

Johann Sebastian Bach
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Rhodes College

Department of Music

*Chiastic Reflection in Bach's Mass in B-minor:
Lament's Paradoxical Mirror*

A talk by Dr. Melvin P. Unger

DATE: Wednesday, March 11, 2009

TIME: 4:00 pm

LOCATION: 100 Hassell Hall

In Bach's *B-minor Mass*, the "Crucifixus" (with its Lamento ground bass) serves as the architechtonic center of the Credo and, in a sense, of the Mass as a whole, since it is equidistant from a pair of matching movements that give the work cyclical unity. A review of Bach's compositional process, together with a comparison of the musical structures and literary thrusts of these movements, suggests that Bach was using formal and melodic chiasms as apt symbols for Luther's

Theology of the Cross ("theologia crucis"). This conclusion is corroborated by Bach's structures elsewhere in the work.

Dr. Unger is Professor of Music and Riemenschneider Chair at the Baldwin-Wallace College Conservatory of Music in Berea, Ohio, where he also serves as the Director of the Riemenschneider Bach Institute. He is founder and director of the Baldwin-Wallace Singers and conducts the Singers' Club of Cleveland. He holds degrees from the University of Illinois/Urbana-Champaign, the University of Oregon/Eugene, and the University of Saskatchewan/Saskatoon.

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