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Glenn Gould, *Bach Digital*, *Bach 333*, and Youtube:
Bach in the Digital Museum of Musical Performance

As Lydia Goehr has documented, as early as 1802 Forkel wrote that “the most efficacious means of preserving in lasting vigour musical works of art is undoubtedly the public execution of them before a numerous audience.” Public performance of Bach’s works...would “raise a worthy monument to German art,” as well as “furnish the true Artist with a gallery of most instructive models.” In 1809, Carl Maria von Weber remarked on the foundation of a musical “museum” (also called “reading society”) in Stuttgart. And in 1835 Franz Liszt declared, “we require the foundation of a musical Museum,” explaining the concept as “an assembly to be held every five years for religious, dramatic, and symphonic music, by which all works that are considered best in these three categories shall be ceremonially performed every day for a whole month in the Louvre...” This paper will briefly explore the extent to which this vision has been realized and vastly exceeded since World War II, beginning with the mass dissemination of recordings such as Glenn Gould’s iconic 1955 recording of Bach’s *Goldberg Variations* (BWV 988), and including 21st century developments such as *Bach Digital* (the digitization of most of the Bach manuscripts), *Bach 333* (the recently-released complete edition of Bach’s works recorded in CD form), and Youtube (where Gould’s recording of BWV 988 currently records 4.1 million hits and thousands of other recordings of the same work are available). Within a single day, today’s aspiring “true artist” is able to digitally access the original manuscripts relating to virtually any Bach work and also to compare multiple high-level and iconic performances. Has the “imaginary museum” been digitally realized, especially on Youtube? Should iconic recordings also qualify as “works”? If so, what are the consequences and implications?