



Beethoven – life and maladies

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In 2020 we celebrated the 250th anniversary of the birthday of the great Ludwig van Beethoven. In honour of the great composer, a number of events popped up. But also, as part of the Beethoven year, we were all COVID-driven and had to overcome lockdowns and restrictions. Luckily, the Society of Physicians was able to present “Everything what medical professionals should know about Ludwig van Beethoven: Pathology—ENT—Science—Art”, which was moderated by Mrs. Dr. Angetter-Pfeiffer from the Austrian Centre for Digital Humanities & Cultural Heritage (Austrian Academy of Science). Another celebration could also be held in the Pathological-Anatomical Collection of the Museum of Natural Sciences in Vienna: “Medical Humanities: Politzer 100—Beethoven 250—Raffael 500”, which was organised by Prof. H. Swoboda (Department of ENT, Vienna Hospital Hietzing). A lot of experts gave brilliant lectures about the life and diseases of Beethoven. The discussions were lively and interesting. At the end, all speakers were asked to submit their talks to the special issue of the *WMW*, which you can now find published here.

Will Meredith, board member of the American Beethoven Society and emeritus of the San José State University presents the diagnostic challenges and the best sources of information to diagnose Beethoven's physical and mental illnesses. Christian Reiter, emeritus professor of the Department of Forensic Sciences of the Vienna Medical University, brings us closer the intensely discussed topic of Beethoven's cause

of death. Mrs. Dr. Rokitansky-Tilscher gives us insight into Beethoven's death as the starting point for Rokitansky's family connections in the art world, and shows how the autopsy of Beethoven had an influence on Rokitansky's method of correlating clinical symptoms with morphological findings. Andreas Erfurth, head of the Department of Psychiatry and Psychotherapy (Vienna Hospital Hietzing), describes and analyses the mental maladies from his point of view as a psychiatrist. Finally, my article on Beethoven's life and death masks goes together with a description of the history of face masks in general, with which we became quite familiar due to the current pandemic.

Overall, the special issue of the *WMW* presents highlights and new aspects of Beethoven research in the field of medicine, for which I would like to thank all the authors for their contribution under the special circumstances of a pandemic. For those who would like to take a look at current Beethoven research, two current books are recommended [1, 2]. Also, a few journal articles are published that would be of interest of our readers [3–9].

Conflict of interest R. Sedivy declares that he has no competing interests.

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