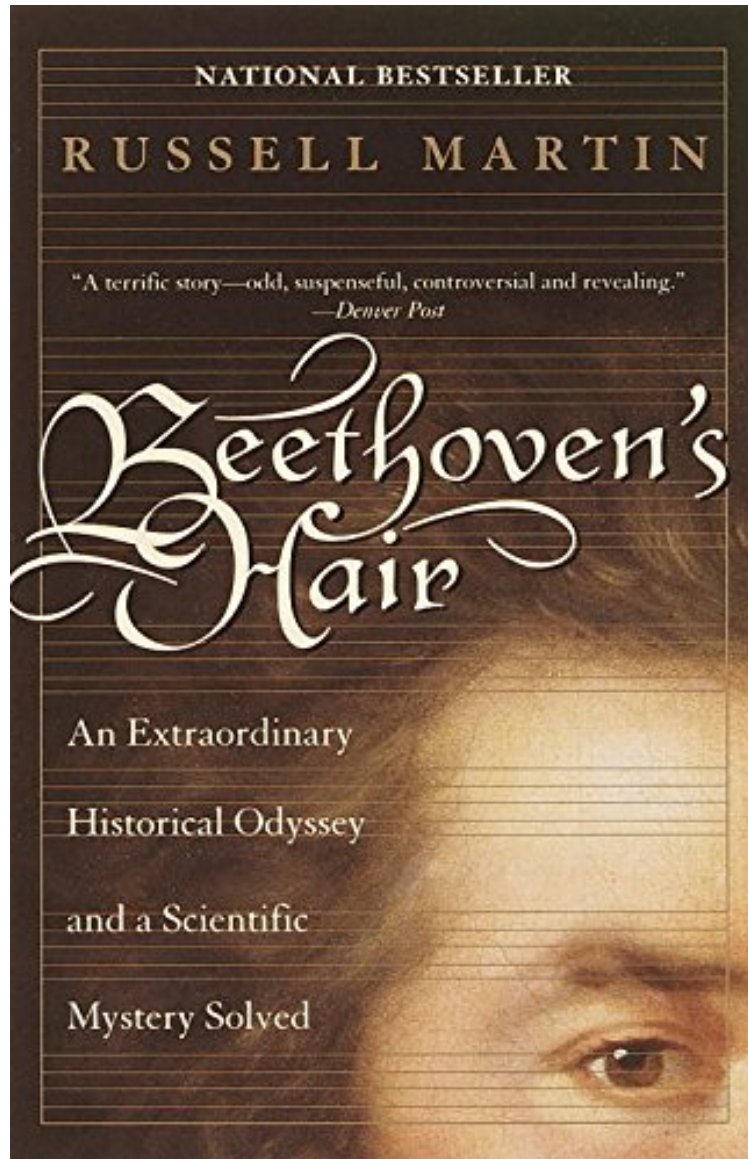


Beethoven's Hair: An Extraordinary Historical Odyssey and a Scientific Mystery Solved

Russell Martin

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#760731 in Books Russell Martin 2001-10-09 2001-10-09 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.00 x .60 x 5.20l, .70 #File Name: 076790351X275 pages Beethoven s Hair | File size: 61.Mb

Russell Martin : Beethoven's Hair: An Extraordinary Historical Odyssey and a Scientific Mystery Solved before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Beethoven's Hair: An Extraordinary Historical Odyssey and a Scientific Mystery Solved:

15 of 16 people found the following review helpful. One third of the volume, please! By M. M. V. Vooren Yes, it is

more about the hair and its owners, and its itinerary, than it is about Beethoven himself. The book could have been one third of its volume and be satisfactory. One has to read to the very last pages to find out what ailed Ludwig and killed him. I think the conclusion is correct, though. Actually, I think an article about the findings in a relevant science and/or classical music and history magazine would have been good enough for me. If I told you what the analytical conclusion of the hair test was, you'd not need to read this entire book. But I won't, lol. On a side note, the author knows next to nothing about different cultures in Austria. There is NO way that Ludwig van Beethoven would have ever been simply called "Herr Beethoven" in the city of Vienna, of all cities in Austria. In Salzburg, OK, but in Vienna? No way ever!! If you don't have a title in Vienna, even still in this century, the Viennese will make one up for you. Just calling an illustrious person "Mr. So-and-so" is like seeing them walk around stark-naked. And the viewer would feel one hundred times more embarrassed by it than the viewed. They might have called him "Maestro Beethoven", or maybe "Professor Beethoven", but never, ever Herr Beethoven! I am willing to put big money on this one, that is how sure I am of this. And while it won't change the story per se, it just irks me, because it sounds wrong in the historical-social context. Professional writers should do thorough research, and mind such details, or when in doubt, leave them out!

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. "extraordinary" is a good descriptor. By Rachel E. Pollock I do love a good, readable, well-paced nonfiction book on a compelling and odd topic, and this was a very good example of exactly that. Yes, it's ostensibly about how a lock of Beethoven's hair came to be auctioned by Sotheby's, and of course it weaves in a biographical sketch of the composer throughout, but it also takes the reader some pretty amazing and unexpected places: the heroic rescue efforts undertaken by the citizens of Denmark on behalf of their Jewish countrymen during the Holocaust, for example. Reminded me of other faves in this same vein, like the books of Paul Collins and Rebecca Skloot.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. It was a tedious read, so distracted by the writer's choice of ... By Fuzzy Furr I read this because it was a book club selection. It was a tedious read, so distracted by the writer's choice of writing style it was hard to sift through the verbiage to essential and somewhat interesting facts. The hops back and forth through time were hard to follow, and the long, long sentences forced me back to the beginnings at times to remember the simple subject and verb of the topic the author was trying to explain with too many dependent clauses and prepositional phrases and asides to add more words to meet the publisher's requirement. Pictures would have helped immensely as well. Whew! I got through it!

The basis for the movie of the same name, an astonishing tale of one lock of hair and its amazing travels--from nineteenth-century Vienna to twenty-first-century America. When Ludwig van Beethoven lay dying in 1827, a young musician named Ferdinand Hiller came to pay his respects to the great composer, snipping a lock of Beethoven's hair as a keepsake--as was custom at the time--in the process. For a century, the lock of hair was a treasured Hiller family relic, until it somehow found its way to the town of Gilleleje, in Nazi-occupied Denmark. There, it was given to a local doctor, Kay Fremming, who was deeply involved in the effort to help save hundreds of hunted and frightened Jews. After Fremming's death, his daughter assumed ownership of the lock, and eventually consigned it for sale at Sotheby's, where two American Beethoven enthusiasts, Ira Brilliant and Che Guevara, purchased it in 1994. Subsequently, they and others instituted a series of complex forensic tests in the hope of finding the probable causes of the composer's chronically bad health, his deafness, and the final demise that Ferdinand Hiller had witnessed all those years ago. The results, revealed for the first time here, are the most compelling explanation yet offered for why one of the foremost musicians the world has ever known was forced to spend much of his life in silence. In *Beethoven's Hair*, Russell Martin has created a rich historical treasure hunt, a tale of false leads, amazing breakthroughs, and incredible revelations. This unique and fascinating book is a moving testament to the power of music, the lure of relics, the heroism of the Resistance movement, and the brilliance of molecular science.

.com A well-publicized 1994 Sotheby's auction listed, among other musical artifacts and ephemera on the block, a lock of Beethoven's hair. The high-bidders of the hair, two Beethoven enthusiasts, were easy enough to identify by their oddball names: one was a doctor named Che Guevara, the other a retired real estate developer named Ira Brilliant. But the real story, as author Russell Martin attempts to explain in this book, is how did the lock end up on the auction block? More important, can we learn anything from a 175-year-old snippet of hair? Somehow, author Russell Martin attempts to weave biographical information about Beethoven's life with scientific findings about his hair (the two buyers had the lock DNA-tested), as well as trace the path the hair took, from the great composer's head right into the present. It's a tall order and one at which Martin partially succeeds. His facts about Beethoven and Ferdinand Hiller (the original keeper of the lock) are solid, but he hypothesizes at length about how the hair ended up in a small port town in Denmark during the Nazi occupation. Likewise, he spends nearly the entire second half of the book describing the lives of Guevara and Brilliant, occasionally sounding more like a press agent than a journalist. Subtitled "An Extraordinary Historical Odyssey and a Musical Mystery Solved," *Beethoven's Hair* doesn't truly solve any musical mysteries, but it is a fascinating, original read for Beethoven-philes who want to learn a little bit more about their favorite composer. --Jason Verlinde From Publishers Weekly Six years ago an improbable pair: a retired real-estate developer Ira Brilliant and a Mexican-American doctor named (remarkably) Che Guevara. They got together to buy a lock

of hair that was snipped from Beethoven's head on his deathbed by a young musician. The hair, enclosed in a glass locket, passed through the musician's family, then, during WWII, into the possession of a Danish doctor who helped smuggle Jews through Denmark into safety in Sweden. When the doctor's daughter put the locket up for sale through Sotheby's in London, Brilliant and Guevara, ardent collectors of Beethoven memorabilia, pooled their resources to buy it. They acquired it for a little over \$7,000. After recounting these events in detail, Martin moves on to the "newsy" last third of the book: the two collectors submitted the hair to the most up-to-date DNA analysis, with results they and their publisher regarded as so earth shaking that the book was originally embargoed, lest word of its revelations should leak prematurely. The results, however, do not seem particularly startling, though they shed an interesting light on Beethoven's artistic integrity and the cause of his lifelong ill health. For one thing, the analysts found no trace of morphine, suggesting that the composer, often in great pain, foreswore its use so as to keep his mind clear for his work. They also found abnormally high concentrations of lead, indicating that at some time in his life Beethoven may have been subjected to lead poisoning, which would account for many of his health problems, including his deafness. That's hardly enough to make a book, however, and Martin's account is padded with a great deal of repetitious material on the collectors themselves, a long passage on the Jewish escape from Denmark and familiar tales from the composer's life. Ultimately, the book comes off as a scholarly article that got out of hand. (Oct.) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist Lead poisoning, eh? Where was OSHA when Western music needed it? Ray Olson Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved