

Johann Sebastian Bach's Remains – A Call for 3-D Computer Tomography Imaging

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SHORT COMMUNICATION

On October 22, 1894, the alleged skeleton of famous composer and virtuoso on the harpsichord and organ, Johann Sebastian Bach (born March 21, 1685, in Eisenach; died July 28, 1750, in Leipzig) was found. In his treatise from 1895 titled “*Anatomical research on Johann Sebastian Bach's remains and face, including comments on the likenesses prepared thereof*”, anatomy professor Wilhelm His, Sr. (1831–1904), who was consulted for the excavation, examined in detail the temporal bone and focused on the facial reconstruction with the help of sculptor Carl Ludwig Seffner (1861–1932), but his statements regarding the post-cranial skeleton are only marginal [1]. However, His made a photograph of the anterior view of Bach's skeleton in good quality and acceptable resolution, and included a ruler (photograph see page [57] at: <http://digital.slub-dresden.de/id302656669>).

This photograph of the skeleton has not been further analysed up to now, although it is most thrilling – anatomically, anthropologically, and anthropometrically, and worth a closer look. Many details undermine its authenticity, for instance, the prominent muscle lines on the bones of the arms [2–4], or the extraordinarily large hands [5], which are indeed reported historically by the organist and writer, Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart (1739–1791) [6]: “*His fist was gigantic. He could, for example, reach a twelfth with the left hand and then colour in between with the middle fingers.*”

The 2-D high resolution photograph of Bach's skeleton from the digitalized work from His [1] is the only (limited) material available. To undermine further research on Bach's skeleton,

of course, a study completed on the original remains would be desirable.

Alternatively, a (non-invasive) 3-D computer tomography of Bach's casket would suffice to create high-resolution 3-D images of the skeleton with all its fascinating details as can be assumed already from the photograph [4, 5]. With sarcophagi of ancient mummies, this approach has been successful [7] (full article available at: <http://www.nuclmed.gr/magazine/eng/may13/70.pdf>).

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