

BEETHOVEN

by ALAN PRYCE-JONES

Great Lives

江苏工业学院图书馆
藏书章

DUCKWORTH

3 HENRIETTA STREET

LONDON

W.C.2

GREAT LIVES

8vo, cloth 2s. net

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------------------------|
| ✓ 1. SHAKESPEARE | by JOHN DRINKWATER |
| 2. QUEEN VICTORIA | ARTHUR PONSONBY
(LORD PONSONBY) |
| 3. WAGNER | W. J. TURNER |
| 4. JOHN WESLEY | BONAMY DOBRÉE |
| 5. JOSHUA REYNOLDS | JOHN STEEGMANN |
| 6. CECIL RHODES | J. G. LOCKHART |
| 7. GLADSTONE | FRANCIS BIRRELL |
| 8. GEORGE ELIOT | ANNE FREMANTLE |
| 9. THE BRONTËS | IRENE COOPER WILLIS |
| 10. CHARLES II | JOHN HAYWARD |
| ✓ 11. DICKENS | BERNARD DARWIN |
| 12. BEETHOVEN | ALAN PRYCE-JONES |

To be published shortly

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| H. M. STANLEY | by A. J. A. SYMONS |
| TENNYSON | J. C. SQUIRE |
| ROBERT BURNS | CATHERINE CARSWELL |
| SHERIDAN | W. A. DARLINGTON |
| THE PRINCE CONSORT | HAMISH MILES |
| WILLIAM BLAKE | ALAN CLUTTON-BROCK |
| COLUMBUS | CHARLES DUFF |
| POPE | JOHN SPARROW |
| EDWARD VII | H. E. WORTHAM |
| MILTON | ROSE MACAULAY |
| COBDEN | I. I. BOWEN |
| CHARLES LAMB | ORLO WILLIAMS |
| GEORGE III | ROMNEY SEDGWICK |
| THACKERAY | G. U. ELLIS |

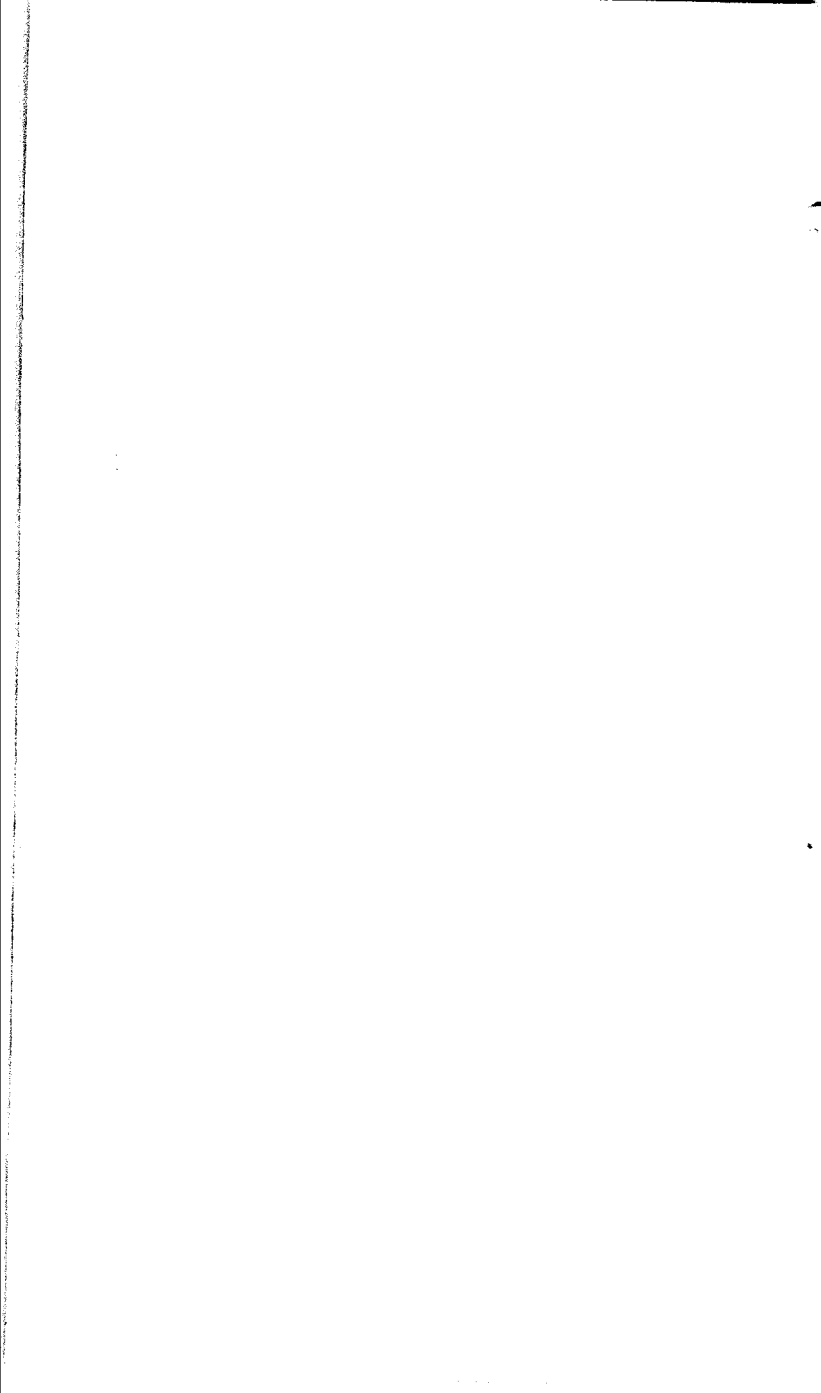
Other volumes in preparation

BEETHOVEN

First Published . . 1933
All Rights Reserved

Made and printed in Great Britain
By The Camelot Press Ltd
London and Southampton

For
GRAHAM EYRES-MONSELL



CONTENTS

<i>Chapter I. Bonn : 1770-1792 . . .</i>	<i>page 11</i>
Antecedents - musical life of Electoral Court - first visit to Vienna - journeys with Electoral orchestra - Beethoven at eighteen - leaves finally for Vienna.	
<i>Chapter II. Vienna : 1792-1802 . . .</i>	<i>28</i>
Beethoven in Vienna - lessons with Haydn - social activity - relations with Brunsvik family - first symptoms of deafness - the "Immortal Beloved" - Heiligenstadt will - Beethoven at thirty-two.	
<i>Chapter III. Vienna : 1802-1815 . . .</i>	<i>62</i>
<i>Eroica</i> symphony - treatment of his friends - recovery from despair - quarrel with Breuning - <i>Fidelio</i> - new friends - Bettina Brentano - Goethe - musical successes.	
<i>Chapter IV. 1815-1827</i>	<i>96</i>
Domestic troubles - von Bursy - difficulties with nephew - condition in 1823 - Rochlitz - final concert - Rellstab - Gneixendorf - illness and death.	
<i>Chapter V. Fragmentary Criticism . . .</i>	<i>126</i>

CHRONOLOGY

- Born at Bonn, *December* 1770
First public appearance, 1778
Assistant organist at the Court of Bonn, 1784
First visit to Vienna, 1787
Return to Bonn, 1787
Visit to Aschaffenburg, 1791
Settles in Vienna for good, 1792
Publishes three trios, 1795
Proposes marriage to Magdalena Willmann, 1795
Travels with Prince Lichnowsky, 1796
First mention of deafness, 1801
Friendship with Brunsvik and Guicciardi families
at its height, 1801
Letters to the "Immortal Beloved," (probably)
1801
Heiligenstadt will, 1802
Failure of the *Eroica* symphony, 1803
First performance of *Fidelio*, 1805
The nephew, Karl, born, 1806
Revised version of *Fidelio* performed, 1806
Career as a virtuoso ends, 1808
Offer of a post at the Court of Westphalia, 1809
Proposes marriage to Theresia Malfatti, 1811

- Friendship with Bettina Brentano, 1811
Friendship with Amalie Sebald, 1811
Meeting with Goethe, 1812
Final revision of *Fidelio*, 1814
Death of his brother and adoption of his nephew,
1815
Appeal to Upper Austrian Landrecht for custody
of nephew, 1816
Period of little work and ill health, 1812-18
Too deaf to converse: Conversation Books
begun, 1819
Resigns, but regains, guardianship of the nephew,
1819
At work on the *Missa Solennis*, 1820
At work on *Diabelli Variations*, 1823
Concert for *Missa Solennis* and ninth symphony,
1824
Attempted suicide of Karl, 1826
Visit to Gneixendorf, 1826
Illness on his return to Vienna, *Autumn* 1826
Death, *March 26th*, 1826

CHAPTER I

BONN : 1770-1792

Antecedents - musical life of Electoral Court - first visit to Vienna - journeys with Electoral orchestra - Beethoven at eighteen - leaves finally for Vienna.

THE history of the Beethoven family, obscure though much of it is, gives an interesting example of the influence of heredity. Its beginnings are not important, though there is some evidence that Ludwig van Beethoven allowed the Viennese to imply his nobility from the "van"; and, beyond the fact that Ludwig's great-grandfather was a Flemish master tailor we know little about them. In the next generation, however, lies the immediate root of Ludwig's genius. His grandfather, another Ludwig, was so competent a musician that as a very young man he was engaged to the Court of the Elector of Cologne, who appointed him *Kapellmeister* at Bonn, so that henceforward our branch of the family severs all connection with its own country; and by his subsequent marriage to Maria Poll he brought the dissolute streak into their descendants which so often liberates profound creative ability.

Possibly because her husband ran a vintner's business to supplement his income, Maria van Beethoven drank to excess – a weakness which recurred in their son, Johann, also a musician attached to the Elector. Of Johann we hear little good. For some reason the biographers of musicians are invariably strong for rectitude, and in the hundred years which have elapsed since the composer's death, nearly every one of which has offered him a new biography, the character of his father has been more and more blackened by successive copyists, until it is now proper to think him, not merely a sot, but a monster.

The truth appears to be that he was a weak, jovial man, not too mediocre a musician to succeed the elder Ludwig, and not, during the lifetime of Maria-Magdalena his wife, too dissolute to instruct his children in an art which might be profitable to themselves and to him. Maria-Magdalena, the widow of the Elector's chief *valet-de-chambre* and daughter of his head cook at Ehrenbreitstein, was a colourless personality, and consumptive as well.

Three years after her marriage with Johann van Beethoven, on the 15th or 16th of December, 1770, Ludwig was born, and after him Karl Kaspar and Johann Nikolaus. There also were four children

who died, one of whom, another Ludwig, was the first-born of all.

The Beethoven family had already, in 1770, begun that decline which was in reality only the step back which a high-jumper makes before an unusual effort. The grandfather, then nearly seventy, could deplore his unhappy marriage, could regret that his son's good qualities were only pale reflections of his own, could disapprove, as we know he disapproved, of his son's choice of a wife. Johann's self-indulgence and his wife's lack of positive qualities, however, were the elements that often procreate a strong character, and it is perhaps significant that the strength of the family was so concentrated in Ludwig that there was none left for his brothers, and that Ludwig showed a particular affection for his grandfather, who died when he was only three.

His childhood was not a happy one. His parents were miserably poor ; his education was limited to music, and to what an inferior school had to provide. It is even suggested that his father brutalised him in an attempt to create an infant prodigy, and there is a picture, familiar to those who read the biographies of eminent artists, of the child being dragged from his bed and forced to practise all night, despite his tears, to a drunkard. We need not believe such anecdotes. Frau van

Beethoven was still alive, and there is no reputable evidence of cruelty on his father's part beyond a severity supposed from the knowledge that Ludwig hated his music lessons and that it was decided to drill him into early proficiency on both the piano and the violin.

Nevertheless, he did not have a happy childhood if only because he did not have, even at that age, a happy temperament. He was a silent, shy, unattractive child, and his musical ability was not remarkable. At eight years old he made a public appearance, but his performance was not to be compared with that of Hummel, let alone of Mozart, at the same age ; and it is easy to imagine that an ugly, rebellious little boy was not likely to endear himself to a handsome and profligate father. Yet we read that he was quick at his lessons, quick enough to read Cicero's *Letters* six weeks after he had begun to study Latin, and, whatever he may have suffered in his early years, at the age of eleven he became pupil of the Saxon, Neefe, Court organist to the Elector Max Friedrich.

The Electoral Court at Bonn deserves a word, not merely of interest, but of homage ; and not merely the Court of Max Friedrich, but that of innumerable contemporary German princes. When we consider that the mindlessness of a

modern Court is taken for granted, that specimens of its interests or conversation are preserved as the very types of ineptitude, it is almost painful to see how enlightened was the average Court at the close of the eighteenth century ; and enlightened, not owing to any extraordinary powers on the part of the prince, but owing to a general opinion in favour of intelligence.

Thus at Bonn, after the death in 1761 of the Elector Clemens August, an archbishop who died, uniquely perhaps, of dancing, Max Friedrich supported as a matter of course admirable operatic and theatrical companies. Bonn was not large. It had under ten thousand inhabitants, and no commerce of any kind. Beyond the presence of the Court, the city had no reason to exist, since even the military importance which had caused it to be wholly enclosed, like a nursery town, by its walls, had vanished. Yet its intellectual diversions were far more intense than those of London to-day.

In one year (1779) plays of Lessing, Colman, Beaumarchais, Garrick, Goldoni, Voltaire and Hoadly were performed, extracts from the *living* theatre of four countries ; and in accounts of the archbishop's birthday in 1767 we can see how agreeably the arts were mixed with a royal gaiety which nowhere survives, though it only finally

vanished with the disappearance of the Italian Courts in 1861, and even left a tradition at the Greek Court that lasted into this century. For at the celebrations there was not only a concert of serious music, but also a comic opera, in which Johann van Beethoven sang ; with the High Mass there were salvoes of artillery ; the Court and the public were “graciously permitted to kiss His Transparency’s hand” ; and the whole concluded with a supper of over a hundred persons. On other nights the operas of Galuppi and Piccini would be performed – operas whose names are wholly forgotten. Grétry was especially popular, and on one occasion an opera was given, the title and author of which are tantalisingly curious : General Burgoyne’s *Maid of the Oaks*.

In this atmosphere Beethoven passed the first seventeen years of his life, varied, in 1781, by an expedition with his mother to Holland, of which we know nothing beyond that the weather was unusually cold, and that his mother had to warm his feet in her lap during the journey. It was on his return from Holland that he seriously began his musical education under Neeffe, with such effect that two years later he was allowed to publish three pianoforte sonatas, and that Neeffe thought enough of him to write at length of his accomplishments in *Cramer’s Magazine*.