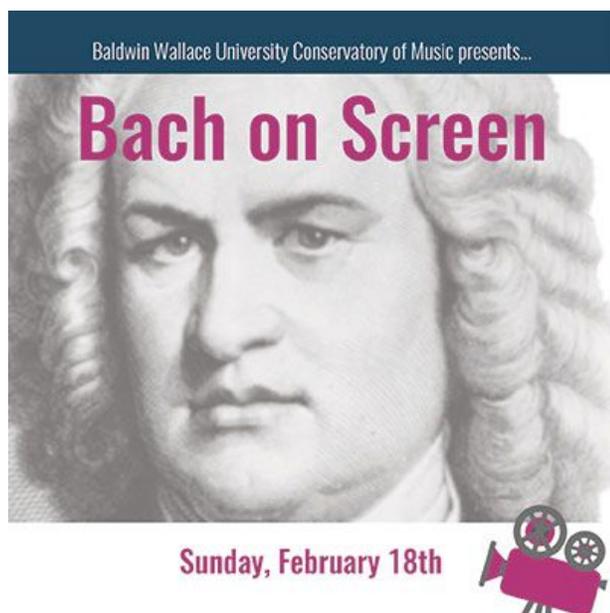


## Baldwin Wallace to host “Bach on Screen” February 18

by Mike Telin



Johann Sebastian Bach’s music seems to have penetrated every corner of Western culture. Baldwin Wallace’s *Bach on Screen* Conference will devote a whole day on Sunday, February 18 to the subject in four sessions in the Chamber Music Hall of the BW Conservatory.

At 9:00 am, the topic is “From Silent Films to Video Games,” followed at 11:15 am by “Bach’s Sacred Music in New Contexts.” After lunch, a 2:00 pm session takes up “Bach in Unexpected Places,” and the day ends with the interesting question, “Genius or Villain?” at 4:15 pm.

The \$50 registration fee includes all conference sessions, conference materials, a light breakfast, a buffet lunch at the Colony Room, and coffee and tea breaks. More information and registration forms are available [here](#).

We recently spoke with Christina Fuhrmann, who joined the BW faculty in the fall as professor of music and editor of the *Journal of the Riemenschneider Bach Institute*.

“I was interested in organizing a conference that would have its papers published in the *Bach Journal*,” Fuhrmann said. “Along with my co-editor for this volume — Rebecca Fülöp, a film scholar — we decided to put together *Bach on Screen*. We asked scholars to look at how Bach’s music has been used in any kind of screen media — there are papers on films, television, video games, and commercials.”

The call for papers brought in almost double the number the Conference could accept. “It was a difficult process, and we had to reject several very fine abstracts. We thought we would accept five or six, but there were so many good ones that we accepted ten.”

The authors of the accepted papers hail from around the country, plus one from Sweden. “We were so pleased at the overwhelming response — so much so that we’re thinking about doing it again in the future.”

Fuhrmann said that people can feel free to come for all or part of the day, and that registrations will be accepted at the door. “Even though there is a scholarly focus, I think it will be appealing to everyone because of the film aspect. We’re also excited that our students will be able to attend, so they can get a sense of what scholars do and how this is something they could possibly pursue. It’s good to be able to bring this kind of conference to them.”

Fuhrmann gave a rundown of what to expect at each of the day’s sessions:

**Session 1 (9:00-10:45 □): “From Silent Films to Video Games □”**

Chaired by Daniel Goldmark (Case Western Reserve University) □

Everybody in this session is going to talk about the D-Minor Toccata and Fugue. This is the piece that so many people associate with Bach, because it was used in so many films.

*“Status, Standards, and Stereotypes: J.S. Bach’s Presence in the Silent Era”*

*Presented by James M. Doering (Randolph-Macon College)*

Doering is going to speak about the business of silent film organists. The Society for Theater Organists had all sorts of rules about what music they could use — and of course Bach wasn’t under copyright. Bach’s music was used from the very beginning of silent films — beginning around 1910.

*“The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Stokowski, or: Two Film Careers of Bach’s D Minor Toccata □”*

*Presented by Tobias Plebuch (Uppsala University)*

He’ll look at the way the piece is used in *Dr. Jekyll* and *Fantasia*.

*“From the Concert Hall to the Console: The 8-bit Translation of the Toccata and Fugue in D Minor”*

*Presented by Dana Plank (Ohio State University)*

□ **Session 2 (11:15-12:30): “Bach’s Sacred Music in New Contexts”** □

These are both foreign films. I’ve watched parts of them, and they use huge works like the *St. Matthew Passion*.

“*Jean-Luc Godard’s Je vous salue, Marie / Hail Mary (1985) and the Sublimity of J.S. Bach’s Music*”

*Presented by Michael Baumgartner (Cleveland State University)*

“*The Consecration of the Marginalized: Pasolini’s Use of J.S. Bach in Accattone and The Gospel According to St. Matthew*”

*Presented by Mark Brill (University of Texas, San Antonio)*

□ **Session 3 (2:00-3:45): “Bach in Unexpected Places”** □

Chaired by Stephen Meyer (University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music) □

“*Another Woody: J.S. Bach in Dixieland*”

*Presented by Per F. Broman (Bowling Green State University)*

Woody Allen is more known for using jazz in his films, but there are a number of places where he uses Bach. Since he doesn’t do it that often, there is a sense of — why *did* he choose to use it when he did?

“*The Voice of the Dance: J.S. Bach’s B-Minor Mass in the Maksimova-Vasiliev film Fouetté (1986)*”

*Presented by Olga Haldey (University of Maryland College Park)*

There is a lot of music in the score to this Russian film, but the B-Minor Mass is right in the center, and is featured in one of the big dance scenes.

“*‘Good Hands’: The Music of J.S. Bach in Television Commercials*”

*Presented by Peter Kupfer (Southern Methodist University)*

This scholar has created a database of all the uses of Bach’s music in commercials. He will talk about various trends, and which pieces are the most popular. In his abstract he says that the Prelude from the First Cello Suite and the first Prelude from the Well-Tempered Clavier account for 70 % of all uses. He has a lot of interesting statistical information so people can get a bird’s-eye view of how Bach has been used in commercials.

#### **Session 4 (4:15-5:30 □): “Genius or Villain?”**

It’s interesting that a lot of his music has been used for villains, the most obvious being Hannibal Lecter.

*“First Mathematics, Then Music: J.S. Bach and The Evolutionary Supergenius in The Outer Limits’s ‘The Sixth Finger’ (1963) □ ”*

*Presented by Reba Wissner (Montclair State University)*

Here the composer is being used to represent genius — the character is suddenly able to play Bach. We thought the juxtaposition between this paper and the next one would be interesting.

*“Terminal Bach”*

*Presented by Kristi Brown-Montesano (Colburn Conservatory of Music)*

This paper is about the 1974 movie *The Terminal Man*, which uses one piece of music the whole way through — one of the Goldberg Variations. The movie is like a psycho thriller about scientific progress and ethics. The Terminal is a computer terminal, and this is an interesting example of Bach being used for a villain.

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Fuhrmann said she’s always been passionate about Bach. “I started as a pianist, and some of the first pieces I played were the Inventions. For my senior recital at Marlboro College, I played the *Goldberg Variations*. And for one of my thesis papers, I compared different recordings of that piece and talked about the shift to historically informed practice. That’s what got me interested in musicology and music history.”

She pointed out the different layers of meaning in his music. “Every time you come back to a piece there’s something new that you discover, and I think that’s a sign of an enduring work of art. Of course, this conference is great because there are so many layers that can be added by combining images and his music.”

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