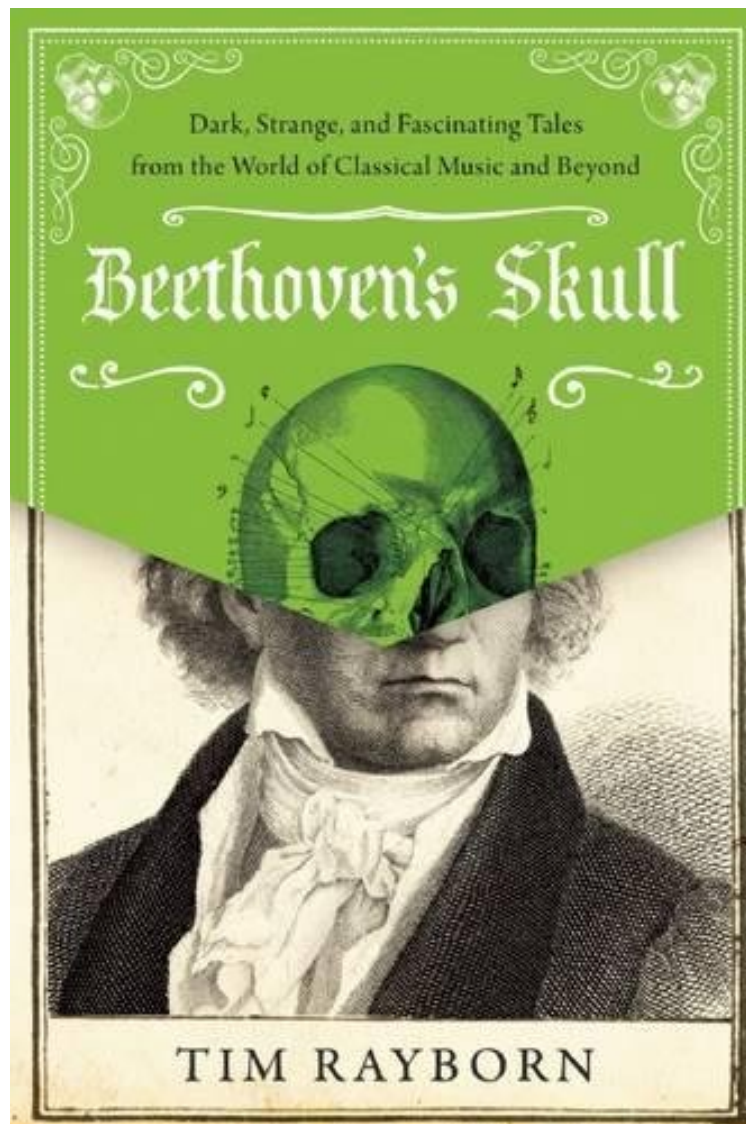


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Beethoven's Skull: Dark, Strange, and Fascinating Tales from the World of Classical Music and Beyond

Tim Rayborn

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Beethoven's Skull is an unusual and often humorous survey of the many strange happenings in the history of Western classical music. Proving that good music and shocking tabloid-style stories make excellent bedfellows, it presents tales of revenge, murder, curious accidents, and strange fates that span more than two thousand years. Highlights include: A cursed song that kills those who hear it A composer who lovingly cradles the head of Beethoven's corpse when his remains are exhumed half a century after his death A fifteenth-century German poet who sings of the real-life Dracula A dream of the devil that inspires a virtuoso violin piece Unlike many music books that begin their histories with the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries, Beethoven's Skull takes the reader back to the world of ancient Greece and Rome, progressing through the Middle Ages and all the way into the twentieth century. It also looks at myths and legends, superstitions, and musical mysteries, detailing the ways that musicians and their peers have been rather horrible to one another over the centuries.

"Is there a classical music history better suited to the modern world than Tim Rayborn's Beethoven's Skull? Almost every entry in it would have been Tweeted or placed on Facebook the minute anyone caught wind."—Lawrence Toppman, Charlotte Observer "Sex, drugs, and rock and roll: certainly a modern rallying cry, and not usually what the average person visualizes when thinking about classical music. Professional musician and music historian Rayborn gleefully proves that kind of thinking wrong in this rollicking, if grisly, stroll through the history of music. . . . This impeccably researched yet eminently approachable book is sure to keep readers engrossed (pun intended) to the very end." —Library Journal "An enjoyable source of well-researched material and quirky anecdotes." —Publishers Weekly "In this book, you'll read about composers and their works, music and those who made it, and the scandalous, scary, and strange things you never learned from music lessons. Set in different eras of composition, it's also easy to find entries on your favorite composers or to learn about new ones. If you think classical music is boring and stuffy, this short-chaptered, informative book will make you change your tune." —Terri Schlichenmeyer, USA Today "A treasure trove of juicy bits about composers of classical music and their eras. Just the kind of anecdotes that spark curiosity and give readers and listeners a real human perspective. Certainly there's nothing dry, boring, or 'elitist' here! A fun read!" —Mary Ann Nichols, announcer, NPR Boston affiliate WCRB Boston, and pre-concert speaker, Boston Classical Orchestra "An intriguing and highly entertaining read that will transform your view of classical music and its composers. Tim Rayborn uses a delightful mix of humor and horror to create a fascinating and utterly compelling guide into every corner of classical music history. A treat in equal measure for both novices and devoted listeners alike." —Mark Buckingham, illustrator of Sandman, Fables, Miracleman, Hellblazer, and Death "A fascinating and eminently readable book. Wearing its thorough research and factual detail lightly, Tim Rayborn's book entertains and informs in a delightful way. I shall be plundering its fact and anecdote for concert chat for many years to come." —William Lyons, director of The Dufay Collective, composer, and historical adviser for Shakespeare's Globe Theatre. "Tim Rayborn's clever and bewitching book, Beethoven's Skull, should come with a warning label: once you dive into it, you may not come up for air for a long, long time. Painstakingly researched and darkly humorous, Beethoven's Skull is one of those books that you buy as a gift for someone else and then end up keeping for yourself." —Tony Morris, producer of Classical Guitar Alive "A witty, fun, and informative gavotte through musical history." —Hallie Rubenhold, historian and author of The Lady In Red and Mistress of My Fate "A fascinating volume, full of the unexpected, this book is for every concert-goer who wants to get beyond the program notes, for every grandparent looking for a gift for a grandchild studying music, and listeners who find themselves wondering about the relationship between life and art." —Diana L. Paxson, author of Sword of Avalon and the Chronicles of Westria