

Bach and Beethoven – Angels or Rebels in Classical Music

Objective: Listen to the first fifteen minutes CBC’s “The Sunday Edition” interview with Ted Gioia about whitewashing historical figures, particularly Beethoven and Bach and respond to the prompts below.

After watching the BBC documentary about the life of J. S. Bach, we may see the colonial and imperial perception of how our culture can view masters in their field. That being said, when we omit the more subversive and darker elements of their elements, we can lose sight of what made them innovative in the first place.

How to access the recording:

- 1) Google the following: “CBC Sunday Edition Bach Beethoven” (without quotation marks)
- 2) Click on the first link, which should be: “Bach and Beethoven: CBC.ca”
- 3) Listen to the first fifteen minutes, which is the section about Bach.

Here are some prompts that you might to respond to:

- 1) What is whitewashing? How are historians steering our perceptions of the masters of composition? (or masters of anything, really)
- 2) How has respectability created inaccessibility to Classical music? Relate it back to Jazz and Hip Hop (and anything else, if you’d like to add it).
- 3) Imagine if the news organizations of today were as in-depth and invasive in the time of the Classical masters? Would all of the darker and seedier side of their lives be projected to the public like now? And how might that colour their legacy?
- 4) “Music as art” vs. “Music as entertainment.” How does our cultural viewpoint on music change the way that we (individuals or culture) treat it? And if music is only entertainment, how could it possibly affect cultural change?
- 5) What if the artist has institutional respectability thrust upon them, but they don’t want it? Can you think of a modern example of this? And what happened?
- 6) “... You need to understand where innovation comes from. Innovation comes from people who don’t toe the line.” Who are some public figures whose subversive behavior encourages innovative artistry? They can be modern or otherwise.
- 7) Straddling the line between singability and artistry in religious music has deep roots. Which other figures that we’ve studied have struggled with managing that balance? And what are some of the challenges in maintaining it?
- 8) (What else might you like to write about?)

One-page would be an appropriate length, but more is always welcome.

DUE: _____