

J. S. Bach

(1685-1750)

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

- ▶ J.S. Bach is generally regarded as the consummate master of the Baroque era, with his music representing the culmination of all previous developments
- ▶ He has had an enormous impact on the music of succeeding generations of composers
- ▶ Like Handel, Bach's music shows a remarkable fusion of national styles (particularly Italian, French, and German)
- ▶ His compositional style shows unmistakable individuality, great expressive intensity, harmonic richness, linear integrity, structural grandeur, and polished craftsmanship
- ▶ His music is rigorously contrapuntal, and clearly unified through the development of themes and motives

Bach's background

- ▶ Bach came from a family that had produced six generations of professional musicians (and his sons after him became professional musicians)
- ▶ He worked as an organist, *kapellmeister* and cantor at the St. Thomas school in Leipzig for the last 27 years of his life (where he was underpaid and underappreciated)
- ▶ During his lifetime, Bach was known primarily as a great organist and church musician—other composers such as Telemann were more successful and popular than he was
- ▶ Only gradually did musicians become aware of his great craftsmanship and boundless imagination

Bach's works

- ▶ Vocal music:
 - ▶ over 300 cantatas in 5 complete cycles for the church year, several masses (including the *Mass in B minor*), two Passions (including the St. Matthew Passion), a *Magnificat*, etc.
- ▶ Organ music:
 - ▶ many chorale preludes, a collection of 24 preludes and fugues, toccatas and other miscellaneous works
- ▶ Keyboard music:
 - ▶ preludes and fugues (including *The Well-Tempered Clavier*), several suites, variations (including the Goldberg Variations), fantasias, inventions, etc.

Bach's works

- ▶ Orchestral music:
 - ▶ four orchestral suites and several concertos (including the Brandenburg concertos)
- ▶ Unaccompanied cello suites and violin sonatas
- ▶ A collection of canons (*A Musical Offering*)
- ▶ A collection of fugues (*The Art of Fugue*)