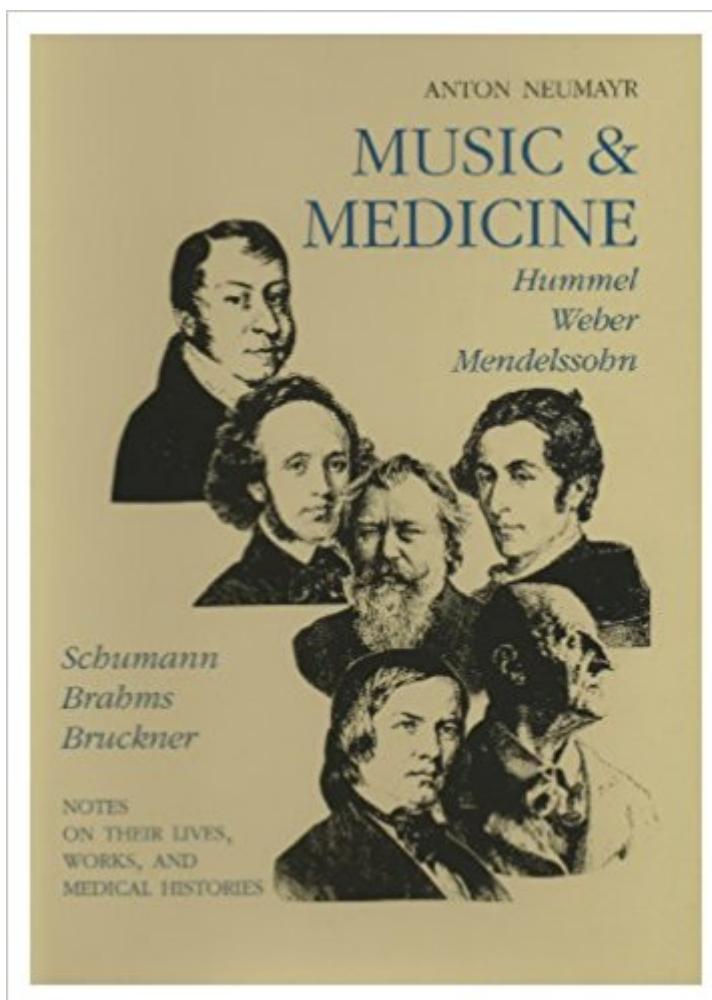


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Music And Medicine: Hummel, Weber, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Brahms, Bruckner: On Their Lives, Works, And Medical Histories



Synopsis

In this second volume of the 3-volume Music & Medicine series, Neumayr investigates the lives, music, and medical histories of Johann Nepomuk Hummel, Carl Maria von Weber, Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Robert Schumann, Johannes Brahms, and Anton Bruckner. Neumayr, a world-recognized physician and scientist, presents biographies of these master composers, with special attention to their illnesses and diagnostic interpretations. With great acumen, he scrutinizes the sources and the statements of contemporaries, gathering memories and facts, studying theories on their deaths. In many cases, he contradicts with expert competence his medical colleagues who died long ago, for although he has consulted letters and documents contemporary to the musicians themselves, his diagnoses are based on the medical knowledge of the present day, knowledge not available to the doctors of those days.

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Customer Reviews

...The author cleverly reconstructs each composer's life...intertwining how health and psychological states affected, and even inspired, compositions and performances.... While the book clearly targets a medical community interested in music, it is equally intriguing for musicians..; Amy Knutson-Stack, Instrumentalist... I unwrapped the book, took a seat, and devoured it. It is fascinating. Dr. Gerd Schäflein, Dresden State Opera The narrow divide between genius and madness has always exercised a special fascination...the extraordinary casts a spell of its own...and the particular attraction of this book is that the author is not only looking over the shoulders of the composers but

also peering into their minds and bodies. German Book Trade Gazette, Frankfurt An extremely well-done translation from the original German...combining excerpts from biographical writings, personal letters and diaries....Written from the prospective of today's medical knowledge, Neumayr is able to more accurately assess medical problems...(with) additional emphasis placed on how the composer's health influenced his work....It is spellbinding reading. Gail Berenson, Journal of the American Music Teacher It is difficult to favor any chapter as each brings a wealth of medical and musical history....The greatest value of Neumayr's book is that it involves the reader emotionally in the lives of creative human beings, who were also great composers. He accomplishes this with scholarship but especially with humanity, never succumbing to sentimentality. Richard J. Bing, MD, Nature Medicine These unique volumes, filled with stimulating information, anecdotes, and sometimes far-fetched theories, will enthrall any musically oriented biomedical researcher. Robert M. Genta, *Helicobacter* --Robert M. Genta, *Helicobacter*In four.. chapters, the biographies of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert are carefully presented. Special attention is given to health, both physical and psychological, throughout life and at its end. .. the author emphasizes the impact of illness on the composers' relationships with family members and doctors, and on their musical composition. Evidence is derived from a wealth of primary sources, often with long citations from letters, poetry, musical scores, prescriptions, diaries, the remarkable chat books of Beethoven. Neumayr also takes on the host of other medical biographers who have preceded him in trying to retrospectively 'diagnose' these immortal dead. Late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Vienna emerges as a remarkable city of musical innovation and clinical medicine. The composers' encounters with each other link these biographies. The disease concepts of the era, prevalent infections, and preferred therapies are treated with respect. Rigid public health rules in Vienna concerning burial practices meant that ceremonies could not take place in cemeteries and may explain why some unusual information is available and why other seemingly simple facts are lost. In this readable, scholarly book, plausible answers are explored to burning questions: Was Mozart really poisoned? If not, of what did he die? And why was his grave unmarked? What caused Beethoven's deafness? And his longstanding abdominal pain? Did he die of drink? Can Schubert's syphilis be related to his music? Did he have a premonition that he would die at age 31? Historians shun retrospective diagnosis, but physicians are irresistibly drawn to it, especially when it involves artists. The danger lies in trying to impose our own views on the past--and in the impossibility of actually answering contemporary questions from sources written in other times, for other purposes. Neumayr recognized the problem when it came to divining the motives for Schubert's musical productivity as an intimation of mortality: such an interpretation runs the risk of using our knowledge

of historical events to infer thoughts and ideas in retrospect that have nothing to do with reality (391). But he seems less troubled by the possibility of presentist interpretation when it comes to medicine. In fairness, his medical diagnoses are well argued and mostly convincing. The conclusion of each chapter shifts in tone from a medical biography of a brilliant musician to a clinical pathological conference of a deceased patient, complete with photographs of three of the composers' skulls. One irony is that the subtle, biographical work contrasts with the confidence of the medical analysis. --Medical Humanities, Jaclyn Duffin

Anton Neumayr, a graduate of the renowned Salzburg Conservatory of Music, the Mozarteum, and a professor and doctor of internal medicine of international reputation, has used his unique combination of credentials and talents to prepare this work of exceptional authority, written in a way that makes it accessible to every lover of classical music. As an Austrian physician living and practicing in Vienna, Dr. Neumayr is intimately familiar with the Vienna schools of medicine of the past two centuries; the German language of most of the relevant source documentation is his own. He has sought to provide an objective review of the diseases and deaths of these six composers of the German Romantic era. In the course of his investigations, Dr. Neumayr touches on many of the misconceptions and faulty diagnoses put forth over the years.

Very good book that analyzes the careers of these musical genius, the influences on each other and many times learn about their rivalries, and most notably as the book intends, examine their intersections with infirmities that allow us to see the human side of them and better understand the effects of these setbacks on their musical works. In addition it quotes many useful references for each composer. Easy and very enjoyable book to read.

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