

## BACH'S LASTING LEGACY – FAMOUS QUOTES

“His name ought not to be *Bach* [German for “brook”], but *Ozean* [Ocean], because of his infinite and inexhaustible wealth of combinations and harmonies.”

-Ludwig van Beethoven, composer (Vienna, 1822)

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“What Newton was as a philosopher, Bach was as a musician. He embraced with Newton’s spirit everything that has hitherto been thought about [composition]..., and he penetrated its depths so completely and felicitously that he must be justly regarded as the lawmaker of genuine harmony, which is valid up to the present day.”

- C. F. Daniel Schubart, poet (Vienna, 1801)

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“Recognition of human excellence in its highest form, knowledge of the path that leads to it, the necessary done with dutifulness and driven to that point of perfection where it outgrows all necessity – this knowledge is the most precious inheritance given us with Bach’s music.

“If music has the power to direct our entire existence towards nobleness, this music is great. If a composer has dominated his music to this point of greatness, he has achieved the utmost.

“This Bach has achieved.”

- Paul Hindemith, composer (Hamburg, 1950)

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-Upon being asked what message he thought humanity should take to other civilizations in space:  
“I would send the complete works of Johann Sebastian Bach, but that...would be boasting.”

- Lewis Thomas, American biologist (1974)

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“The universal spirit of Bach which manifests itself in the *B-Minor Mass* produces... the paradox that one of the most Christian works in all of sacred music transcends and dissolves its confessional limits, serving instead the whole of humanity – non-Christians included.

“It may seem odd at first glance that as a Buddhist I have theologically come to terms with one of the most Christian works of European music history, Bach’s *B-Minor Mass*. The conciliatory spirit which manifests itself in this work nevertheless encouraged me to do so.”

-Yoshitake Kobayashi, Bach scholar (1987)

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“It is reasonable, it seems to me, to question the propriety of performing a work of music (the *B-Minor Mass*) so specifically and exhaustively theological in text in so secular a setting, before an audience ranging in religious preference from the totally contrary to the totally committed, and ranging philosophically from welcome through indifference to distrust.

“Certainly the masses of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, with their four to six movements are almost symphonic in nature and more appropriate to this hall.

“Somehow, however, the fact that extra seats have had to be added for these performances attests to the unique position that Bach’s *Mass in B Minor* holds in the minds and hearts of men and women of all faiths – and no faith at all – except perhaps the oneness of humankind with the universe, and the responsibility of human life to seek beauty and to do good.

“It may well be true that Bach’s *Mass in B Minor* – assembled, no less than created – has become, some two hundred and fifty years after he bound its 27 movements together, the most remarkable musical allegory of human existence – its pain, aspiration and promises.”

-Robert Shaw, conductor (1998)

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“The [old] edition of Bach's Complete Works (1851-1899) numbers 45 volumes, totals roughly 13,000 pages and takes about 6 and 1/2 feet of shelf space. Among other things, this means that Bach's creative output is a full 18 inches longer than that (say) of Wolfgang Love-God Mozart.

-And we are told in the (1980) *New Grove's Dictionary of Music* of 20 volumes that since the year Bach's library was divided among his heirs upon his death, roughly two-fifths to one-half of his music has been lost. Did he really total twenty thousand pages of manuscript? -Of that intellectual quality?

Do you recall the Winnie the Pooh story in which Eeyore's house is blown to bits by the wind, and Pooh and Piglet rebuild it in a protected corner of the forest? Eeyore himself takes all the credit – for building, in the first place, an indestructible house: ‘Do you see, Pooh? Do you see, Piglet? -Brains first, and then hard work. That's the way to build a house!’

Sure, brains first – from the gene pool. -But what about that ‘hard work?’ Who among us, for instance, could copy 20,000 pages of manuscript in a life-time – let alone, create them?”

-Robert Shaw, conductor (1994)

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“What I have achieved by industry and practice, anyone else with tolerable natural gift and ability can also achieve.

“Music’s ultimate end or final goal...should be for the honor of God and the recreation of the soul.”

- Johann Sebastian Bach - Leipzig, 1738

“Where there is devotional music, God is always at hand with his gracious presence.”

“*Jesu juva [Jesus, help me]*

“*In nomine Jesu [In Jesus’ name]*

“*Soli Deo Gloria [To God alone the glory]*”

- Johann Sebastian Bach - Leipzig, 1750