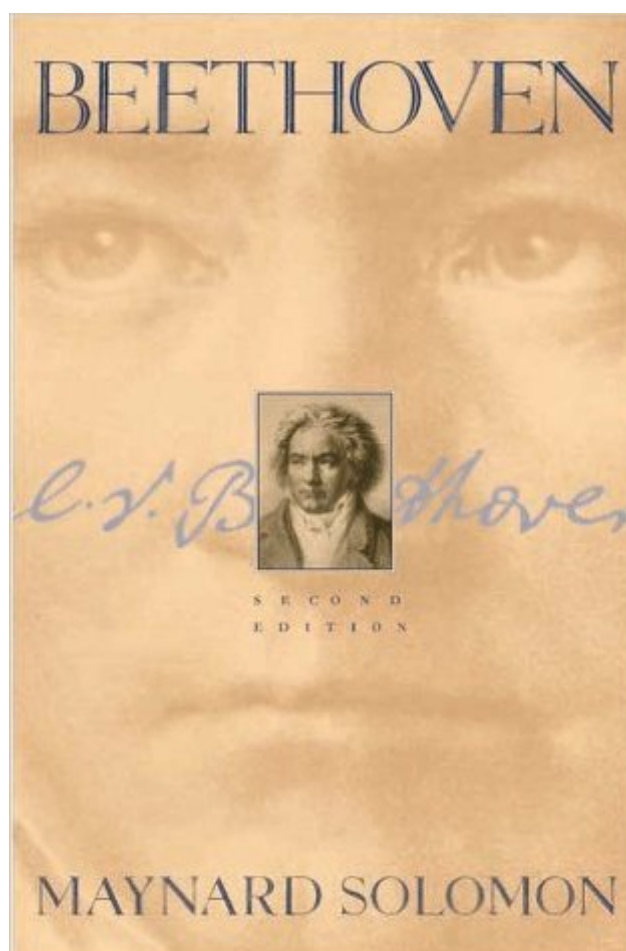


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# Beethoven



## Synopsis

Hailed as a masterpiece for its original interpretations of Beethoven's life and music, this edition takes into account the latest information and literature. Includes a 30-page bibliographical essay, numerous illustrations, and a full-color pictorial biography of the composer. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

How to describe Solomon's very good book on Beethoven? It is part psychohistory, which is always a perilous operation for a writer. I am one of those people who actually like Freud, but sometimes Solomon's psychoanalysis irritated me, and I was always glad when he left the couch and went back to more or less solid facts. There is a huge chapter on the Immortal Beloved that bored me after a couple of dozen pages, but those particularly interested in this aspect of Beethoven's life are in for a real treat! I'd like to have seen more discussion of B's politics and social views; Solomon's discussion of these is, overall, pretty thin. But Solomon's weaknesses (and that is my judgment) do not outweigh his great strengths. He has certainly done his homework on B's life, and he is a skilled writer and a patient, tireless researcher. He knows his Thayer as well, and he isn't above questioning long-held assumptions about this flawed but very great man. Solomon's discussion of B's music is sufficient for a biography (those who want a lot of details on the music should go elsewhere), and he does a great job of showing how the composer followed the classical models and broke away toward romanticism. He does well in showing the man's great genius without ever worshipping him (the way 19th century music lovers did). No doubt about it, Beethoven was a real

crumb in a lot of ways, and Solomon makes this clear. As good as this book is, I wouldn't call it definitive. I imagine some bright person coming along some day who has a deep understanding of the Enlightenment, of early romanticism, of music, and of German and Viennese society who will give a truer picture of the man in his full context. It is very difficult to describe music in words, but my imaginary writer will be adept at this as well. Until this person comes along (and we're talking about a reincarnation of Samuel Johnson or Shakespeare), Solomon will do just fine.

This is the second edition of Solomon's biography of Beethoven and it is an improvement in terms of both analysis and lucidity. The book is written from a psychoanalytic point of view that all may not find convincing. However, the rudiments of Mr. Solomon's analysis, in terms of tracing Beethoven's life problems, his difficulties with women, with peers, and with himself to his childhood experiences probably transcends any specific psychological dogma and is insightful. The book is a biography rather than an attempt at technical musical analysis. Even so, it elucidates the music well and with an obvious love for it. I found the discussion of Beethoven's final period works, and of his sometimes neglected vocal writings, particularly good. The sections on Beethoven's relationship with Haydn, on his testament written upon the discovery of his impending deafness on the immortal beloved, and on his relationship with his nephew are all thoughtful and helped me better understand Beethoven. A wonderful book for anybody who loves this composer or wants to learn more about why other people love him.

Sometimes it's necessary to read a book twice to really understand it. For me, neither an academic nor a musicologist, this is the case with Maynard Solomon's "Beethoven." When I first read it two years ago, I saw it as "the best Beethoven biography I ever read...combining excellent writing, complete objectivity, and outstanding scholarship...maybe the best Beethoven biography ever." Now that I've read it again, (after also reading additional material Beethoven's life from other sources,) my opinion has changed. This time I found his attempts to psychoanalyze Beethoven annoying, and seemingly rooted more in conjecture rather than solid facts. Even the chapter on the Immortal Beloved, which I found so impressive the first time I read the book, seems now to me based more upon a process of elimination rather than solid scholarship. Professor Solomon's prose is lively and entertaining, and his musical commentary may help non-academics and non-musicologists like myself better understand Beethoven's work. However, readers like myself, with a strong interest in Beethoven's life and music, may find other biographies that will better meet their needs.

I found this book impossible to put down! I'm neither a musicologist nor a professional musician and this book was still enjoyable as well as readable (didn't have to refer to other books for further elucidation of terminology). I found Mr. Solomon's style quite pleasant and his analysis insightful. Being a Psychiatrist, I easily become disinterested in amateur journalistic psychoanalysis. Mr. Solomon presented multiple theories to help explain a complex personality and his behavior. His reasoning is on target. This is a wonderful book, a story well told about a personality riveting from before his birth till after his death.

This is a great book if you want to learn about Beethoven's life. It gives you an idea of all the difficulties Beethoven had to overcome to become the great musician he is. Inspiring in itself. The book organization is very well thought, describing first a particular period of Beethoven's life and then doing an analysis of the music in that particular period, showing how both relate to each other. That gives the reader a sense of unity and establishes a link between the life and the works of this master. The contents of the book is very well researched. In fact, Solomon takes other biographies before his and goes deep into finding out the real facts. The research on the "Immortal Beloved" is great and there's a whole chapter dedicated to this mystery, which is very worth reading. And in the whole book, Solomon tries to split fact from fiction by going to the original sources and documents. That makes the book very accurate and because all evidence is shown, the reader can judge for himself. This is definitely THE BIOGRAPHY you want to read if you really want to know about Beethoven's life.

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