



to a literary journal, *Die vernünftigen Tadlerinnen* – ostensibly written by women but actually penned by men using female pseudonyms – which promoted the agency of women as crucial for the establishment of a German national culture.

The afternoon session featured one further panel that focused on music: ‘Legacies of the Enlightenment’. In ‘Claudio Monteverdi and *La Favola d’Orfeo*: Character Construction and the Depiction of Emotions’, Julia Coelho (University of Missouri) explored the construction of character on the early operatic stage by examining the impact of Monteverdi’s use of musical gesture, involving voice type, rhetorical devices and stylistic conventions. Her argument was that Monteverdi’s influential operatic developments were connected to the limited parameters of his cultural and intellectual environment. Also on that panel was Laurel Zeiss (Baylor University), who presented ‘The “Persistent” Eighteenth Century in Recent Opera Productions’. Looking at the directors William Kentridge and Peter Sellars, among others, along with the pasticcio *Enchanted Island* (2011), a compilation of baroque music premiered by the Metropolitan Opera, her paper uncovered a number of eighteenth-century elements that can enliven modern opera production even today.

For scholars from a wide range of eighteenth-century research orientations, this conference provided a stimulating mix of ideas, discussions, roundtables and informal gatherings. While it is common to host interdisciplinary conferences that appear to be diverse in methods and fields, it is less often that they cohere as an opportunity for meaningful exchange. ‘Conversing among the Ruins’ readily lived up to the conversational spirit of its title. Each panel I attended was filled with good discussion, useful commentary and engaging critical inquiry. A short two days in Las Vegas was a robust intellectual adventure, augmented by many musical high points.

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BACH ON SCREEN

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Around thirty scholars from several countries assembled at the Baldwin Wallace Conservatory to explore the music of J. S. Bach in films, television, video games and advertisements. The conference, sponsored by the Riemenschneider Bach Institute, was an unusual assembly in that it included both scholars of eighteenth-century music as well as academics who focus on twentieth- and twenty-first-century media, two groups whose scholarship only occasionally overlaps. The conference was intended to examine the use of Bach’s music in narrative and non-narrative media, to challenge longstanding assumptions about the dominance of ‘romantic’ musical language in film and to build on both Bach and media studies by bringing to bear diverse methodological and disciplinary perspectives.

A theme that pervaded the conference was the uses of the Toccata and Fugue in D minor, BWV565, which has been by far the most prominent work of Bach on the screen. Tobias Plebuch (Uppsala universitet) pointed out that the beginning high A, played with a mordent on an organ, is not only the shortest but also the most easily recognized motive in music history, and one semantically encoded with a plethora of changing meanings and allusions. The Toccata has appeared in at least fifty-three feature films, including *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1932), *The Black Cat* (1934) and *20,000 Leagues Under The Sea* (1954). In the 1930s it became associated with the Gothic film tradition, used as a demonic piece to indicate evil or the supernatural, replete with stock narrative elements such as evil geniuses and damsels in distress. But it was also used to portray



the sublime in films such as *Fantasia* (1940) and *La Dolce Vita* (1960). After the 1960s, the Toccata became trivialized as an object of comedic parody, for example in *The Great Race* (1965), *Barbarella* (1968), the television show *Lost in Space* (1965) and in advertisements and pinball machines.

Dana Plank (Ohio State University) examined the use of the Toccata in video games in the 1980s. While it still often evoked the macabre, the piece sometimes merely served as sonic wallpaper, with no discernible relationship to the image, as the designers of the video games often availed themselves of a ready-made collection of cultural allusions. The Toccata's opening motive became a metaquote, alluding to the generic topos already established by the use of Bach's music in film. Some of the music in these games contains chromatic and contrapuntal inaccuracies, often the result of programming errors by coders without musical training, but which none the less provide interesting new meanings to the work.

Kristi Brown-Montesano (Colburn Conservatory of Music) showed that while in the early twentieth century the Toccata was most often used to evoke horror, it was later replaced by another Bach work, the Goldberg Variations, BWV988. Brown-Montesano traced the mid-century rise in popularity of Bach's keyboard music in general, and of the Goldberg Variations in particular, pointing to several recordings of the 1940s and especially to those by Glenn Gould (1955) and Walter/Wendy Carlos. The latter's *Switched-On Bach* (1968) was lauded for its 'mathematical precision', and these recordings reflected post-war anxiety about science, technology, violence and dehumanization. They also put keyboard works at the centre of the culture, supplanting the vocal works that had previously been dominant. From the 1970s on, the Goldberg Variations replaced the Toccata as the favourite device to evoke horror, violence and evil genius in films such as *Slaughterhouse Five* (1972), where it depicts the destruction of Dresden, and *The Terminal Man* (1974), where it portrays a violent, brain-damaged computer genius. These films foreshadow the work's most prominent evocation in the horror genre, for the cultured yet cannibalistic psychopath Hannibal Lecter in *Silence of the Lambs* (1991).

The use of Bach's music to portray evil genius became an ongoing trope, as discussed by Reba Wissner (Montclair State University), who focused on the episode 'The Sixth Finger' from the popular television show *The Outer Limits* (1963). The episode portrays a rapidly evolving, futuristic super-genius whose mathematical abilities are only matched by his virtuosic keyboard abilities, displayed in his performance of various preludes and fugues from the Well-Tempered Clavier (WTC), despite his never having played the piano. Bach's association with both genius and virtuosity is underscored by the use of the 1955 recording by Gould, who was also portrayed in popular culture as a 'mutant' virtuosic genius. The episode emphasizes the link between complex mathematics and Bach's music, which confirms the timelessness of the latter – yet another trope that has pervaded popular perceptions of the composer.

Beyond discussion of Bach in horror films, the conference also addressed his music in art films by auteurs such as Pier Paolo Pasolini, Jean-Luc Godard and Woody Allen. Though none of the papers directly addressed the films of Ingmar Bergman, whose use of Bach's music was very influential, the Swedish director loomed large over the proceedings. To this end, James Deaville (Carleton University) presented a five-minute tribute film entitled 'Bach on Screen: The Trailer', which showed several famous examples of Bergman's use of Bach's music.

Famously, Woody Allen's preferred musical vehicle is Dixieland Jazz, though, as Per F. Broman (Bowling Green State University) pointed out, the director often delves into classical music as well. Allen often uses Bach in an intertextual relationship to Bergman's films, as he does in *Hannah and Her Sisters* (1986), alluding to Bergman's *Fanny and Alexander* (1982), and in *Another Woman* (1988), alluding to Bergman's *Wild Strawberries* (1957). Like Bergman, Allen provides only instrumental versions of Bach's music, ostensibly to remove any religious associations. Bach, and classical music in general, are upper-class markers in Allen's films, often appearing in diegetic settings such as operas, symphony concerts or chamber music played at social gatherings. Thus the Prelude in C minor, BWV847, from WTC Book 1, which appears in both *Melinda and Melinda* (2004) and *Irrational Man* (2015), serves as a device to indicate not just the high-class setting of the characters, but their erudition and virtuosity as well. Despite the fact that many of Allen's films are comedies, he almost never uses Bach as a comedic vehicle. The music instead provides a seriousness of



purpose, accentuating poignant moments in the narrative, and is often followed by a light-hearted jazz tune that changes the mood.

Michael Baumgartner (Cleveland State University) examined the use of Bach's music in Godard's 1985 film *Je vous salue, Marie*, a modern re-telling of the story of the Virgin Mary, and part of the director's 'Sublime Trilogy'. The choice of Bach was unusual, as Godard's classical composer of choice is usually Beethoven. Using fragments from the St Matthew Passion, BWV244, the Passacaglia in C minor, BWV582, and the Toccata and Fugue in D minor, Godard sublimates a worldly, human story of a contemporary Swiss teenage girl, elevating her to a divine level. Godard continues the nineteenth- and twentieth-century tradition of understanding Bach as both the quintessential composer of sacred music and the unrivalled master of the 'most sublime' of all late baroque music.

The St Matthew Passion also appears prominently in the works of Pasolini, and it is used in a similar fashion. I (Mark Brill, University of Texas at San Antonio) examined Pasolini's film *Accattone* (1960), which also provided a new context for Bach's sacred music. The film portrays a gritty underclass world, where violence and poverty are primal elements, far removed from the economic and social 'progress' of post-war Italy. Bach's music sublimated and transcended the marginalized characters, often contradicting the profane visual and narrative elements of the film. The director's musical aestheticization of violence was very influential, embraced by many subsequent film auteurs, including Martin Scorsese, whose *Casino* (1995) paid direct homage to Pasolini by using Bach's Passion in similar aesthetic and mimetic fashion. But Pasolini's use of music went beyond aesthetic enhancement. Bach's Passion, as a religious object, transforms his characters into mythological, spiritual figures who become both sacrificed and sacrosanct.

Olga Haldey (University of Maryland College Park) examined the use of Bach's Mass in B minor, BWV232, in the Soviet ballet film *Fouetté* (1986). The film – as well as the ballet within the film – are not only visual but also aural artefacts. The fusion of image, music and gesture elevates the narrative to the level of unreal metaphorical allegory. Bach's music, towering over the compilation score, highlights a complex, multi-layered plot with various levels of allusion and metaphor. It gradually replaces not only the other music but also the dialogue, culminating in the final pas de deux, danced to the 'Et Incarnatus Est' movement of the mass. The music emerges as a counterpoint to the film's narrative, and eventually becomes the inner voice of the main character, and of her creation.

Two papers presented historical studies of Bach's music in specific industries. James M. Doering (Randolph-Macon College) assessed the extent of Bach's music in silent-era movie theatres, based on popular trade magazines, cue sheets and newspaper reports from the 1910s and 1920s. One problem Doering uncovered was the presence of various other composers who bore the name Bach and the misattribution of works to the German composer, creating confusion among publishers, performers and an unsuspecting public. Although works by Beethoven, Rossini and Wagner were more prominent, Bach nevertheless had an increasingly important presence in early twentieth-century theatres. Among the most popular Bach pieces were the 'Air on the G String' from the Third Orchestral Suite, BWV1068, and the Bach/Gounod *Avé Maria*, based on the Prelude in C major, BWV846, from WTC Book 1.

These and other works remained in the repertoire throughout the silent era and later became material for stereotyping. Doering attributed the prominence of Bach's music to the rise of theatre organs in the 1920s, to the fact that Bach figured prominently in the repertoire of the Society of Theater Organists, and to the rise of legal and copyright issues, particularly the establishment of the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP), which caused publishers to turn to Bach. At the same time, contemporary commentators often disparaged Bach's music, complaining that it was too dry, too rigid or too complex for moving pictures, or that it was a marker of stuffy high culture.

Peter Kupfer (Southern Methodist University) examined Bach's music in television advertisements, drawing from a database he has assembled of over 140 advertisements from recent decades. Bach was the third most quoted composer, and the most used Bach pieces were the Prelude from the Cello Suite in G major, BWV1007, and the Prelude in C major from WTC Book 1, which together accounted for seventy per



cent of all uses. Citing advertisements from companies such as MetLife, American Express and AllState – companies that offer insurance or financial products, and which require a level of trust – Kupfer concluded that modern popular culture has assigned Bach's music a function of reassurance, protection and relief. The cello prelude works well in narratives of reassurance because the solo player attempts to overcome the challenge of the counterpoint. The piece builds from a single musical line, cutting through a complex world, finally culminating in a grand resolution. Further, reactions to the use of classical music in television advertisements, including comments posted to social media sites, corroborate Kupfer's conclusions: viewers equate the cello piece with calmness and the disappearance of conflict and frustration. The artistic director of one of the advertisements confirmed that, in addition to budget considerations, Bach's music was selected for its emotional impact and its ability to break through the clutter.

The papers presented at this conference will be published in the 2019 issues of *BACH: Journal of the Riemenschneider Bach Institute*.

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