Clarion Review

Biography

Beethoven's Only Beloved: Josephine! A Biography of the Only Woman Beethoven ever Loved

John E. Klapproth
CreateSpace
978-1-4611-8638-0
Four Stars (out of Five)

Fans of Charles Schulz's *Peanuts* cartoons will remember Schroeder, the Beethoven-obsessed character who kept a bust of the composer on his piano and never let the feminine charms of Lucy interrupt his playing. John E. Klapproth is like Schroeder, similarly absorbed in Beethoven's music and life story. In *Beethoven's Only Beloved: Josephine!* the author identifies the composer's anonymous lover and muse, the "Immortal Beloved" Beethoven refers to in a passionate 1812 letter. She is the subject of much debate among classical music scholars and devotees.

Klapproth is suited to tackling this detective work. A serious Beethoven fan and fluent in both German and English, he is thus able to understand the nuances of meaning in each language as he analyzes reams of historical documents. He identifies Josephine, Countess von Brunsvik (later, Baroness von Stackelberg), as Beethoven's beloved, laying out proof for his theory in a chronological account of her life, and Beethoven's, and where they intersect. Klapproth believes that the composer fell in love with Josephine, his musical pupil, and would have married her if only Josephine's aristocratic mother had not had a wealthy old nobleman in mind for her nuptials. In addition, Klapproth makes a case that Beethoven fathered a daughter with Josephine during her difficult and loveless second marriage.

The book is packed with footnotes, quotes, charts, and paragraph after paragraph of literary detective work, which will be absorbing to Beethoven afficionados, but perhaps not to many other readers. The footnotes are printed in small type, which adds to the work of plowing through them. Klapproth's prose style has verve and charm, but he relies a bit too much on the parenthetical asides. It would also be beneficial to have a few illustrations of Beethoven, Josephine, and their love child, Minona, or some of the architectural landmarks of Vienna,

Prague, Budapest, and Bonn to give the reader a better understanding of the atmosphere that surrounded Beethoven's life in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Beethoven's Only Beloved: Josephine! is an extensively researched and well-written book, but it is hard to know if it will have an audience beyond the hardcore classical music buff or Beethoven scholar. The author provides a great deal of information about the Eastern European cultural scene during Beethoven's time, but the book is primarily an exhaustive argument in favor of identifying Josephine as Beethoven's lover, which may limit a wider readership.

Rachel Jagareski