

Book Notes

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1791: Mozart's Last Year
by H.C. Robbins Landon
Schirmer, 240 pages, \$19.95
Beethoven Essays
by Maynard Solomon
Harvard, 375 pages, \$29.50

Eminent musical scholars can be far from dull when they put their minds to it; they can also remind us that, where genius is concerned, the last word may never be spoken. H.C. Robbins Landon bows to no man when it comes to appreciating Mozart, proclaiming that his legacy "is as good an excuse for mankind's existence as we shall ever encounter and is perhaps, after all, a still small hope for our ultimate survival." His quest for the historical Mozart in the year of his death sets the record straight and should be read as an antidote to "Amadeus", if nothing else. An added beneficiary of his persuasive volume is Constanze, who suffered both from the fictionalists and the misogynistic attitudes of 19th century German musicologists. In all likelihood a good lady, after all.

Maynard Solomon's *Beethoven Essays* include far more than the title suggests, mov-

ing forward from the author's landmark biography into new and fascinating territory. His virtuoso command of different historical methods leads from intensely technical close reading of the record to tantalizing speculations about the composer's dreams, visions, and fantasies. Most revealing of all, however, is a superb translation and annotation of the fragmentary diary during the personal and stylistic crisis that extended from 1812 and the Seventh Symphony to 1818, the year of the "Hammerklavier" Sonata. For many, these pages will introduce a Beethoven largely unknown—intellectual, curious, and always searching in the realm where reason cannot move.

Jump in the Waves: A Memoir

by Jacqueline Piatigorski
St. Martin's, 181 pages, \$15.95

In the Music Library

by Ellen Hunnicutt
Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 147 pages, \$16.95

Toscanini's Fumble and Other Tales of Clinical Neurology

by Harold L. Klawans
Contemporary Books, 229 pages, \$17.95

Sometimes tangents are as interesting as the circles to which they are attached. These three books have little in common beyond their author's familiarity with music and seductive writing skill. *Jump in the Waves* is the memoir of Gregor Piatigorski's widow, but it is the woman and her feelings that engage us, not the cellist. Born a Rothchild, she gives us the often painful reverse side of "Lives of the Rich and Famous," starting with a miserably restrictive childhood and leading to a happy marriage, children, and accomplishments in aviation, tennis, and chess.

In the Music Library won last year's Drue Heinz prize for short fiction and the novella and 10 short stories speak quietly about the inner lives of people we feel we have known. Suffering is a sometime companion of most of her characters, and the world of studio, practice room, and concert stage is never far away.

Sick brains and damaged nerves are what *Toscanini's Fumble* is purportedly about, but these fascinating tales are far more than fragments from a casebook. The explanation of a widely reported Toscanini memory slip is one of several fascinating and often humorous examples of how our mental apparatus can go awry and sometimes recover.