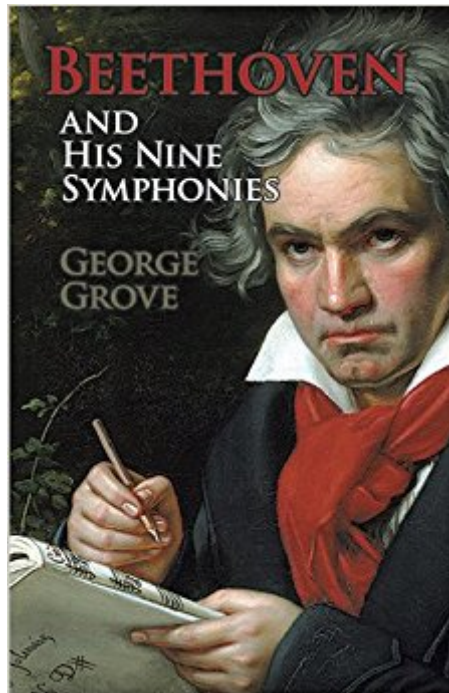


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Beethoven And His Nine Symphonies (Dover Books On Music)



Synopsis

This classic of music analysis by a noted musicologist offers revealing insights into Beethoven's personality and music. George Grove, the founding editor of Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians, interweaves fascinating background information on the composer's historical era with quotations, letters, and anecdotes. He examines the nine symphonies in chronological order, movement by movement, illustrating his points with numerous excerpts — more than 400 in all. In addition to emphasizing the uniqueness of Beethoven's music and its iconoclastic renunciation of established musical theory, Grove comments at length on the relation of the symphonies to the minor works, events in the composer's personal life, the conditions under which he worked, and other fascinating details. Examples of Beethoven's correspondence include several letters to the Countess Theresa and the famous letter to his brothers Carl and Johann.

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Customer Reviews

George Grove (1820–1900) was an English writer on music and the founding editor of Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians.

The text of this book is old going back to the 19th Century. The analysis is still relevant since it is the only analysis from this era. Accordingly, it is somewhat difficult to read because of the archaic writing style.

Great book!! I wish it was in hardcover but of course Dover Books doesn't really do hardcovers but it's very nice, very legible, readable typescript and fonts, nicely done. It's a small sized book, not the regular Dover size of 8" x 11", this one is like 6" by 9" so it does fit great in your hands for a very personal reading experience.

great insight on his symphonies.

Although over one century old it is the best guide one can have for the Beethoven symphonies. Good to have besides you when listening to those extraordinary works.

The following review was posted October 23, 2007, on an earlier printing of this title. I reposted the review after reading Jan Swafford's large new biography, "Beethoven: Anguish and Triumph" and reviewing it here on .Sir George Grove (1820 -1900) is best-known as the writer of the original "Dictionary of Music and Musicians" which, with its many updates and versions over the years, has become the standard English reference work on classical music. In 1896, Grove wrote "Beethoven and his Nine Symphonies" which, unlike the "Dictionary" is still read today in the form in which Grove wrote it. I have recently returned to Grove's study as a guide in listening to and reviewing the Beethoven symphonies in the recordings by David Zinman and the Tonhalle Orchester Zurich and have learned a great deal. Grove's book is written in an accessible late-Victorian style. He devotes a chapter to each of the nine symphonies. He begins with a summary of the instrumentation, publication history and early metronome marks of the symphonies. Grove offers material on Beethoven's life at the time each symphony was composed and describes Beethoven's compositional process. He offers information on early performances and on the reception of each work, including a great deal of commentary from the works of later composers. But the highlight of the study is Grove's movement-by-movement analysis of each symphony. It is a difficult skill to write about music in a way that amateurs may follow; and Grove succeeds admirably. He gives the score for the principal themes and highlights of each movement and discusses them in a way that anyone with a basic skill in reading music can follow easily. I used Grove many years ago when I was just coming to the Beethoven symphonies, and I continue to learn from his book. Much of what Grove says is still current in studies of the symphonies. For example, in discussing the Seventh Symphony, Grove aptly describes it as the most romantic of the nine, and he points out how the rhythm of the symphony may be scanned in terms of the meters

and "feet" of poetry. Maynard Solomon has made the same points in detail in his essay on the Seventh Symphony in his recent book "Late Beethoven". In addition to the musical analyses, Grove writes with great passion about Beethoven and his work. His study is replete with allusions to the works and writings of other composers that illuminate his analysis of Beethoven. He also gives a great deal of biography, some of which must be used with caution as Grove relied on the biographical writings of Anton Schindler about Beethoven. Schindler has been discredited as a source by modern scholars. Grove has a partiality for large-scale romantic performances of Beethoven, and I don't think he would have been overly impressed with the modern Zinman performances that I just heard and greatly enjoyed. For example, his book is full of strictures against performing Beethoven too fast. Grove clearly shares the prevailing Nineteenth Century view that Beethoven was the greatest of all composers in the depth, variety, structure, and moods of his symphonies. Grove's enthusiasm and love for his subject is eloquent. He concludes his book as follows: "These great works he did as no one ever did, and probably no one ever will.... Music will advance in richness, scope, and difficulty; but such music as Beethoven's great instrumental works, in which thought, emotion, melody, and romance combine with extraordinary judgment and common sense, and a truly wonderful industry, to make a perfect whole, can hardly any more be written. The time for such an event, such a concurrence of the man and the circumstances, will not again arrive. There can never be a second Beethoven or a second Shakespeare. However much orchestras may improve and execution increase, Beethoven's Symphonies will always remain at the head of music as Shakespeare's plays are at the head of the literature of the modern world." Some readers in the early 21st Century may question Grove's adulation of Beethoven. Be that as it may, Beethoven's symphonies have remained an inspiration to an untold number of listeners, including myself, and will almost certainly remain so. Grove's book remains highly valuable for those wanting to explore in detail the richness of the Beethoven symphonies. Robin Friedman

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This is a reprint of the 3rd edition of 1898, but that fact should not deter anyone from purchasing it. It remains an excellent analysis of Beethoven's 9 symphonies. Along with copious music quotations of the symphonies, the author has integrated some history of Beethoven's historical times and quotes letters and anecdotes that reveal not only the music but the personality of this composer. The author's knowledge of the scores of the symphonies is extraordinary. For anyone with more than a passing interest in the symphonies of Beethoven, I can't think of a better book for the money. While it is impossible to name any composer as the greatest, Beethoven must be acknowledged as one of the great architects of musical form and expression. George Grove's book underlines the genius of this composer, and is highly recommended

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