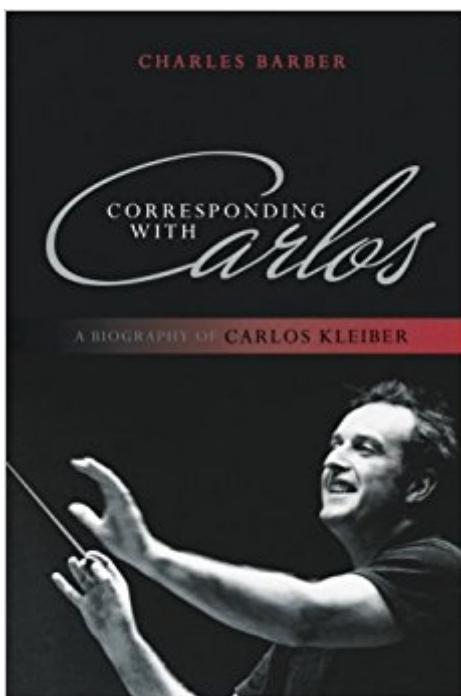


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Corresponding With Carlos: A Biography Of Carlos Kleiber



Synopsis

Drawing heavily on their 15-year correspondence, this book is the first English-language biography of Carlos Kleiber ever written. Charles Barber offers unique insights into how Kleiber worked. This biography considers Kleiber's singular aesthetic, his playful and often erudite sense of humor, his reputation for perfectionism, his much-studied baton technique, and the famous concert and opera performances he conducted. It explores the great conductor's musical lineage and the contemporary contexts in which he worked, and it repudiates myths that inevitably crop up around genius and reflects on Kleiber's contribution to modern musical performance.

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Customer Reviews

There's much, much more to Kleiber than the myth-making. At least there is now, thanks to Charles Barber's astonishing new book, *Corresponding with Carlos: A Biography of Carlos Kleiber*. Charles had a unique relationship with Kleiber. As a conducting student at Stanford University, with dazzling boldness and naivety, he wrote to Kleiber out of the blue and said he wanted to study with him. The key was Barber's use of humour and irony to attempt to elicit a response from Kleiber – it worked. Barber never formally became a student of Kleiber's (nobody ever did), but from 1989 until the maestro's death, he corresponded with the supposedly unknowable Carlos, and as well as vivid account of Kleiber's life, Barber's book publishes pretty well the complete letters he received. And they're a revelation. Kleiber proves as virtuosically funny and self-deprecating as he was incandescent on the

podium....Barber's book does more than any other I know to simultaneously reveal the truth behind the Kleiber myths and to illuminate the deeper mystery of how his recordings and films continue to have such a talismanic power. This is a brilliant summary of Kleiber's way of making music. (The Guardian)Barber is artistic director of City Opera Vancouver, with a longstanding, busy career in California music life, including contributions to Classical Voice. Corresponding With Carlos: A Biography of Carlos Kleiber offers unique insights into how Kleiber worked. This biography considers his singular aesthetic, his playful and often erudite sense of humor, his reputation for perfectionism, his much-studied baton technique, and the famous concert and opera performances he conducted. It explores the great conductor's musical lineage and the contemporary contexts in which he worked. (San Francisco Classical Voice)Once the book turns from biographical sketch to lively correspondence, we get the thrill of reading "hearing" the voice of Carlos Kleiber, and all is light. (The Wall Street Journal)Charles Barber's book on Carlos Kleiber is fascinating, remarkable and unexpected....Rich in details....it contains unique jewels as one can appreciate Kleiber's encyclopedic knowledge....While Charles Barber's book is comprehensive, it is easy to read and the author's fascination and respect is palpable at every page....This is probably the musical book of the year. (ConcertoNet: The Classical Music Network)Charles Barber's Corresponding with Carlos: A Biography of Carlos Kleiber represents an admiring younger conductor's efforts, begun during his graduate-student days, to draw out a brilliant but eccentric and reclusive maestro through multiple layers of correspondence. (SymphonyNOW) "An artist par excellence", and "creativity par excellence" - those are the definitions that come to mind when one thinks of Carlos Kleiber. Each time he conducted, it seemed that the music was being created anew that very moment in all its greatness, beauty and freshness. How wonderful that now we have a book about this genius. Bravo and many heartfelt thanks to Dr. Charles Barber for his work! (Evgeny Kissin, pianist)Having heard most of the world's best conductors in the last 35 years, I can safely say that none brought so much passion, energy and exquisite musicality and beauty to their work as did Carlos Kleiber. La Bohème and Der Rosenkavalier under his baton at the Met will remain among my most treasured memories. In this fascinating work Charles Barber offers a rare glimpse into the enigma that was Carlos Kleiber. (Valery Ryvkin, conductor)This is mainly a book so fascinating that for once the "impossible to put down" cliché is appropriate. Charles Barber was, in 1989, a young music teacher and conductor who sent a short letter to Kleiber, and to his amazement received a reply a few days later. He wanted to be Kleiber's student, but there could be no question of that. Instead, they became frequent correspondents, and all of Kleiber's letters concerning music are published here, with

enough of Barber's letters to make the exchanges intelligible. What makes Kleiber's correspondence with Barber especially interesting is that Barber regularly sent Kleiber video cassettes of the great conductors, eliciting a deluge of comments on their style, greatness (or weaknesses), and their music. Kleiber's criticism alternates with his commentary on his own slender repertoire and his growing distaste for conducting. The first 180 pages are devoted to a biographical sketch, with many quotations from letters: illuminating, but I doubt whether many readers will be able to resist the temptation to leap ahead to the epistolary section. (BBC Music Magazine) As a musician and old Kleiber fan, one cannot resist the temptation to whole-heartedly recommend this book. (Teatro Colón Magazine)

Charles Barber is artistic director of City Opera Vancouver. He is the author of *Lost in the Stars: The Forgotten Musical Life of Alexander Siloti* (Scarecrow, 2002). More information can be seen on his website www.correspondingwithcarlos.com

First, viewed with a critical eye, my impressions about the book were a bit mixed, sort of like the book's narrative itself. The author, himself a conductor, is obviously a vigorous fan, so a neutral biography seems to be out of the question from the start. But who can blame him. There are many of us who love Carlos Kleiber as a medium of divine music, as well as his imperfect nature. It is not difficult to imagine him thinking similarly about Beethoven. The man's resting place in Slovenia which at every occasion provides a meditative journey of tranquility is perhaps the best indicator of Carlos' enigmatic and tormented character which nevertheless continues to inspire. In any case, I do think that the author did a great job. Bravo, Maestro! His correspondence with Carlos is a treasure and he well knows it. But regardless of that the price of the book should not necessarily be in a class of Carlos' conducting fees. So, this is not a definite bio of Carlos Kleiber and the question is whether we're ever going to get one, considering the secretive nature of his being. But this book is fun, a lot of fun, many well known and less known anecdotes of the fascinating man and his world. His character simply radiates from the pages. There are many humorous treats which will be devoured by Kleiber's fans. I definitely propose watching, reading and listening to the sources mentioned in the book, and the read is an even bigger pleasure. The author did a good but limited effort with the bio part of the research, vastly inferior to say Osbourne's Karajan bio (a must read!) although the way I see it, this part, by no means a minor feat, is to be viewed merely as a prelude to the letters themselves. These are a treasure, that's for certain. They convey vividly Kleiber's complexity as a person, his playful side, formidable intellect as well as his hyperactive humor and

self-doubt. A fascinating perfectionist of a man indeed, and true to himself and the music he so loved. Another important stone in the mosaic of Carlitos' already stupendous pedigree. Huge thumbs up for the loads of fun and joy that the book brings, big thumbs down for the price.

If you have seen Kleiber conducting Beethoven's 4th with the Concertgebouw on YouTube, you will have some idea of the unusual man you will meet in this book. No conductor ever captured Ludwig's playfulness and joy as well as did this conductor, and those qualities are to be found in the man as well. Kleiber had an Austrian father, an American mother, and was brought up in South America. As might be expected, he had an outrageous sense of the oddity of the many languages he spoke and wrote. His nonsensical letters to Barber alone are worth the price of the book. Kleiber comes off as a man who loved making music more than making a career. He was notoriously demanding of rehearsal time and proper preparation; conducted only what he liked; recorded very little, and felt equally at home with Wagner and Johann Strauss Jr. A very great man and musician, someone whose shining presence is everywhere in his music and his conversation. Not many like him anymore.

For anyone interested in the art of orchestral conducting - or music in general - or the interaction between talent and genius - this is one of the most valuable and enjoyable works imaginable. Charles Barber has given us a gift (...well, at a price! But well worth it...) almost beyond imagining: an open window into the mind of one of the greatest recreative artists of any generation. The fact of this correspondence is improbable beyond words, but we can be forever grateful to Dr. Barber for establishing a personal and professional friendship that prompted Carlos Kleiber to expound - in great detail, with great wit and almost painful self-deprecation - on a multitude of topics that are enjoyable to the lay person and indispensable to the serious musician. The anecdotes alone are worth the price - who could have known that he "stole" a technique from Duke Ellington to get the effect he wanted for the opening of Beethoven's *Coriolanus*, or of his enormous respect for the extraordinarily gifted and musically illiterate Danny Kaye as a conductor? But it's the insights Kleiber shares regarding specific works and the process of working with creative artists that are truly priceless to artists of all stripes. To the author, thank you - and to the rest - buy and enjoy!!

NOTE to Kindle version readers: interactive endnotes are not enabled, so one cannot navigate between the text and the corresponding notes. Nor are the endnotes set in separate sections in the Table of Contents so as to be bookmarked by the reader to make toggling between chapter and

endnotes useful as a workaround. With 439 endnotes to Chapter 2 alone (good grief!), this is highly problematic to say the least and nearly renders this book unreadable. The work is organized into just 3 chapters, #2 being quite long. This organization makes a sort of sense, but is impractical for the e-reader. While we wait for a true scholarly biography of the enigmatic Carlos Kleiber, we have this: the only English-language book about this magnetic Maestro available and perhaps the only one we're likely to have. It does not purport to be a full-scale biography of the man, as indicated by the title, yet it seems to be about as well researched as it's possible for a work like this to be. Still, because it is written from the perspective of an admiring conductor who began an unlikely correspondence with Kleiber while still a student conductor, this work is at times tinged with a hagiographical tone. It is not, nor is it intended to be, a wholly objective study of the man. That said, it may never be possible to fully dispel the mists surrounding the elusive, evasive, much-lauded but poorly understood Kleiber -- to include his relationship with both of his parents, not just his conductor-father -- to achieve the sort of biography of the man that the world deserves.

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