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BEETHOVEN THE PIANIST

The widely held belief that Beethoven was a rough pianist, impatient with his instruments, is not altogether accurate: it is influenced by anecdotes dating from when deafness had begun to impair his playing. Presenting a new, detailed biography of Beethoven's formative years, this book reviews the composer's early career, outlining how he was influenced by teachers, theorists, and instruments. Skowroneck describes the development and decline of Beethoven's pianism, and pays special attention to early pianos, their construction, and their importance for Beethoven and the modern pianist. The book also includes new discussions of legato and Beethoven's trills, and a complete annotated review of eyewitnesses' reports about his playing. Skowroneck presents a revised picture of Beethoven which traces his development from an impetuous young musician into a virtuoso in command of many musical resources.

TILMAN SKOWRONECK is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Southampton, and is also a freelance harpsichordist and fortepianist. His main area of interest is the early piano, its construction, and its repertoire. This is his first book.

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For Jessica and Lukas

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Acknowledgments

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Abbreviations and conventions

AMZ: *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*

MGG: *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, edition 1949–1951

References to the “Kafka” sketch miscellany in instances where the date is not crucial are not footnoted and refer to Joseph Kerman, ed., *Ludwig van Beethoven Autograph Miscellany from ca. 1786 to 1799 (The “Kafka” Sketchbook)*. 2 vols., London: The Trustees of the British Museum, 1970.

In order to keep the text readable I have refrained from italicizing certain frequently recurring German terms such as Klavier and Clavier. The capitalization of these terms usually follows the source at hand.

The term *fortepiano* is only one of many historical names for a keyboard instrument with a hammer action. I use this term in the modern way to address any kind of “historical piano,” no matter in which tradition or period it was built. This is a necessary shortcut to keep the text readable.

The part of the German and Viennese piano actions that is shaped like a fork in which the hammer pivots is called the *Kapsel* in German. Organologists have chosen various ways of adapting this term to English usage. I have adhered to the German term.

All translations in this book are mine, unless otherwise indicated.