



MEDIA RELEASE

BACH 2.0 – THE TRUE FACE OF BACH

Neither photos nor videos have ever existed of the composer Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) – until today. The classical music festival "Bachwochen Thun" is now breaking new ground with its pioneering "Bach 2.0" project. It will present this Baroque composer as a living figure, as someone human and approachable, in a way that the world hasn't seen him for the past 274 years. This has been made possible thanks to a skilful interaction of human and artificial intelligence.

Several portraits of Bach have come down to us from the Baroque period. However, it remains uncertain as to whether the man variously depicted on them is actually Bach. The only authentic portrait of Johann Sebastian Bach that has survived in its original form was the work of the German artist Elias Gottlob Haussmann (1695–1774), which exists in two versions. One of these is a well-preserved painting from 1748 that has been held by the Bach Archive in Leipzig since 2015. It has often been utilised by Bach researchers as the prime reference for Bach's supposed likeness. Until now, Bach fans all over the world have had to make do with this sole reliable source.

But all that's going to change. The innovative team of the Bachwochen Thun is now presenting a world premiere with its "Bach 2.0" project, featuring the most authentic animated face of Bach ever created to date.

Bach 2.0 – science fiction becomes reality

Taking Haussmann's painting of 1748 as his starting point, the Iranian 3D-artist Hadi Karimi from Tehran has created a high-resolution, photorealistic, 3D model of Bach's face. Karimi is regarded as a leading specialist in digital portraiture, and his skills have now paved the way for the Bachwochen Thun to embark on its own "revivification" of Bach.

In the old, venerable tower hall of Holligen Castle in Bern – which could easily stand in for the hall of the former School of St Thomas's in Leipzig – the Bachwochen Thun has filmed a video with Bach in the leading role, here played by the actor Christoph Müller from Leipzig. Our scene shows Haussmann at work on his painting: Bach is sitting for him, though he really doesn't have the time because he urgently needs to finish a composition. The clip ends with an appeal from Bach to his audience, spoken in his native accent of Thuringian Saxon: *«Doch Ihnen, hochgeehrte Liebhaber mein'r Music, sei diese Bitte gnädich anbefohlen: Der Aufführung des gefälligen Collegium Musicum Bachwochen Thun zu assischdier ´n und mir sodann Ihre geschätzte Nachricht darüber freindlichst zu ertheile!»* (But to you, the esteemed lovers of my music, I issue the gracious request that you should attend the performance of the delightful "Bachwochen Thun" and that you should kindly send me news of how it went).

Deepfake shows Bach deceptively real as a living person

During the post-production phase of the film, artificial intelligence was used to replace the actor's face with our digital reconstruction of Bach's own. This so-called "deepfake" now reveals Bach as a living, breathing human being. This video clip is some three minutes in duration and was produced by the Bernese production company Epic Lab, directed by Andreas Graf. The VFX artist Mubin Khan from India was recruited to make the deepfake.

Video Bach 2.0

<https://youtu.be/xY3TZMK8SgA>

Names and contact people

Idea, concept and script: Vital Julian Frey, Bachwochen Thun, www.bachwochenthun.ch

Video cast: Christoph Müller as J. S. Bach, Eugen Jost as E. G. Haussmann

Video producer: Andreas Graf, an.graf@gmx.ch, +41 79 305 26 51, www.epic-lab.com

3D artist / Bach's face: Hadi Karimi, www.hadikarimi.com

VFX artist / Deepfake: Mubin Khan

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Photo material and video material

- 01 Bach-painting Haussmann 1748, JPG 5.8MB
- 02 Haussmann-Karimi © Bachwochen Thun / Artist: Hadi Karimi, JPG 4.4MB
- 03 Bach 2.0 © Bachwochen Thun / Artist: Hadi Karimi, JPG 2.2MB
- 04 Bach 2.0 © Bachwochen Thun / Artist: Hadi Karimi, TIFF 20.9MB
- 05 Bach 2.0 close-up © Bachwochen Thun / Artist: Hadi Karimi, JPG 2.8MB
- 06 Bach 2.0 close-up © Bachwochen Thun / Artist: Hadi Karimi, TIFF 13.2MB
- 07 Filmset camera © Bachwochen Thun, JPG 4.1MB
- 08 Haussmann-Bach © Plattform J, JPG 11.4MB (E. Jost, Chr. Müller)
- 09 Bach with crew © Plattform J, JPG 14.7MB (A. Graf, E. Jost, S. Payet, Chr. Müller)
- 10 Haussmann with crew © Plattform J, JPG 12.2MB (E. Jost, A. Graf, S. Huber, N. Ubezio)
- 11 Crew © Plattform J, JPG 13.2MB (E. Jost, C. Müller, S. Payet, V. Frey, N. Ubezio, A. Graf, S. Huber)
- 12 Film clip, opening scene © Bachwochen Thun, PNG 6.4MB
- 13 Film clip, music © Bachwochen Thun, PNG 5MB
- 14 Design Bachwochen Thun 2024 © Bachwochen Thun, JPG 4.8MB
- 15 YouTube QR-code

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