



Bach's Numbers: Compositional Proportion and Significance

Ruth Tatlow

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In eighteenth-century Germany the universal harmony of God's creation and the perfection of its proportions still held philosophical, moral and devotional significance. Reproducing proportions close to the unity (1:1) across compositions could render them beautiful, perfect and even eternal. Using the principles of her groundbreaking theory of proportional parallelism and the latest source study research, Ruth Tatlow reveals how Bach used the number of bars to create numerical perfection across his published collections, and explains why he did so. The first part of the book illustrates the wide-ranging application of belief in the unity, showing how planning a well-proportioned structure was a normal compositional procedure in Bach's time. In the second part Tatlow presents practical demonstrations of this in Bach's works, illustrating the layers of proportion that appear within a movement, a work, between two works in a collection, across a collection and between collections.

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