

ARTS 578: The Fifth Evangelist: The Sacred Repertoire of J.S. Bach

Sven Soderlund, Ed Norman, Dietrich Bartel, Evan Krieder

May 22–26; 8:30 – 11:30am

1 or 2 graduate credit hours; or 1 audit hour

COURSE DESCRIPTION

At the heart of Western classical music stands the towering figure of Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750). Although Bach made no distinction between “sacred” and “secular” in his compositions (signing “SDG” [Soli Deo Gloria] at the end of most of his works, no matter the genre), the focus of this course is on the music Bach composed for inclusion in church services, especially the weekly cantatas and organ preludes, the deeply moving St. John Passion and the monumental Mass in B Minor. The course seeks to explore how these different musical expressions reflect Bach’s vision for a “well-regulated church music” in the service of God.

On May 22nd, 1723, J.S. Bach moved to Leipzig to take up his role as director of music or Cantor at the St. Thomas Church in that city. This means that May 22nd, 2023, marks the tercentennial of the beginning of Bach’s long 27-year career in Leipzig where he wrote so much of his choral and instrumental music until his death in 1750.

The course is offered as a team-taught effort with four participants: Sven Soderlund (Coordinator, Regent College); Ed Norman (Co-coordinator and professional organist and pianist, Vancouver); Dietrich Bartel (Emeritus Professor of Music, Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg); and Evan Kreider (Professor Emeritus of Music at UBC).

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Upon the successful completion of this course, students should have a clearer understanding of:

1. Know the basic biographical facts related to J.S. Bach’s life.
2. Identify the primary compositions associated with Bach’s sacred repertoire.
3. Recognize leading motifs in Bach’s church cantatas.
4. Understand the contribution and importance of Bach’s organ music in the church liturgy.
5. Explore the enduring legacy of Bach’s Mass in B Minor and the St. John Passions.
6. Explain how Bach demonstrated himself to be both preacher and theologian through his music

COURSE OUTLINE

Day 1 May 22 Introduction to the course (Sven Soderlund); The art and theology of Bach’s cantatas (Dietrich Bartel)

Day 2 May 23 The art and theology of Bach’s cantatas, cont. (Dietrich Bartel)

Day 3 May 24 The art and theology of Bach’s sacred organ music (Ed Norman)

Day 4 May 25 The art and theology of the Mass in B Minor (Evan Kreider)

Day 5 May 26 The art and theology of the St. John Passion (Evan Kreider)

REQUIRED TEXTS

(All Students)

Christoph Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach: The Learned Musician*. New York, London: W. W. Norton, 2000.

OR

John Eliot Gardiner. *Bach: Music in the Castle of Heaven*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013.

(2-Credit Students)

Jaroslav Pelikan. *Bach Among the Theologians*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1986; reissued by Wipf and Stock, Eugene, OR, 2003.

Calvin R. Stapert. *My Only Comfort: Death, Deliverance and Discipleship in the Music of Bach*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000.

Please Note: This Course Information Sheet is meant to assist in selecting courses.

The official syllabus should be consulted for more detailed information. A full syllabus with drop deadlines, policies, and course assignment details is available on Moodle for registered students: moodle.regent-college.edu/login

