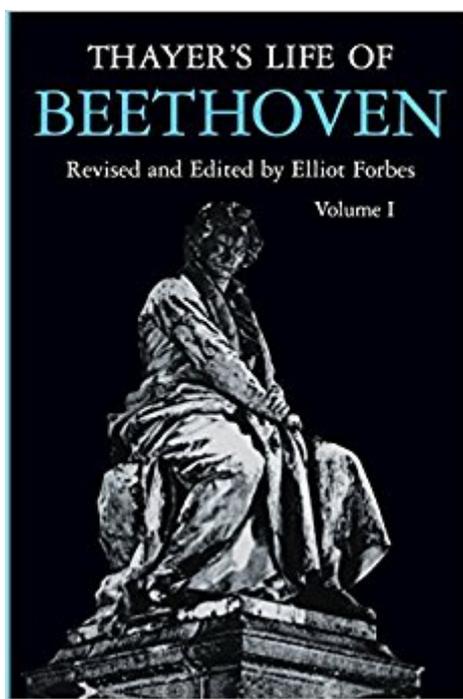


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Thayer's Life Of Beethoven, Part I



Synopsis

The description for this book, Thayer's Life of Beethoven, Part I, will be forthcoming.

Book Information

Series: Thayer's Life of Beethoven (Book 1)

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Customer Reviews

Since Alexander Thayer (a Harvard alum) published his three volume biography of Beethoven over a period of twenty-one years from 1866 -87 it has been the bedrock of information about Beethoven's life and work. It has also become a model for other musicologists and biographers. Obviously, more came to light over the next hundred years and the work was edited and reworked by Elliot Forbes (another Harvard alum and professor of music (but from a time before a Ph.D. was required)). Forbes' "Thayer's Life of Beethoven" was published in 1964 in two volumes. (Does the name Ruth's Chris Steakhouse come to mind?) Prof. Forbes died in January of 2006 at 88 years of age. For awhile the two volumes were combined, but they are now separated. You simply must have them both. This first volume covers Beethoven's origins through 1814. The second volume from 1815 through his death in 1827 with several appendices that cover his estate, speculations about his various illnesses, lists of his works, publications of his works immediately following his death, preparations for a first biography, and so forth. The book is organized chronologically and provides a well-documented presentation of Beethoven's activities that year whether performing, composing, or personal. It provides some speculation about certain events, but always identifies it as such. At the end of each chapter it lists the works composed that year and the works published

that year. Very much worth having. Just remember that you have to buy BOTH Part I and Part II to get the whole biography.

Everything you always wanted to know about Beethoven. That's what is in Thayer's biography. This is a two volume set, so there is a lot of reading. From a short history of Beethoven's family on to the composer's demise, there is not a stone that is left uncovered. This is a reprint, the original being written I believe at the turn of the last century. Doubtless there has been more info about Beethoven uncovered since then, but if you are a true Beethovenite, this biography is essential reading.

Recommended, along with Vol. 2!

If you're taking a course in Beethoven, at a graduate level, this is pretty important required reading. It's comprehensive, and along with the Solomon book, and the Kerman/Tyson offering in the small New Grove edition, you cover a lot of info. It's well-written and doesn't get too lagubrious, in spite of it being translated from the German. I found the subject matter spurred me on anyway. Even though the work first appeared in 1921, a lot of the information remains accurate, and one gains also some insight into what a remarkable historian Thayer was.

Sorry but I can't find anywhere else to write this! The Princeton University Press website states that, for this paperback edition, volume 1 is 632 pages and volume 2 is 542 pages. [...] But, states on this page that this volume 1 alone is 1139 pages, which suggests that the two volumes have been combined into one book. Have they? The matter is made even less clear by the fact that nowhere on is volume 2 of the Princeton paperback edition available. You can only find volume 2 in the older 1967 and earlier versions. Someone needs to straighten this out. Assuming the Princeton website is correct and has made the mistake, can just offer volumes 1 and 2 in paperback as a discounted set? Some description of the difference between the two volumes would also be much appreciated. I'm a little surprised that the most important book retailer appears to have bungled the most important book about the most important musician.

Step back in time and walk with Beethoven. This book and the second volume present so many facts and accurate details, that if you immerse yourself, reading and listening to his music, you can leave the here and now and all of its annoyances, float down Einstein's space-time continuum and live with Ludwig, the Master.

Great hopes were set on the publication of a new English edition of Thayer's monumental Beethoven Biography by Elliott Forbes (1967). However, he could not say more about the Letter of July 1812 (where he, again, wrongly translated L1.14 as "We shall surely see each other soon" instead of "probably") than: "This letter is the only known one in which Beethoven used the 'Du' form of address to a woman. Even his love letters to Josephine Deym used the more formal 'Sie'." (p. 535) We know already that Beethoven used the "Du" form once, in his love letter to Josephine of April 1805 (Brandenburg 1996, #219), but also jocularly at the end of his only letter to Bettina. What is much more important is Forbes' blatant ignorance of the strict customs of the time, where lovers simply would not use "Du" until after marriage. Forbes (pp. 1088-1092) listed all the major attempts so far to identify the "Immortal Beloved": Schindler (1840, 1860), Nohl (1865), Thayer & Deiters (1879), La Mara (1909, 1920), Thomas-San-Galli (1909, 1910), de Hevesy (1910), Unger (1910), Thayer, Deiters & Riemann (1911), Krehbiel (1921), Sonneck (1927), Rolland (1928), Smolle (1947), and finally Kaznelson (1954). The latter's discovery regarding the birth of Minona, he correctly presented as: "Since Stackelberg was not with Josephine at the time he could hardly have been the father." (p. 1092) Then he followed it with this note: "For a vigorous refutation of this argument see J. Schmidt-Gallé n. 41." "What Schmidt-Gallé (1957, p. 34 f., note 41) really "refuted" was: "First of all a document about Josephine's presence in Prague has to be provided before considering that this letter was written to her." "which is fair enough, except that, if anything, then a proof would be required that she was definitely not in Prague to refute this: i.e., an "alibi" that Beethoven could not have been the father of Minona. Schmidt-Gallé had finished his "vigorous" argument with a swipe at Kaznelson (1954), whom he preferred not to name, because he was "the author of the sensational revelations about 'Beethoven's Faraway and Immortal Beloved'." Remains to add that not only an "alibi" for Beethoven (or rather Josephine) would be required, but also some "proof" that Stackelberg (or whoever else) fathered Minona. Which is easier (or more likely)?

More in *The Immortal Beloved Compendium: Everything About The Only Woman Beethoven Ever Loved - And Many He Didn't*

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