

# BEETHOVEN

Impressions  
By His  
Contemporaries

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## PREFACE

Anton Schindler first seems to have suggested in his Beethoven biography (1845) that a collection of contemporary impressions of the composer would form a very interesting volume. This idea appealed to Ludwig Nohl who, in 1877, published his book "Beethoven as Seen by Contemporaries." That pioneer-attempt has definitely been superseded by the practically exhaustive compilations of Friedrich Kerst (first edition, 1913) and Albert Leitzmann (1914), whose research and interest in their task placed all future books of similar purport under heavy obligation. Indeed, without Kerst and Leitzmann, this commemorative volume, too, would have become, if not impossible, at least improbable as a contribution to the Beethoven Centenary on March 26, 1927.

Recently a liberal selection of Beethoven's letters has again been made available in English to students of Beethoven's personality. Hence, there was no need for duplicating the enterprise of a fellow-publisher. Furthermore, the honor of printing in the author's native language what is likely to remain for many years the authoritative biography of the master, fell to us: Alexander Wheelock Thayer's "Life of Beethoven," published in 1921 by The Beethoven Association. This monumental work includes many letters of Beethoven and a considerable number of recollections of his personality by contemporaries, but no book is available in English which devotes itself exclusively to such impressions. Hence, we accepted the suggestion of our Vice-President, Mr. O. G. Sonneck, that he plan, compile and annotate for the Beethoven Centenary a book of moderate size to fill that gap.

The book was not planned as a contribution to Beethoven's biography. For that reason, practically no attempt was made to "edit" the reminiscences of the contemporaries in whose company, as it were, the reader

visits the composer. That is to say, no attempt to reconcile errors of memory, time, etc., with the conflicting facts. Of such errors many could be pointed out, but they do not conflict with the impressions of the master's personality which visitors carried away with them and it seemed preferable not to mar their narratives by editorial comment unessential for the real purpose of this volume.

Of the one hundred and fifty or more recorded reminiscences of contemporaries who visited Beethoven, slightly more than thirty were selected. Such a selection, of course, will vary with every compiler, but the present selection was arrived at only after a good deal of comparative valuation of the available material in the interest of the general reader in America. Naturally, he will find much repetition, but that lies in the nature of the subject and could not be avoided. Indeed, it ought not be avoided, since it acquires the force of accumulative corroborative evidence. Beethoven, being what he was, could not very well appear in a different light to every visitor—and yet, how amusingly at times the impressions of him contradict one another. Even so, the differences are not nearly so extraordinary as those between the existing contemporary likenesses of Beethoven!

In only rare instances were these impressions of contemporaries originally written in English. All others called for translation. By courtesy of Mrs. Krehbiel a few translations were borrowed from Henry Edward Krehbiel's edition of Thayer's "Life of Beethoven," mentioned above. A few were made by Dr. Theodore Baker, our former Literary Editor, and others were made by Mr. Sonneck himself, but the majority were entrusted to Dr. Baker's successor, Mr. Frederick H. Martens.

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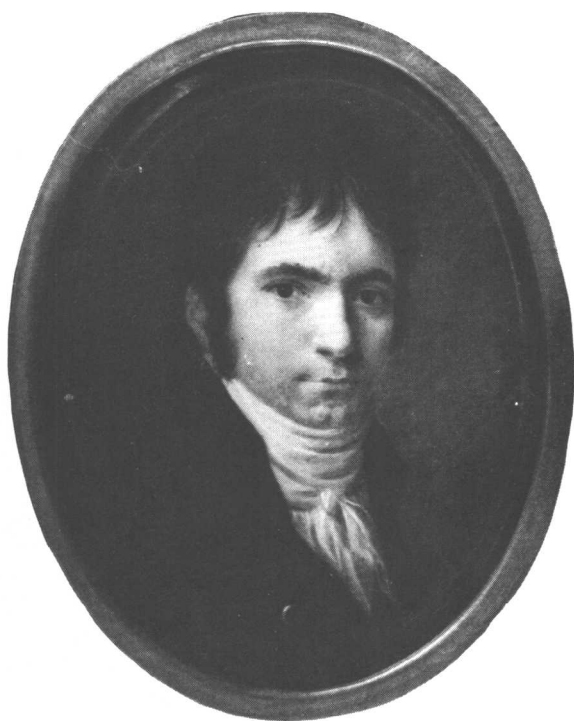


Silhouette of Beethoven by Neesen, 1786  
(*Courtesy Beethovenhaus, Bonn*)

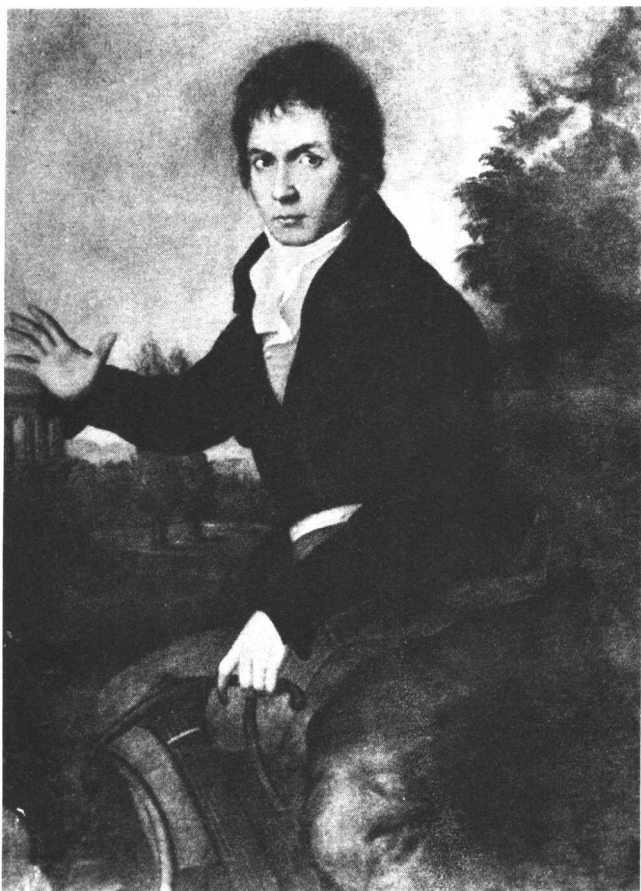


Engraved by Neidl after the Portrait-Drawing of Beethoven  
by Stainhauser, 1801

*(Courtesy Beethovenhaus, Bonn)*



Miniature of Beethoven  
by Horneman, 1803  
*(Courtesy Beethovenhaus, Bonn)*



Mähler's First Portrait of Beethoven, 1804

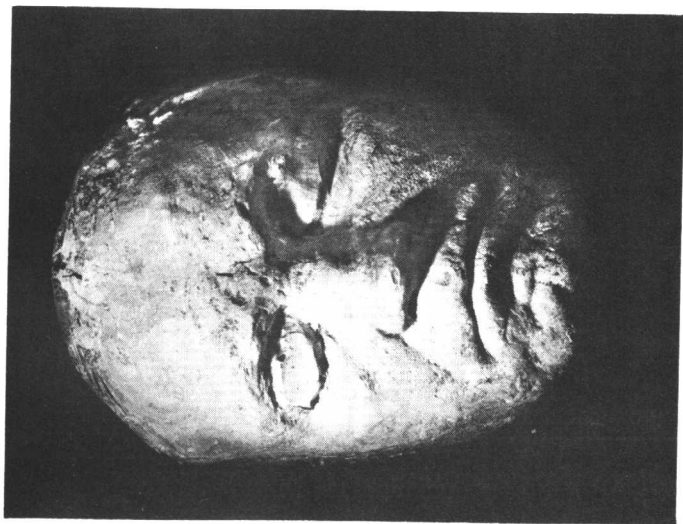
*(Courtesy Beethovenhaus, Bonn)*





Portrait of Beethoven by Neugass, 1806

*(Courtesy Beethovenhaus, Bonn)*



Front and side-view of life-mask of Beethoven by Franz Klein, 1812  
*(Courtesy Beethovenhaus, Bonn)*



Beethoven bust by Franz Klein, 1812

*(Courtesy Beethovenhaus, Bonn)*



Crayon sketch of Beethoven  
by Letronne in 1814, engraved by Höfel

*(Courtesy Beethovenhaus, Bonn)*



Mähler's Second Portrait of Beethoven, 1815

*(Courtesy Collection Karajan, Salzburg)*



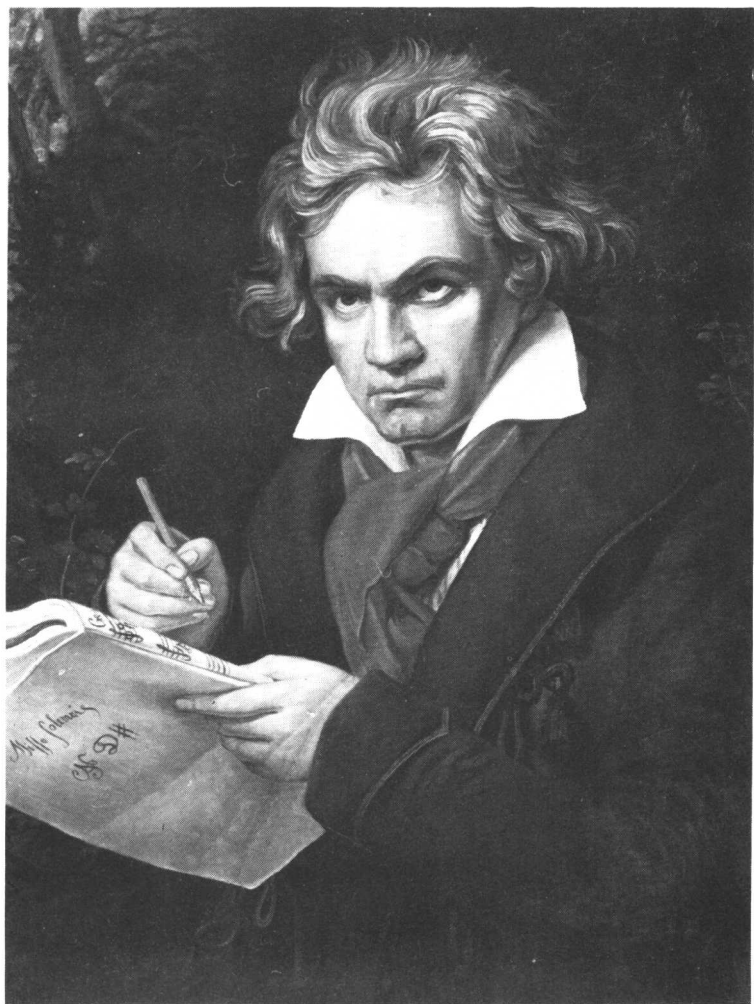
Crayon drawing of Beethoven  
by A. v. Kloeber, 1817 or 1818

*(Courtesy Beethovenhaus, Bonn)*



Oil-portrait of Beethoven by Schimon, 1818

*(Courtesy Beethovenhaus, Bonn)*



Portrait of Beethoven by Stieler, 1819-1820

*(Courtesy Edition Peters, Leipzig)*





Two sketches of Beethoven by J. D. Böhm,  
between 1820 and 1825  
(*Courtesy Beethovenhaus, Bonn*)