

The museum at Johann Sebastian Bach's birthplace

# BACH HOUSE, EISENACH

Life & Work of  
Johann Sebastian Bach

• Live music  
on historic instruments

• Interactive  
sound installations

MEDIENMITTEILUNG – mit der Bitte um Veröffentlichung

04.03.2014

## Special exhibition: "B+A+C+H = 14" – Bach's Numerological Mysteries



To mark Johann Sebastian Bach's 329th birthday on 21 March 2014, a special exhibition is opening in the Bachhaus Eisenach which examines the question of number puzzles in Bach's music.

Bach's waistcoat in the famous 1746 portrait of him has 14 buttons. The monogram on the front of the "Bach Cup", the drinking glass owned by Bach that is now in the Bachhaus, has 14 points. Bach wrote 14 canons using the bass motif of the Goldberg variations. Bach's "Art of Fugue" contains 14 "Contrapuncti". All of this is hardly a coincidence – in the Baroque era, people playfully assigned numbers to letters using the "numerical alphabet".

According to this A = 1, B = 2, and so on. B+A+C+H thus gives us 2+1+3+8, which equals: fourteen. Fourteen is thus the "Bach number". If we turn 14 around, we get 41: This in turn is the total of J+S+(B+A+C+H) = 9 + 18 + (14). The letters JSB add up to 29, which is the same numerical value as the letters SDG, which Bach wrote under many of his works. According to the rules of the poetic paragram in which every word can be replaced by another with the same numerical value, these letters therefore not only stand for "Soli Deo Gloria" (to God alone the glory) but are, at the same time, Bach's sophisticated signature.

Numerical games of this type are part of the numerology of the Kabbala, which assigns numbers to terms in the Bible and the appearance of which elsewhere is interpreted as a divine pointer, a revelation. Some people believe that a numerological system of this type is also concealed in Bach's works: secret messages which can be decoded through counting bars, entries or note values. Bach is even said to have predicted the date of his own death.

21 March 2014 sees the opening in the Bach House of the exhibition entitled "B+A+C+H=14" which takes a fairly tongue-in-cheek look at the question of numbers and other puzzles in Bach's work. For this, the animation production team of "die buchstabenschubser" from Potsdam, recent recipients of the Brandenburg Design Prize, have created two films which examine the Bach Cup and the 1746 Bach portrait in terms of their numeric symbolism. In addition, there are 14 "toy canons" for adults and children.

The fact that Bach celebrates his 329th birthday on the day of the exhibition opening – the numbers add up to 14 – is pure coincidence, of course.



**BACHHAUS  
EISENACH**

[www.bachhaus.de](http://www.bachhaus.de)

#### Location

Frauenplan 21  
D-99817 Eisenach  
Germany

#### Opening times:

10 a.m. to 6 p.m. every day

#### Entrance charge:

8,50 Euro, conc. 6,50 Euro

#### Contact

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Managing Director:

Dr. Jörg Hansen

Supervisory Board Chairman:

Prof. Dr. Martin Petzoldt, Leipzig

Proprietor:

Neue Bachgesellschaft e.V.

An international association based in

Leipzig, founded in 1900



Registered in the German Government's Blue Book as cultural commemorative site of national significance

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**ARTEFAKT**  
KULTURKONZEPTE

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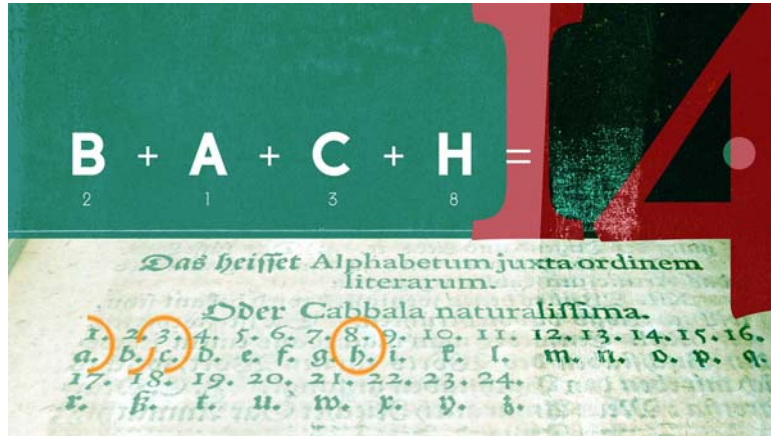
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## SPECIAL EXHIBITION

### "B+A+C+H = 14". Bach and Numbers

The "Bach number" fourteen is to be found not only in a whole series of Bach's compositions, but also, for example, in the Haussmann portrait (14 buttons) or the Bach Cup (14 points). Bach left a few number puzzles behind in his works – some people even talk about a numerological system. The special 2014 exhibition that starts on Bach's 329th birthday looks at these questions in an entertaining way.

Bachhaus Eisenach, Frauenplan 21, 99817 Eisenach  
21.03. - 09.11.2014

Opening: Friday, 21.03.2014, 12:30 pm

Opening times: daily, 10 am to 6 pm

[www.bachhaus.de](http://www.bachhaus.de)

### On 21 March 2014, Eisenach will be celebrating Bach's birthday:

- 11:00 am: Traditional Bach-tribute at the Bach memorial, Frauenplan  
Speakers: Christine Lieberknecht (Premier of Thuringia, CDU), Lady Mayor Katja Wolf (Die Linke), Superintendentin Martina Berlich (Eisenach), Prof. Dr. Martin Petzoldt (New Bach Society), Dr. Jörg Hansen (Bach House, Eisenach). Musical programme: Eisenacher Kurrende (boys and girls choir), wind instruments ensemble of the Parish of St George's, conductor: Christian Stötzner
- ca. 12.00 Uhr: The Bach House serves coffee and the birthday cake.
- ca. 12.30 Uhr: Opening of the special exhibit "B+A+C+H = 14", guided tour
- 14.00 Uhr: Event of the Lippmann + Rau Foundation (Jazz Archive, Eisenach)  
Details to be announced.
- 15.00 Uhr: Invited talk: Prof. Wolfgang Wiemer, Ludwigsburg:  
"The Art of Fugue – Bach's Creed"
- 19.30 Uhr: 329<sup>th</sup> Birthday Concert "From Jazz to Bach": JAZZDUO David Timm – harpsichord, keyboard, Reiko Brockelt – saxophone

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