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Beethoven in Person: His Deafness, Illnesses, and Death
(review)

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it illustrates the revival of Hippocratic medicine at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; it also depicts the shift of interest in Hippocrates from medical to historical. Stressing the role played by Coray in this transformation, however, the book pertains to the history of medical erudition rather than to the history of medicine.

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Peter J. Davies. *Beethoven in Person: His Deafness, Illnesses, and Death*. Contributions to the Study of Music and Dance, no. 59. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2001. xxiv + 271 pp. Ill. \$69.95 (0-313-31587-6).

It was a great pleasure to read Peter J. Davies's most recent contribution to "music and medicine." His previous publications have helped us to understand how illness caused tragedies in the lives of several other composers. His insight into Mozart's life and struggle with undiagnosed diseases resulted in the excellent book *Mozart in Person: His Character and Health* (1989). After several publications in journals of medicine and history, he consolidated his scholarly research on Beethoven's illnesses in this delightfully original book. Dr. Davies is a retired consultant physician in internal medicine and gastroenterology in Melbourne, Australia. His penetrating interest in musical history and his clinical insight give us a moving picture of Beethoven, victim of the ignorance of medicine in his time. This is not "hero-worship," although Davies extols the genius of Beethoven in describing his creative periods in relation to his illnesses.

The book contains fifteen chapters covering Beethoven's physicians and treatments, his appearance, his various illnesses in chronological order, his death and burial, the exhumations, and the still-debated cause of his deafness; extensive explanatory notes, based on bibliographic analysis, follow each chapter. Davies provides a chronological survey of the twenty-one proposed causes of Beethoven's deafness, based on more than 125 publications on the subject between 1816 and 1996: it gives preference to otosclerosis (23) and postinfectious acoustic neuritis (21). Syphilis is ruled out. Alcoholic cirrhosis seems to be proven, and Beethoven's tragic suffering from ascites, toward the end of his life, is vividly described. The very long history of his recurrent gastrointestinal complaints merits the favored diagnosis of "irritable bowel syndrome." The arguments for and against each of the diagnostic possibilities of all his illnesses are well tabulated, and an attached glossary of medical terminology helps to understand them. Similarly, the interaction between Beethoven's diseases and his creative periods is well tabulated in chronological order.

The author's scholarly diligence is evidenced in the book's comprehensive bibliography. In reaching his conclusions, Davies clearly takes into account

Alexander Thayer's *Life of Beethoven*, Romain Rolland's romantic *Beethoven the Creator* (1929), and Maynard Solomon's valuable book, *Beethoven* (1977). He also gives credit to Franz Hermann Franken's *Diseases of Famous Composers* (1996), which this reviewer appraised in this journal some time ago.

Dr. Davies makes a most valuable contribution in this book by helping us to gain a greater understanding of Beethoven, the man and his music—and, at the same time, providing an excellent account of the state of affairs in medicine in Vienna during the composer's lifetime. He also illuminates the interaction between illness and creativity, and the extraordinary progress that medicine has made in the past 150+ years. Medical historians, students in music and medicine, physicians, and music lovers will all enjoy this book.

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Susan Wheeler. *Five Hundred Years of Medicine in Art: An Illustrated Catalogue of Prints and Drawings from the Clements C. Fry Collection in the Harvey Cushing/John Hay Whitney Medical Library at Yale University*. Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate, 2001. xxviii + 363 pp. Ill. \$134.95 (0-85967-992-6).

Shortly after he joined the faculty of the Yale University School of Medicine in 1926, Clements C. Fry (1892–1955) began to collect prints and drawings on medical themes. A psychiatrist, his early interest was in images of mental disorders, insanity, treatment of the insane, phrenology, hypnotism, mesmerism, and quackery—but as occurs with many collectors, his scope broadened over time and eventually comprised the entire nondidactic historical iconography of medicine and health care: doctors visiting patients, therapeutic fads, polemics for or against vaccination, anatomy, childbirth, hospitals, pharmacies, and depictions of disease. Fry was in the right place at the right time, for there had been little earlier interest in the field. He found most of his prints one at a time, as most serious collectors do, often in trips to England and Paris. As he noted in a letter to a museum curator, “I used to see them knocking about and my interest was aroused in that I had never seen a good group of medical prints and caricatures, so I began to pick them up” (p. xvi). On occasion he managed to acquire larger blocks of prints: a collection of forty prints on hypnotism from a Paris dealer in 1939, and many of the holdings of Eugen Holländer (1867–1932), the Berlin surgeon, author, and collector whose substantial collection was eventually dispersed by Holländer's son. He also looked for contemporary drawings of medical subjects, acquiring from Charles Addams the original of his famous *New Yorker* cartoon of a proper matron studying the pictures—actually reproductions of medical prints—on the wall of her physician's waiting room, wincing from the horrible scenes of macabre torture, one more gruesome than the next.