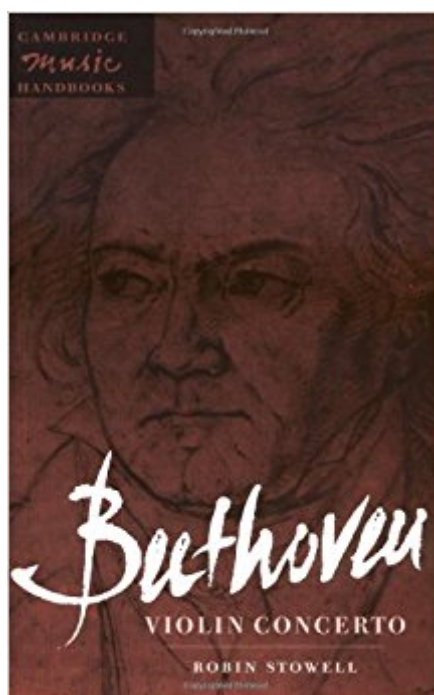


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Beethoven: Violin Concerto (Cambridge Music Handbooks)



Synopsis

This is the first individual study of Beethoven's Violin Concerto. It explores the work's background and the influences that combined in its creation, and describes its indifferent initial reception. It considers the numerous textual problems that confront the performer, including discussion of Beethoven's adaptation for piano and orchestra. Following a detailed synopsis of the work itself, a final section reviews the wide variety of cadenzas that have been written to complement the concerto throughout its performance history.

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Customer Reviews

Beethoven wrote only one violin concerto, but it is one of music's all-time indisputable masterpieces. As Robin Stowell notes in his preface to this scholarly, but quite readable, volume, it is "the only major violin concerto composed between Mozart's five concertos of 1775 and Mendelssohn's E minor Concerto Op. 64 (1844). As a model of melodic invention, spaciousness of design, sheer clarity, and logic of organization, the Concerto has no equals." It has earned a favored place in the repertoire of virtually every violinist of note, and in the hearts of discerning listeners. In this fine addition to the Cambridge Music Handbooks series, Stowell examines the origins of the concerto and influences on it, its structure and style, and its performance history. At its premiere in Vienna in 1806, the reception was mixed; the critic Johann Nepomuk Moser wrote that it was: "Burdened with a host of unconnected and piled-up ideas, and a continual tumult of different instruments... [the

listener] could only leave the concert with an unpleasant sense of exhaustion." Fortunately, we hear things quite differently now. This is a useful volume for the specialist, or for anyone who wants to know as much as possible about this great work. --Sarah Bryan Miller --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

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Robin Stowell's book is an introduction to the musical workings of Beethoven's Violin Concerto in D Major op. 61 and the context of its creation and reception in general. Weighing in at a concise 140 pages and mainly eschewing jargon (the reader needs only a basic understanding of music theory and, ideally, a cheap score for the piece), Stowell's book is friendly and accessible to a broad readership. I got this book while trying to come to grips with this concerto (in Gidon Kremer's 1981 first recording), not easy to do since my tastes run to modernism, and indeed the book greatly expanded my appreciation of Beethoven's work. Stowell opens with the Viennese classical music scene and Beethoven's career in the years before the writing of the Violin Concerto. He discusses in some depth the evolution of violin design and technique in the late Classical era, which is of great importance to why this work turned out the way it did. Stowell gives what details are known of Beethoven's acquaintance with the violinist Franz Clement, the dedicatee of the work. As in all Cambridge Music Handbooks, there is coverage of the work's reception and performance history. The course of approaches in the 19th century is a battlefield, and Stowell notes that Clement's own violin technique was almost immediately ridiculed for belonging to a past age. Stowell also looks at Beethoven's Op. 61a, a piano concerto arrangement, which is of some interest as it gives clues for some aspects of the violin concerto's score, and at least one set of cadenzas has been drawn from it. And as with nearly all Cambridge Music Handbooks, there is a section on recordings of the concerto (and a discography as an appendix), which went out of date immediately because the work continues to attract every violinist who gets a recording contract. Stowell's coverage of the textual history is perhaps the most arcane bit of the book. However, I did learn a lot about just how complicated it is to work with 200 year-old manuscripts and scattered sketches and

produce a critical score or scholarship on them. Finally, Stowell gets down to the music itself, in a section that takes up roughly half the book. He walks the readers through the concerto's three movements, charting all the tonal twists and turns and drawing one's attention to the appearance of motifs that one might not have noticed before. The last chapter of the book deals with the cadenzas -- more cadenzas have been published for this piece than for any other violin concerto.

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