

BACH NOTES

The Journal of the London Bach Society

Autumn 2015 Edition



LBS celebrates 25th Anniversary Bachfest
31 October – 13 November 2015
February 2016

“Bach and the Leipzig Inheritance”
in honour of the City’s 1000th Anniversary (1015-2015)

including

5th Bach Singers Prize – Bach Club

Entry by 28 September

www.bachlive.co.uk

“The Bach Family moves to Leipzig:

Report in Hamburg *Staats-und Gelehrte Zeitung*, Leipzig 29 May 1723

This past Saturday at noon, four wagons loaded with household goods arrived here from Cöthen; they belonged to the former Princely Capellmeister there, now called to Leipzig as *Cantor Figuralis*. He himself arrived with his family on 2 carriages at 2 o'clock and moved in the newly renovated apartment in the St. Thomas School.”

New Bach Reader, p.106, Ed. David & Mendel, revised & expanded by Christoph Wolff, WW Norton & Co.



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**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

Bachfest

A new Chapter for LBS (1990-2015)

"A Bach Festival is being launched this October at St. Marylebone Parish Church as a sequel to one of the heroic achievements in London music-making of recent times: Paul Steinitz's gradual preparation and performance of all Bach's cantatas."

Upbeat - The Independent 2 June 1990

Achievements and Aspirations

The above extract from a pre-festival feature published ahead of our first Bach Festival in 1990 brought it all home to us that, after months of planning, our new venture had become a reality. I may have founded the series, but it was Paul's idea. He saw an annual Festival as a natural development from the complete cantata cycle¹, not only to present the organ works, chamber music and orchestral pieces as well as the vocal ones, but also to widen the Society's artistic horizons, draw in new artists, enhance the educational dimension and broaden the listening experience. Typically Paul! His death in 1988 naturally cast doubts as to whether we, left behind, could match his aims...but in short we have and here we are celebrating our 25th anniversary Festival, in tune with today, yet staying true to the Society's artistic ideals. I write this lest anyone reading should want to realise a musical dream and is hesitating...don't!



Thomanerchor

The appeal of 'Festival' ebbs and flows; sometimes it is the vogue and everyone wants to create one, sometimes it is regarded as 'old hat' - we don't fund festivals! Oh yes! We have dealt with all

of that! However, if we have achieved anything at all we have shown that the festival concept can be expressed in many ways, provide a platform for the sort of event otherwise problematic to programme and give rise to the kind of creative *thinking out of the box* that has become so necessary today. It doesn't have to be static either. When the Leipzig Thomanerchor (pictured) made their historic UK debut in 1994 at our invitation, we took the Festival 'on the road' visiting Cambridge, Birmingham and Wells, in addition to appearing in Westminster Abbey and The City of London's Guildhall. It was a memorable tour.

One of the greatest pleasures has been to give a helping hand to a new artist or group. When Laurence Dreyfus founded his fabulous Consort of Viols *Phantasm* back in 1994, we were only too pleased to offer him and the group an early platform.

At lunchtime recitals and in the course of festival education programmes² we have created performing experience for the young Lucy Crowe, Christopher Maltman, Gillian Keith and Alina Abragimova, violinist Matthew Truscott and countless now familiar orchestral faces who, as students, took part in Bachfest concerts with their respective



Phantasm

Fabulous playing, cutting edge programmes.

The Club continues to develop, student members are curating programmes to gain experience in concert planning as well as performing... all in the footsteps of Bach.

Pushing the boundaries of scholarship and performance



The legendary Gustav Leonhardt at Bachfest 1996 & 1999

Prominent Bach performers have found a ready platform to share latest thinking and discoveries and in this way we have continued the LBS pioneering tradition. Legendary harpsichordist

Gustav Leonhardt³ played some delicious early Bach keyboard works in recital at St. Bart's, John Butt⁴ set Bach's organ compositions in context with his vocal and instrumental works⁵, Steinitz Bach Players directed by Anthony Robson gave the UK 'live' première of the newly discovered Bach Aria⁶ in 2005 and the early version of *Matthäus-Passion*⁷ in March 2013. We are 60 cantatas into a new cycle, performing them using musical forces with which the composer would have been familiar and at the appropriate pitch. This knowledge and experience has then inspired the presentation of Bach Cantata Services, Singing Days, "Dance to Bach" Schools projects, extending the range and scope of our activities, and bringing Bach's music smack into the present. We have endeavoured to create opportunity for everyone from aspiring young professionals to enthusiastic amateurs and encouraged audiences of the future. While there has been innovation and imagination, while the 'live' Bach performance is central, the LBS ethos is not only intact, but also going forward.

What it takes....

The success of any venture today is usually measured by its size and scale, even notoriety, all spiced up with a fair amount of 'spin'. The bigger, the better, in fact anything to get some column inches! While on the one hand forward planning now assumes almost unreasonable timescales to help ease the fund-raising pressures, with the advent of social media it is possible to put one notice on a website and sell all the tickets in an evening via twitter - we've done it...for a Bach Club concert with James Rhodes!

Margaret Steinitz

1 1958-1987

2 Royal Academy of Music 1990-3 & 1997-2001, Royal College of Music 2006-2008

3 1928-2012

4 Leading Bach scholar and performer today

5 RCO 12th London Organ Forum 2012

6 'Alles mit Gott' BWV 1127

7 1727

“Bach and the Leipzig Inheritance” part 2⁸

Mendelssohn's seminal role and unswerving determination to reignite interest in Bach's music in 19th century Germany is one of the most significant in all music history. His Leipzig period⁹ was defined by his determination to gain tangible recognition for Bach the consummate composer, musically in performances and civically with the erection of the statue in 1843. Mendelssohn's presence in the city is still felt today¹⁰ as work to find the missing pieces in the Bach jigsaw continues by scholars and researchers, and we strive to ignite love of Bach's enriching music in new generations.



Revolutionary Drawing Room
Joined by Friends at Bachfest

Revolutionary Drawing Room¹² (2 Nov) playing Bach, Brahms, and Mendelssohn's famous Octet. Not to be missed.

Kindred spirit

We associate Robert Schumann with Lieder, keyboard music and symphonies, but he was also a key figure in the Leipzig Bach revival giving Mendelssohn valuable support through his work as a journalist, therefore crucial to the Leipzig Bach inheritance.

The literary dimension

Born in 1810, at Zwickau due south of Leipzig, Schumann recognised that the literary publication provided a valuable vehicle to promote the composer's art and with the foundation of his *Neues Zeitschrift*



Site of Schumann's apartment

für Musik in 1834, he was able to help composers like, for example, Chopin and Brahms, who both benefited from Schumann's writing skills...so did Bach.

Schumann's mission

Initially, this took the form of published reviews and articles, which, in later years, represented a permanent record of events prevalent. However in 1850, Schumann was able to make a more significant contribution to the Leipzig Bach inheritance with the foundation of the

Bach-Gesellschaft (Bach Society). With fellow Leipzig musicians Moritz Hauptmann (Cantor), Otto Jahn (Leipzig University), and Carl Ferdinand Becker (Leipzig Conservatoire), their purpose was to provide a complete edition of Bach's extant works. The volumes published over the next half century¹⁴ became an invaluable source, appearing uncluttered by editorial markings and a reliable basis for study and performance. The BG edition is still a valid source of study, although the *Neue Bach Ausgabe* (New Bach Edition), published by Bärenreiter in annual volumes released from the 1950s and completed in 2004, has replaced it as the edition of choice for most Bach performers. Revised NBA volumes are being published to keep the scholarship up to date, with competing editions from Breitkopf & Härtel and Carus Verlag among others.

The Bach Revolution

With the end of the BG in 1899, a *Neues Bach-Gesellschaft* was founded in 1900 to foster interest and knowledge of the composer, eventually to take care of the Bach Museum at Eisenach and stage Bach festivals around Germany. However, at no time since the first half of the 18th century has Bach enjoyed such intense adulation as he does today. We read about the influence after his death Bach's music provided for Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, but the overall interest then, and indeed since, cannot be compared to the world-wide Bach 'industry' that exists now. In royalty terms today, Bach would have been a multi-millionaire on the B minor Mass performances alone!

The Leipzig Inheritance's benefit to the UK owes much to the pioneering work of Samuel Wesley and William Sterndale Bennett in 19th century and to Paul Steinitz in the 20th. Through their work we have moved from the gargantuan performances of the Victorian era to '*Bach in its original form*', the latter a reaction to the considerable licence performers and editors took with Bach's music in their quest to make it more appealing, or even to improve it, over the last 150 years. This was combined with an insatiable desire to use the musical forces with which the composer would have been familiar and the inevitable question - What did it originally sound like? Our curiosity continues.

Another piece in the jigsaw

LBS's 25th Bachfest gives a taste of Bach's duties as Leipzig Cantor and is presented in honour of the city's 1000th anniversary. The cantatas featured **(12 Nov)** are all from Bach's Third Cycle (1726-27) for which the likely librettist has been identified recently. Dr. Christine Blanken of the Leipzig Bach Archive has carried out the research and an extensive preliminary article by her has been published in *Bach Network's Understanding Bach Vol.10*¹⁵

Peter Harvey Performing Cantata 82 "Ich habe genug" (1727) at Bachfest



8 See also Bach Notes, March 2015 edition
9 1835-1847

10 Memorial unveiled outside Thomaskirche in 2008

11 Mendelssohn Haus in Goldschmidtstrasse is now a museum set out in reconstruction, complete with his paintings and other memorabilia

12 Celebrating 25th Anniversary this year

13 The Schumann Haus is in Inselstrasse, Leipzig

14 Last volume published in 1900

15 www.bachnetwork.co.uk

Bachfest Leipzig 2015

'So herrlich stehst du, liebe Stadt!' — A Report

The Bachfest Leipzig 2015 took place from 12 to 21 June with the motto 'So herrlich stehst du, liebe Stadt!' (So glorious you stand, dear city!), a line of text which Bach used in Cantata 119 that was performed at the inauguration of the new Town Council on 30 August 1723.



Gottfried Reiche, Bach's Leipzig trumpeter

As in the previous years, the 2015 Bachfest maintained its tradition of putting on show more than a hundred programmes in ten days with concerts in numerous venues including the historic buildings such as Thomaskirche and Nikolaikirche, a well-themed series of lectures on the history and musical life of Leipzig, seminars, guided tours, and church services with distinct musical items, and so on. There was a warm and welcoming

atmosphere and with the celebratory spirit expressed in the motto, everyone seemed to be appreciating Bach's legacy including the artists themselves.

This was most clearly visible in this year's slot for the Goldberg Variations, which was taken by Mahan Esfahani. The late-night concert, which took place on 13 June in *Bundesverwaltungsgericht* was packed with an eager audience. Using some unexpected choices of stops and registration, Esfahani courageously took the challenge that Bach set in the variations, making the audience breathless for an hour. In the same spirit the Passion slot was filled by the 1725 version of St John Passion BWV 245¹⁶, with Philippe Herreweghe directing Collegium Vocale Gent: it was one of the most polished and heartfelt concerts of the whole festival.

The spirit of celebration was most clearly felt at various ceremonies held during the Bachfest, e.g. the homecoming of the 1748 Haussmann portrait of J. S. Bach that was bequeathed by William B. Scheide (New Jersey, USA), the presentation of the 2015 Bach medal to Peter Neumann, and the retirement of Thomascantor Georg Christoph Biller. To mark this occasion, Biller conducted the première of Stephan König's cantata 'Haddock', a work commissioned by the Bach-Archiv Leipzig. The work captures the complex thoughts and feelings on the exile of the Thomaner boys after the bombing of Leipzig on 4 December 1943 by RAF. It was a very moving tribute to those boys through which the prayers of hope for peace resonated beyond time and space.

For many visitors the real thrill of the Bachfest is to hear and compare the approaches and renditions by well-known performers in the historic venues where Bach himself performed. Peter Neumann's characteristic *Klangrede*

approach with Kölner Kammerchor and Collegium Cartusianum in a programme of four sacred cantatas by Bach, 'Gott, man lobet dich in der Stille' BWV 120, 'Ich glaube, lieber Herr, hilf meinem Unglauben' BWV 109, 'Wachet! betet! betet! wachet' BWV 70 and 'O ewiges Feuer, o Ursprung der Liebe' BWV 34 was received favourably particularly among the audience who has a predilection for honest and forthright renditions. Diametrically opposite to Neumann was Sir John Eliot Gardiner, who presented the programme of the music of death by Bach and Mozart, consisting of the cantata 'Lass, Fürstin, lass noch einen Strahl'¹⁷ BWV 198, Requiem (KV 626) and Ave verum corpus (KV 618). His careful approach manipulating the audience's expectation to achieve greater sensations enchanted the connoisseurs.

A specific interest I had with this year's Bachfest was with a series of concerts that recreate the happy atmosphere of Bach's collegium musicum at Zimmermann's coffee house or garden, which offered a glimpse of how Bach performed there. Another was the *Ausgezeichnet* series, a platform given to young, emerging musicians who have recently won prizes, which was never disappointing.



Mahan Esfahani, an emerging artist now on the world stage.

The late night concert of motets by Bach, Schein and Schütz at Thomaskirche performed by Sette Voci was a perfect way to end Saturday night, only to start the next day by returning to the same place for a Morning Service using the liturgy of Bach's time and singing chorales from the same hymn sheet with over 1000 Bach lovers from all over the world.

The Bachfest closes with the B-minor Mass. This year the slot was occupied by Hans-Christoph Rademann directing Gächinger Kantorei Stuttgart and Bach-Collegium Stuttgart, using the new edition prepared by Ulrich Leisinger (Carus-Verlag, 2014). Adopting quicker tempi in nearly all the movements, with an inventive use of dynamics, the work convincingly culminated in the last two movements, 'Agnus Dei' and 'Dona nobis pacem'. Next year's Bachfest runs from June 10-19, 2016, with the theme 'Geheimnisse der Harmonie' (Secrets of Harmony). **Yo Tomita**

Dr. Yo Tomita is Professor of Music in the School of the Creative Arts, Queen's University Belfast. He is a scholar known internationally for his work on the manuscript sources of the works of Johann Sebastian Bach especially the Well Tempered Clavier. The Bach Bibliography and the musicological font Bach. He is a member of the Council of Bach Network UK and Co-Editor of its Journal *Understanding Bach*. In September 2011 he was appointed Senior Fellow at the Bach-Archiv Leipzig.

Visit: www.music.qub.ac.uk/tomita/bachbib/

16) Variants include replacement of opening chorus from 1st version "Herr, unser Herrscher" with 'O Mensch, bewein'
17) Trauerode

Complete Organ Works of Bach

Margaret Phillips completes her survey to open the LBS Bachfest



As a pre-festival treat and in partnership with Mayfair Organ Concerts (dirs Richard Hobson & Simon Williams), LBS is participating in the promotion of a complete cycle of Bach's extant organ works given by the distinguished recitalist

and founder of the English Organ School, Margaret Phillips (pictured). In St. George's Church Hanover Square, over a six-week period (24 September - 31 October 2015) and in three recitals per week (Thurs, Fri, Sat) each at 6.00pm (7pm, 26 Sept) Margaret will give Bach's incredible collection full expression on the Richards, Fowkes & Co organ. The final recital will be a performance of Bach's magnificent Leipzig Organ Chorale Preludes BWV 651-668 to open the LBS's 25th Bachfest. Programmes can be downloaded from www.stgeorghanoversquare.org or www.bachlive.co.uk

Making her debut at the LBS's Bachfest is the engaging soprano Ruby Hughes, past winner of the Handel Singing Competition. She joins Peter Harvey, Jane Gordon and Steinitz Bach Players in two 'dialogus' cantatas BWV 58 and BWV 49 at St John's Smith Square on 12 Nov. Another unmissable Bachfest concert!



Ruby Hughes
Singing Bach cantatas at Bachfest

Ruth's pigeon

The long-awaited new book from Bach scholar Ruth Tatlow has just been published.

Ruth Tatlow, *Bach's Numbers: Compositional Proportion and Significance*,

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

ISBN 978-1-107-08860-3 (Hardback)

Price: £84.99. Paperback will follow soon.

Bach goes digital

The website www.bachdigital.de is a large, detailed, powerful database - and a reliable tool for exploring the constantly updated research findings on Johann Sebastian Bach and other composers in his family. Available in German and English, and another meticulous piece of work by the Leipzig Bach-Archiv researchers, be sure to tell the family that you will be unavailable for weeks when looking at this site!

WW1 Centenary Reflection – 1915

Continuing our survey of Bach's place in the hearts and minds of music lovers a century ago in WW1 also enables us to be reminded how different the presentation of his (and others') music was then. We are now into 1915, the year of carnage at Gallipoli and in the trenches on Flanders' Fields. The blinding patriotic fervour that accompanied the outbreak of WW1 on 4 August 1914, with its optimism that it would 'all be over by Christmas', was cruelly dimmed by the beginning of the New Year. The harsh realities of war were being experienced across Europe. Anti-German feeling was taking root in Britain, with the German Kaiser the chief target for both the peoples' ire and ribaldry. Zeppelins were beginning to appear and there was a more widely felt belief that this was all going to be a very long, bloody and drawn-out business - when really the war shouldn't have started at all!

Through all of this, the Proms series for 1915 continued as planned and the series of 63 concerts took place from 14 August to 23 October at London's Queen's Hall. In spite of the prevailing mood, there was still a substantial amount of German music represented in the programmes, even though German Proms philanthropist Edgar Speyer had to leave the UK for safer havens. There were lashings of Wagner, followed by plenty of Bach, Beethoven and Brahms, with the 'passions of the hour'¹⁸ addressed by the playing of the National Anthems of either Italy, France, Belgium, Serbia, Japan or Russia at the end of a Prom concert.

The programming was quite different then than it is now, lots of different works by different composers in an indigestible mix by today's standards, and in deference to a lesser audience concentration span perhaps. Wagner operas were performed in excerpts and the patriotic blood was kept stirred with performances (several of them) of Breville-Smith's "There's only one England". Reference appears in one of the Proms programmes to a Bach Orchestral Suite No 5 in G major. The only one I can find is listed in Schmieder's catalogue as BWV 1070¹⁹, but it is in G minor - the key a mere detail perhaps but not an inaccuracy one would get away with today!

Bach arr. Henry Wood

It might be tempting to look down on the numerous arrangements of Bach's music by Sir Henry Wood...but really we shouldn't. At that time, the cantatas and passions were not nearly as well known as they are now and *arrangements* of the composer's music prevailed long into the 20th century. RVW's 'version' of the St. Matthew given annually at Dorking for example reordered some of the movements and cut out the harpsichord in favour of the piano. What it achieved was to acquaint a rural community with JSB. The same aim existed with Wood two decades earlier and at the 1915 Proms we find, among others, his arrangements of the cantata aria "Mein gläubiges Herze" (My heart ever faithful) BWV 68, the *world première* of his arrangement of the Concerto for 2 keyboards in C minor BWV 1060, plus the recitative (and presumably the following aria) "Erbarm' es Gott" from the St. Matthew Passion followed by a performance of Beethoven's 6th Symphony! So much for the 'passions of the hour'! **MS**

¹⁸ from a quote by Robert Newman, Queen's Hall Manager and associate of Henry Wood.

¹⁹ Bach's best known Orchestral Suites are BWV1066-69



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****5th Bach Singers Prize – Entry Deadline 28
September – Details and Forms from website**

****More Bachfest events in February 2016**

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The story of Bach, his music, life and times, opens up many exciting avenues to explore. Founded in 1946 by Bach scholar and conductor Paul Steinitz (1909-1988), London Bach Society is devoted to telling that story, from promoting the latest research to presenting high-class professional performances by leading artists at its annual Bachfest... and that's just the tip of the iceberg! To help us promote our performances and educational programmes, we are sustained financially by a growing and greatly valued network of support. Why not join us? The 25th Anniversary Bachfest is from 31 October – 13 November 2015 and the London Bach Society's 70th anniversary is in 2016...and we are going to celebrate. Full details are posted on the Bach Friends page of our website www.bachlive.co.uk

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