

## Anything You Can Do, I Can Do Canonically: The Haussmann Portrait, Mizler's Society, and Bach's Late Styles

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My purpose in this study is to locate and contextualize Sebastian Bach's fundamental identity theme, or narrative identity, analogous to what the Hutcheons have accomplished in their studies of Verdi, Strauss, Messiaen, Britten, and others.<sup>1</sup> I will also be keying off a 2007 article by Christoph Wolff<sup>2</sup>--as well as his recent book<sup>3</sup>--and a formulation by Ernest Becker:

*What most people usually do is to follow one person's ideas and then another's, depending on who looms largest on one's horizon at the time. The one ... with the most authority and success is usually the one who gets our momentary allegiance... But as life goes on... each person...tries to win a following for... their point of view, because... it is an immortality formula.<sup>4</sup>*

The basic hypothesis will be that Sebastian, after introjecting, emulating and competing with multiple transient heroes, was eventually modelling on Isaac Newton (1642-1727) as the most successful and authoritative explorer of unknown scientific territory, inventor of exemplary experiments, and summarizer of past accomplishments combined with the most advanced thinking in his field. Like Newton, whose scientific contributions catalyzed paradigm shifts in our perception of the physical universe (earth-centric to sun-centric, for example), Bach's masterpieces catalyzed paradigm shifts in the musical universe (from contrapuntal or harmonic domination, to a complex equilibrium between harmony and counterpoint, for example) that, over time, led his multi-faceted contributions to become accepted as fundamental exemplars to future "common-practice" musical works in the literate tradition—"the canon."

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<sup>1</sup> Linda Hutcheon and Michael Hutcheon, *Four Last Songs: Aging and Creativity in Verdi, Strauss, Messiaen, and Britten* (Chicago, 2015).

<sup>2</sup> Christoph Wolff, "Bach's Music and Newtonian Science: A Composer in Search of the Foundations of His Art" (*Understanding Bach 2* (2007), pp. 95-106.

<sup>3</sup> Christoph Wolff, *Bach's Musical Universe* (New York, 2020).

<sup>4</sup> Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death* (New York, 1973), p.255.