BEETHOVEN'S CRITICS
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Aesthetic dilemmas and resolutions during the composer’s lifetime

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Abbreviations

AMZ Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung
BAMZ Berliner Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung
Caec. Caecilia: eine Zeitschrift für die Musikalische Welt
WAMZ Wiener Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung
Preface

This book has been many years in the making. Along the way, it has had the assistance of some extraordinary people. First among them was my piano teacher, Pat Carter, who bought for me the scores of the Beethoven string quartets when I was 15 years old. Since that time, I have been convinced that the supposedly impenetrable late quartets represent the summit of human creativity. My decision to make a career in teaching and writing about music also dates from this comparatively early age. During my undergraduate years at Oberlin, my thesis adviser, Sylvan Suskin, was particularly encouraging. Without his inspiration, I might not have braved the whims of an unstable job market and gone on to do graduate work in musicology.

It should be no secret that this book bears a distinct resemblance to the doctoral dissertation which I wrote at Yale. For his help on that magnum opus, I must particularly thank Leon Plantinga, who trimmed away mercilessly at my ambitious prospectus and kept me from putting my foot in my mouth too often. His wide knowledge both of nineteenth-century music and of philosophy were a constant inspiration to me, yet he left me with the satisfying feeling that what I had written was my own work from start to finish.

My wife, Lara, was unfailingly supportive. Particularly during the final years of work, she spent many thankless hours listening to my ideas take shape, and made me feel that what I was writing about was important enough to lose sleep over. She also proofread and typed the final manuscript.

Claude Palisca, Reinhard Strohm, Jane Stevens and Owen Jander also gave much valuable help along the way. I owe a special debt of gratitude to my colleague at California State University at Long Beach, William Weber, who contributed from his special expertise in the field of history to many of the ideas which helped transform this work from a doctoral thesis into a book.

Music historians, beware: this is not primarily a book about Beethoven’s music. It is a book about how people reacted to that music during its first crucial years, and as such I hope that it will be helpful not only to
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Beethoven specialists but to all critics, theorists and historians of music who continue to define the reception of music, both past and present, in the late twentieth century.

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