his second maturity as exemplified by the even-numbered symphonies and by works such as the violin concerto and the cello sonata

in A, opus 69. Lockwood emphasizes as well the lyrical aspect of Beethoven's writing in his detailed consideration of Beethoven's song-cycle "An Die Ferne Geliebte" (to the distant beloved), opus. 98 (pp.344-46) and in his discussion of Beethoven's songs. (pp 274-279).

The compositions of Beethoven's third maturity receive the most individualized and detailed attention in this book. Lockwood considers the Hammerklavier piano sonata and the opus 101 piano sonata (somewhat less attention is given to the final three sonatas), the Missa Solemnis, Diabelli variations, and each of the five final string quartets and the great fugue. Lockwood clearly loves this difficult music and impresses its character well upon the reader. But he gives his fullest discussion to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Lockwood gives a detailed musical discussion of each of the four movements of this work, not merely its choral finale which sets Schiller's "Ode to Joy"; and he places the work well in its historical situation. He admirably rejects the attempts in some modern writers to politicize or deconstruct this great symphony.

In the Ninth, Lockwood shows, Beethoven combined two tendencies which tend to separate in some of his works: his tendency to write works to appeal to a large public on the one hand, and his tendency to write artistically elevated and striving works on the other hand. Lockwood's treatment of the Ninth is one of the highlights of his book.

Lockwood has written a basic book, but probably the best overall book that will increase the reader's understanding of Beethoven and his music. May this book lead its readers to explore and to deepen their appreciation of Beethoven's great music.

Robin Friedman

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### **Barnaby Thieme says**

This is an extraordinary book and an invaluable guide to the works of Beethoven written for the intelligent layperson. He leads the reader through the history of Beethoven's major works and plots the course of his development from his early days worshiping at the altar of Haydn and Mozart to his eventual discovery of older ways of organizing musical ideas in the works of Handel and Bach. Lockwood brings the music to life with an enlivening analysis of structure and content that presupposes only a basic familiarity with the principle elements of music theory such as key modulation.

I am in Lockwood's debt for discovering through this work many of the Maestro's lesser-known works such as the superb cantata "Fair and Prosperous Voyage". He also helped me to understand at last some of the more challenging later works of Beethoven including the final piano sonatas and the string quartets.

While Lockwood focuses on music he also provides a highly readable and moving account of Beethoven's life, which can only bind the listener that much more dearly to his magnificent music. This is the kind of book that leaves me sorrowful when I find the last page, and I look forward to reading it again in the future.

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### **Simon says**

It's rather technical, written for people who know a lot about music. The biographical parts are less Freudian than Maynard Solomon, but it's not comprehensive enough to be an all-purpose biography. The author has

strongly negative opinions about works where Beethoven stuck to the Viennese model, like the first symphony, the Op. 18, No. 3 string quartet, etc., which one might find irritating if one likes those pieces. Still overall it's worth reading, particularly if one has already read Solomon and wants to focus more on the music.

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### **Michael Van Beek says**

Focused more on Beethoven's musical progression than his life biography, so if you don't know much about music you might not enjoy it as much. As such, he emphasizes Beethoven's influences far more than others - Mozart, Haydn, Bach and even Handel. Great analysis of the Ninth too.

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### **John says**

I couldn't get thorough this one. The evaluation of the music is too much for the common reader. It might be more interesting for someone with a deep knowledge of classical music.

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### **Michael says**

I honestly expected this book to be a memoir more than anything, but the focus is on the works with the necessary context behind them more than anything. As a music student, this is vital information - the book is now filled with post-its and underlinings, and I plan on referring to it in the future whenever working on the sonatas and chamber music it describes. There is little more to say about it than that. Even for the non-musician it is a fascinating book, though it is helpful to have some knowledge of music theory and pretty much the complete works available to access while reading.

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### **Mary says**

The title of this book is rather misleading. It's called "The Music and the Life," but it's really just about the music. Lockwood does give some context for the music, which is nice -- certainly, none of Beethoven's pieces were written in a vacuum, and the social and political events around him impacted what he wrote. But this is touched on only very briefly. Some really significant events in Beethoven's life are completely glossed over, like his romantic failures or his conflicts with his brothers and his nephew. So do not read this if you're looking for a Beethoven biography -- it is not one.

But if you're someone with a rather advanced understanding of music and you want to learn more about Beethoven's major works, this is the book for you. I'll admit that some of the discussion of the music was over my head. Lockwood was a professor of music at Harvard, and he writes like his expected audience is those Harvard music majors. There's a lot of music theory in here. This is a book for people who enjoy reading long paragraphs about key changes and can understand sentences like "A central feature of the subject is its division into two parts: the four-note head motive "a," with its motion 5-7-1-6 (bringing a focus on the semitones 5-6 and 7-1); and its tail, the "b" motive, a gradual turning motive around scale step 5 (G#)." I can't say I always enjoyed just reading though this book, but I'm glad that I own it. Because it's so

heavy with detailed music theory about the pieces, the book works better as a reference book to turn to when you listen to a Beethoven piece and want to better understand its structure.

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## David says

"This passage has been stolen from Mozart..."

Lewis Lockwood's *Beethoven: The Music and the Life* is a fabulous book. I cannot say enough about it. While he gives the reader a short biographical sketch of Beethoven's life and times, Lockwood concentrates primarily on the music, analyzing nearly every work Beethoven produced. For the major works these analysis' can be four, five, six pages or more. Lockwood's great gift is the ability to explain these mostly instrumental works in language the general reader can understand and appreciate. His analysis always adds to one's listening pleasure, even with works I've been listening to for years and know by heart. After reading Lockwood, one approaches the piece with a fresh ears and a new perspective.

Of course, it's taking me forever to get through the book. Once Lockwood starts discussion of a work it does not do to simply continue reading. I have to listen to the work, often twice, once while reading Lockwood's analysis, the second time without. Yesterday, for instance, I read Lockwood's takes on the 4th, 6th, and 8th symphonies, works I am not as familiar with as the 3rd, 5th, and 7th. I then listened to each while reading Lockwood's breakdown of each. I then re-listened to the 4th and 6th, before I'd had enough music for the day. Three hours later and I had covered about twelve pages. At this rate, I'll finish the book by June.

Which is fine. I am enjoying my foray into classical music immensely. I love this stuff. My goal at the start of the year was to learn, really learn, one new piece of classical music per week. I shortly thereafter modified the goal to learn 50 new works this year, as I could not listen to simply a single piece of music during a week. I'm mixing it up, listening to what I want when I want. I may listen to fifteen or twenty works in a given week. Eventually, I'll winnow down what I like the most, re-listening over and over until I've got it down, and the work will be added to my list of favorites, i.e. it will become part of my life, a piece of music I'll listen to for the rest of my days.

One of the most interesting parts of Lockwood's analysis is when he explains devices Beethoven used that had been used earlier by other composers, usually Mozart and Haydn, who both had great influence over Beethoven's development (Haydn was actually Beethoven's teacher in 1792, though it was a disappointing relationship for them both.) That Mozart and Haydn influenced each other is without doubt. Though Haydn was 24 years senior to Mozart, they became great friends and admirers once Mozart arrived in Vienna at the age of 25 in 1781. It can be argued that Mozart, child prodigy that he was, did not become a truly great composer until he came under the influence of Haydn. Almost all of the works considered Mozart's greatest came after he arrived in Vienna and his friendship with Haydn. Was Haydn the deciding factor in Mozart's musical maturity? It can also be argued that Haydn, prolific as he had been for the previous twenty years, did not achieve his full greatness until his association with Mozart - Haydn's most admired works were written during the 1780s and 1790s, when he was in his fifties and sixties. Like Bird and Magic, and Evert and Navratilova, they pushed each other to greater and greater heights, heights they never would have achieved otherwise, and in the process they defined the classical style. When we talk about the "classical style" we are really talking about the music of Haydn and Mozart and what they achieved: the development of the symphony, the concerto, and the string quartet; the organization of the orchestra; the sonata allegro form, especially, but also the formalization of minuet and trio, rondo, and theme and variations. But we mean something more when we invoke the term "classical style" than simply form and structure. It has to do



with order, rationality, taste, and a particular emotional restraint, i.e. Enlightenment ideals brought to the musical world. Haydn and Mozart were children of the Enlightenment and their music reflects those ideals.

So here is my question, the one this review was originally supposed to be about. Mozart died at the age of 35 in 1791. Beethoven arrived in Vienna as a 21 year old a year later, brimming with talent and ideas. Had Mozart lived until the age of 70, he would have died in 1826, a year before Beethoven. If this were the case, how would Mozart's music have been affected by Beethoven's? The title of this review comes from an early score of Beethoven's in which he wrote, "This entire passage has been stolen from the Mozart Symphony in C." Can we conceive of a time in our hypothetical world when a fifty-some year old Mozart would have written on one of his own scores, "This passage has been stolen from Beethoven"?

Certainly Mozart, genius that he was, would have recognized Beethoven's own genius. But would he have approved of Beethoven's music? Would he have been dismayed at the direction Beethoven took the music and the forms that Mozart helped to create? Beethoven, after all, was not a child of the Enlightenment. That world was dying fast during his adolescence. The French Revolution would put a nail in its coffin, and Napoleon would shovel the dirt on top of it. Beethoven was a man born of the heroic age, a great admirer of Napoleon (until he declared himself emperor) and of himself. Indeed, Beethoven thought of himself and his music as heroic, an opinion that likely would have baffled Haydn and Mozart. Certainly Beethoven used the forms and structures defined by his predecessors, but he used them for his own expressive purposes, playing with them here, distorting them until they were almost unrecognizable there. But what is more is the emotional extremes that is often present in Beethoven's music. What would Mozart have thought?

On page 170 of his book, Lockwood excerpts this from a letter Mozart wrote to his father in 1781:

[P:]assions, violent or not, must never be expressed to the point of disgust, and music must never offend the ear, even in the most horrendous situations, but must always be pleasing...in other words, always remain music.

Lockwood then goes on to explain:

Clearly enough [Mozart's:] music, in all its facility, formal perfection, and wide range of expression, conveys the sense that its emotional life is contained within well-defined boundaries. Raising the notion of emotional moderation, balance, and restraint to the level of an aesthetic category, we can argue that it is a primary factor in Mozart's aesthetic philosophy.

There, in a nutshell, is the essence of the classical style. Many considered Beethoven's music vulgar. Would Mozart have? Would he have rebelled? Or adapted? Would the man with such a philosophy as described above accept Beethoven's innovations and extremes?

I say, yes. Mozart was no dogmatist. He was always open to new ideas, or old ones (Mozart was greatly influenced by Bach, declaring upon hearing a Bach motet during a visit to Leipzig in 1789, "This is something to learn from!") He took the style of his day and transformed it, perfected it, made it more beautiful. He also was an innovator in his own right, particularly with his operas and piano concertos, where he more or less defined double-exposition form. And, as the quote about Bach above shows, Mozart was

always ready to learn. Within months of Haydn's groundbreaking Op. 33 string quartets, Mozart had produced his own batch of six quartets in the same style, dedicating them to Haydn (the six "Haydn Quartets"). He had an ear for greatness and he no doubt would have recognized Beethoven's greatness. He would have learned from Beethoven and used Beethoven's own innovations for his own purposes. As for emotional expressiveness, Mozart did after all compose both the G Minor symphony and the D Minor piano concerto. While most of us think of lightness and beauty when regarding Mozart's music, he was not afraid to express emotional turmoil in his music. So my own answer to the question of whether Mozart would have been influenced by Beethoven is an emphatic yes, making Mozart's early death even more sorrowful.

You can hear the first movement of Mozart's D Minor Piano Concerto at my blog, [here](#).

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### **David Zussman says**

The amount of creative work that Beethoven achieved during his lifetime is astonishing. The book was great, but mostly I felt like Lockwood couldn't keep up with the sheer volume of work that Beethoven put forth during his lifetime. Amazing works like the Pathetique sonata are relegated to 2/3s of a page because he can spend only a limited time with each work before he has to move on.

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### **Lydia says**

This is an extraordinary book, a wonderful biography written for today's reader (c2003). Beethoven kept meticulous sketchbooks all his life, and was a very hard worker, of course, always profitably employed. I learned so much about his life and how to approach and learn from his music. My favorite quote is from a letter he wrote at age 41 in 1812 to a young admirer, Emilie: "Persevere, do not only practice your art, but endeavor also to fathom its inner meaning; it deserves this effort. For only art and science can raise men to the level of gods...The true artist has no pride. He sees unfortunately that art has no limits." Although this is my first biography of a composer, I am amazed Lockwood has written one of the two best acclaimed biographies of Beethoven, now, two centuries after Beethoven's death. So many have tried. A very useful accomplishment.

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