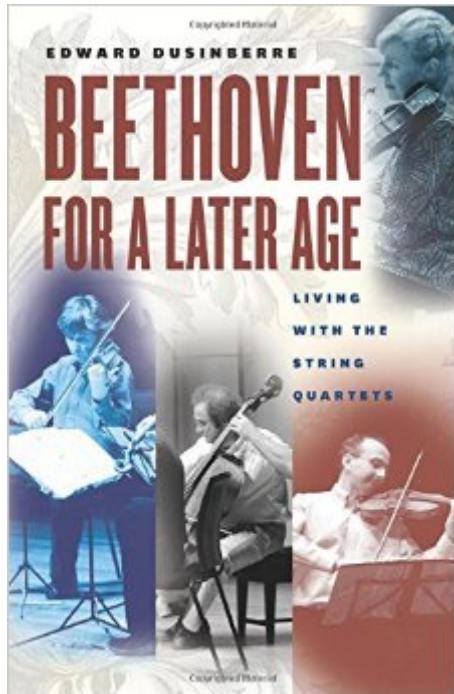


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Beethoven For A Later Age: Living With The String Quartets



Synopsis

Beethoven's sixteen string quartets are some of the most extraordinary and challenging pieces of music ever written. Originally composed and performed between 1798 and 1826, they have inspired artists of all kinds "not only musicians" and have been subject to endless reinterpretation. But what is it like to personally take up the challenge of these compositions, not only as a musician, but as a member of a quartet, where each player has ideas about style and expression? To answer this question, Edward Dusinberre, first violinist of the renowned Takács Quartet, offers a rare peek inside the workings of his ensemble, while providing an insightful history of the compositions and their performance. Founded in Hungary in 1975 and now based in Boulder, Colorado, the Takács is one of the world's preeminent string quartets, and performances of Beethoven have been at the center of their work together for over forty years. Using the history of both the Takács Quartet and the Beethoven quartets as a foundation, Beethoven for a Later Age provides a backstage look at the daily life of a quartet, showing the necessary creative tension between individual and group and how four people can at the same time forge a lasting artistic connection and enjoy making music together over decades. The key, Dusinberre reveals, to a quartet crafting its own sound is in balancing continuity with change and experimentation "a theme that lies at the heart of Beethoven's remarkable compositions. In an accessible style, suitable for novices and chamber music enthusiasts alike, Dusinberre illuminates the variety and contradictions of Beethoven's quartets, which were composed against the turbulent backdrop of the Napoleonic Wars and their aftermath, and he brings the technical aspects of the music to life. Beethoven for a Later Age vividly shows that creative engagement with Beethoven's radical and brilliant quartets continues to be as stimulating now as it was for its first performers and audiences. Musicians and music lovers will be intrigued by Dusinberre's exploration of the close collaboration at the heart of any great performance. Â

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Customer Reviews

In this book Edward Dusinberre provides tremendous insight into the mind of a musician and the life of a string quartet. In the film "A Late Quartet," Christopher Walken describes the extraordinary complexity of performing Beethoven's Opus 131 string quartet. Beethoven demanded that the entire piece - seven movements - be played without pause. Inevitably, Walken's character explains, the instruments fall out of tune, forcing each musician to adapt his/her own playing to the demands of the instruments and the playing of the other musicians. In the film, this is a powerful metaphor for life and Dusinberre does a beautiful job of making the same point through his memoir/reflection. He describes the music he plays, and the people with whom he plays it, in loving detail. He shows a remarkable awareness, often lacking in intensely creative people, of self-reflection and self-criticism. The lesson, or one of them, that he seems to have learned in his years with the Takacs Quartet is that life is a struggle between our own self-regard and our regard and affection for those closest to us - but a richly rewarding one if we approach it with the right spirit. I am not very knowledgeable about music technically. I can't read music and have a very difficult time following conversations or writing that focus on composition or technique, but I was still very much able to follow and enjoy Dusinberre's style (though doubtless I would have gotten even more out of it if knew more). This is an excellent book and I highly recommend it for anyone who is interested, as I am, in the life of the creative mind even if, and often especially because, I don't possess the same talents as the author. I would also recommend that anyone interested in this book watch "A Late Quartet" if they haven't.

Having heard Edward Dusinberre give his witty, personable and succinct introductions to works during a concert, I was not surprised at his fluid and entertaining writing style. I absolutely loved this book, which interweaves the day-to-day life of a string quartet member with the cultural history of Beethoven's time. It definitely makes me want to play a string instrument! I would certainly recommend this book to any and all musicians, but also to concert-goers and lovers of the string quartet. It will make everyone who reads it a better listener.

Because I have long been a follower of the Takacs Quartet, I enjoyed the parts of the book that dealt with the people involved. The segments that focused on the intricacies of the music was a bit dense for a non-musician. It did give me a greater appreciation of the talents of such artists.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book for its intimacy, which is one reason I love watching and listening to a string quartet in concert. I try as much as possible to sit close to the performers, and this book brought me even closer to these extraordinarily talented and accomplished musicians. The author cleverly intertwines his autobiographical perspective as first violinist of the Takacs Quartet with intriguing accounts of Beethoven's composition and early performances (and performers) of his string quartets. The book is filled with fascinating descriptions of people and events in Beethoven's life interspersed with deeply personal accounts of rehearsals and performances by the internationally renowned Takacs Quartet. My enjoyment was probably heightened by having seen the Takacs in performance but this book provides valuable insights into the interpretation of these compositions that all ensembles must struggle with. I highly recommend this book to all classical music lovers, even if they (like me) are not musicians themselves. It has added considerably to my appreciation and understanding of Beethoven's string quartets.

This is an absolute must read for all string instrument players (particularly if you play in a group) and teachers, those who fancy Beethoven's works (particular his string quartets) and folks interested in the man himself (particularly if you're a history buff) . It is extremely well written and readable, and you will find it difficult to put down. The authors thoughts regarding the dynamics of string quartets in terms of both the music and the interpersonal relationships among the players are full of really useful insights regardless of your level of skill and experience. I found the author's journey from newbie to an established and renowned member of one of the worlds foremost string quartets to be exhilarating and suspenseful ride. And the author's manner of informing the reader about Beethoven and the period in which he lived brought history to life. One of the most enjoyable reads I've had in recent memory.

A fascinating book that connects various aspects of playing in the Takacs quartet, Beethoven's life and music, and music in general.

it was a gift

Excellent

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