

Rethinking Bach: A Fresh Perspective on the Baroque Master

Johann Sebastian Bach, the towering figure of Baroque music, has long been the subject of countless studies and interpretations. Yet, in her groundbreaking book *Rethinking Bach*, musicologist Bettina Varwig challenges many of the traditional assumptions about the composer and his music, offering a fresh and thought-provoking perspective on this iconic figure.



Rethinking Bach by Bettina Varwig

★★★★☆ 4.6 out of 5

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Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Print length : 413 pages
Lending : Enabled



Beyond the Myth

Varwig begins by deconstructing the myth of Bach as a solitary genius, isolated from his contemporaries and the broader cultural context of his time. She argues that Bach, far from being an ivory tower composer, was deeply engaged with the musical and intellectual currents of his era.

Varwig draws on a wealth of primary sources, including Bach's correspondence, travel accounts, and the writings of his contemporaries, to

reveal a more nuanced and complex picture of the composer. She shows how Bach was influenced by the music of his predecessors, such as Dieterich Buxtehude and Georg Philipp Telemann, and how he incorporated elements of popular music and dance into his own compositions.

Music as a Social Act

Varwig emphasizes the social dimension of Bach's music, arguing that it was meant to be performed and experienced in a communal setting. She explores the role of music in Lutheran worship, as well as the use of music for civic ceremonies and social gatherings. By placing Bach's music in its proper cultural context, Varwig helps us to understand its meaning and significance beyond the concert hall.

Varwig also examines the ways in which Bach's music interacts with the visual arts and literature of the Baroque period. She shows how Bach's passion for symmetry and order is reflected in the architectural design of churches and palaces, and how his music often depicts biblical and allegorical themes.

New Directions in Bach Scholarship

Rethinking Bach has had a profound impact on Bach scholarship, prompting a reassessment of many long-held beliefs about the composer. Varwig's work has inspired new directions of research, such as studies of Bach's social and cultural networks, the reception of his music in different historical periods, and the role of improvisation in his compositional process.

One of the most significant contributions of *Rethinking Bach* is Varwig's challenge to the traditional view of Bach as a strictly rational and intellectual composer. She argues that Bach's music is also characterized by a deep emotional expressiveness and a profound understanding of human nature.

Bettina Varwig's *Rethinking Bach* is a groundbreaking work that challenges many of the traditional assumptions about Johann Sebastian Bach and his music. By placing Bach in his proper cultural context and emphasizing the social and expressive aspects of his compositions, Varwig offers a fresh and thought-provoking perspective on this iconic figure. *Rethinking Bach* is a must-read for anyone interested in Bach, Baroque music, or the history of music in general.

Bibliography

* Varwig, Bettina. *Rethinking Bach*. Cambridge University Press, 2018.

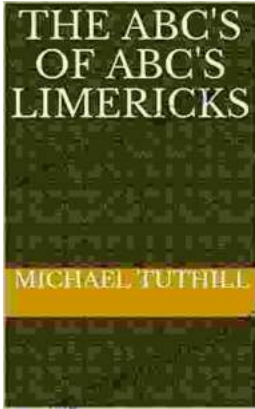


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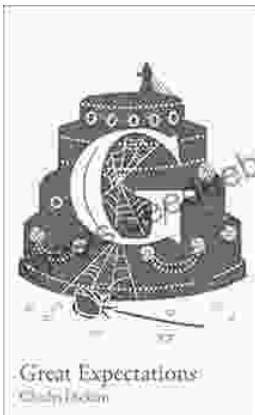
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