

BACH NOTES

The Journal of the London Bach Society

(Online Edition – Autumn 2020)

KEEP CALM AND CARRY ON
Building on a legacy

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www.bachlive.co.uk



Bach Notes

Bach Notes is the London Bach Society's Journal. It is distributed **free**, downloadable from our website alongside past editions, with an e-version compiled bi-monthly, and emailed via Mail Chimp and in-house email groups. It is a way of keeping readers in touch with the Bach world of today and the LBS role within it, a complement to our performances in fact.

Our Journal is published in the spirit of the 19th century German romantic composer Robert Schumann (*pictured 1850*), who was also a Journalist and a leading light in the movement to revive Bach's music, which he achieved in support of Mendelssohn by successfully using his own Journal "*Die Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*". He helped to set up *Die Neue Bachgesellschaft* in 1850 whose purpose was to produce the first complete Bach Edition, a task not finished until 1899. The LBS Journal was launched in 1996 as part of the Society's 50th Anniversary and has grown in style ever since. **MS**

Editorial

Welcome to our online edition.

It was well worth doing. I thought long and hard before applying and then spent three days, budgeting/planning/re-budgeting in my own bubble. Off it went on 20 August. I don't deal with failure very well! However, our ship has come in; **£50,000** grant from the **Government's Culture Recovery Fund**. Now we can get to work on setting up our online performances, support our orchestra and bolster our core costs. Online performances generate less box office income, but they will extend our audience reach and enhance our profile – sound investment. More anon.

Where there's will, there's a way. So it is 'Keep Calm and Carry On'. **#HereForCulture**

LBS has met several challenges over the years, head on, and always with Plan B, or C if necessary, at the ready. This is the position at present and, like our colleagues running concert halls, our precious cash-strapped freelance musicians without whom we cannot do our work and the back-up services that enable us to do so, we have to be patient and keep to the Social Distancing rules the Government has laid down. There will be light at the end of the tunnel. What we don't know is how long the tunnel is going to be before we actually see that light! Heigh ho!

As humans, dealing with uncertainty is something that does not come easily. We value and enjoy personal social contact, moving about freely unmasked, good conversation, and engagement. At present, we have to resort to technology to keep us all in touch. Fine for the short term, but there is no substitute for the person to person contact, 'live' performances, and the camaraderie that goes with it all. What we as a Society can do is live positively from day to day, use the time productively to sort out our considerable Archive/Library for example. Ahead there is this little matter of the LBS 75th in 2021/22 to fine tune, which we intend to celebrate one way or the other! **#letmusiclive, #keepsafe. MS**

Steinitz Bach Players (SBP) Building on a legacy



The SBP was founded by Paul Steinitz in one of the most important musical decades of the 20th century – the 1960s. These years saw the full flowering of English musical life after the immediate post-WW2 years and the austerity of the 1950s.

Such circumstances did not dim the light of creativity nor stifle ideas, the rubble all around eventually giving way to expose new and fertile ground on which the musical seeds were sown for what we not only enjoy in abundance, but also **expect** today. Paul's vision and the central SBP purpose at foundation was to enhance modern Bach scholarship in 'live' performances and that remains the case today. Many significant Bach projects have flowed since, from completing the historic Bach cantata cycle

here to performing Bach's Mass in B minor with Paul and the London Bach Society choir (1947-1989) in the Leipzig's Thomaskirche (1983), from the UK 'live' première of a newly discovered Bach Aria (2005) to the UK 'live' première of the early version of his *Matthäus-Passion* (2013), plus the foundation of the LBS 18-30 Bach Club for Paul's centenary (2009). How he would be smiling today!

The SBP is unique in the way it operates, is managed today by Philippa Brownsword and is under the umbrella of the London Bach Society; no less significant for that. It only takes one concert to change approaches to the music and get people thinking afresh as to how it was originally performed and sounded. At the start in 1968, the performing style was novel and controversial; it is now accepted scholarship in performance and since Paul's death in 1988 we are building upon the musical legacy he entrusted to us today. Here's the SBP launch Press Release in 1968, which sets out Paul's vision.

"The main object in forming this orchestra is to introduce a type of string-playing more in line with eighteenth century style than that used by players of today in music of the period, and in this way a better balance with wind will be obtained (clarini, recorders and 'baroque' trombones have been used in LBS concerts for some time). Inevitably changes will be gradual, and at first the main objects will be to phrase in a lighter manner and to reduce vibrato and attack. Eventually too, all the players will use the older type of bow." – *The Times, 1968*

The image (*above*) is of the brilliant violinist Rodolfo Richter, our Guest Director and Orchestra Leader. A prominent member of the freelance pool of musicians, Rodolfo stepped in at short notice for Alina Abragimova to perform some double violin concertos with Nicola Benedetti and OAE at this year's Proms, demonstrating so well how much we owe to our musicians in bringing their incredible expertise used on the concert platform, in the classroom, and community hall.



For chamber concerts we have invited Jane Gordon's Rautio Piano Trio (*pictured left*) whose gorgeous performances of Trios by Bach's youngest son Johann Christian and by 19th century reviver of the composer's music Felix Mendelssohn, (both having London connections) have encouraged new audiences, including a thoroughly enjoyable collaboration with the members of the British-German Association (BGA) last November, something we plan to repeat in future. Jane is a member of SBP.

The SBP comprises specialist *freelance* musicians who are booked individually for concerts or recitals, following the pattern for most chamber orchestras. At present an unacceptable percentage do not qualify for financial help during this pandemic and have to live on their wits. It is very tough for them. The music industry generates over £5 billion per year, paying back many times over any grants the bands may receive from Arts Council England for example, and they are contributing to the Creative Industries' £100 Billion generated revenue annually. What a terrible loss to the Treasury and the Country if we allow it!

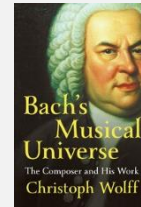
Book Review

BACH'S MUSICAL UNIVERSE The Composer and His Work

Christoph Wolff

ISBN 978-0-393-05071-4

Published by W.W. Norton & Co, March 2020



The name of Christoph Wolff is synonymous with the study of Bach's life and substantial folio of compositions that has included research into the origins, purpose, and the music's reception. This has stimulated, challenged, and informed both the performer and reader, and since German unification his energy and entrepreneurial drive has enabled many of the projects at the Leipzig Bach Archiv, the nerve-centre of world Bach Research of which he was Director (2001-2014). Prof. Wolff remains a Board Trustee and in addition to completing more literary work, he has overseen the beautiful refurbishment of the Bach Museum that is in the same building as the Archiv. Wolff was also instrumental in ensuring the significant Singakademie Library, which was discovered in Kiev at the turn of the century, was brought back to Berlin complete with its 5000 items including the Alt-Bachisches Archiv (a rich collection of 17th century compositions by Bach Family members). It has been a fulfilling and very productive life, with many of the succeeding generation of Bach Scholars and Researchers his former students. These are now carrying forward what he has established. Part of the author's literary legacy this century: the Bach biographical and music surveys.



We already have Wolff's prize-winning "*Johann Sebastian Bach, The Learned Musician*", published in 2000 for the Bach 250th, a wide-ranging survey of the composer's life, domestic, working environment and career-path. The latest volume "*Bach's Musical Universe, The Composer and His Work*", published in March 2020, is a very welcome and scholarly complement to the earlier biography that focusses more intensely on the

music itself, the thought and compositional processes that created it. The writing style is not for the faint-hearted, but as Wolff makes clear in his Preface in which he reveals in some detail his approach to compiling the book, the author chooses to discuss in considerable depth significant works or collections of works under each designated chapter heading, as opposed to covering the whole folio of works more superficially, an impossible task as well given the sheer size and scale of Bach's output. This provides a useful focus for the reader, leading perhaps to a clearer assessment and description of the composer's Art. For maximum impact, and unlike the earlier volume, the numerically economical number of musical examples, as well as the illustrations, are included alongside or near to the narrative that applies to them, and are not consigned to the back of the book. As we have come to expect from Professor Wolff, the book is meticulously prepared, supported by numerous Tables, footnotes, and extensive Bibliography. Readers will be particularly drawn to the detailed Chronology, clearly set out for easy reference and fascinating reading in itself.

The eight chapters are book-ended by a detailed Prologue entertainingly sub-titled "*The Composer's Business Card*" that sets the tone for the chosen music's assessment that follows. The Epilogue provides much food for thought and reflects overall upon Bach's place and honest approach to his Art in amongst what must have been a 'hot-bed' of intellectuals following his every offering from the comfort of their pews or courtly seat! Random selection of a particular chapter is a considerable temptation given the way these are ordered, but side-stepping Chapter 1 "*Revealing the Narrative of a Musical Universe: The First List of Works from 1750*" for example, means the reader will miss out on essential background information about '*Bach's Universe*' including the size of his Estate, the Manuscripts and, given the author's approach to writing the book, the Benchmark Works. With this volume, the author has set his own 'Benchmark', inspiration for further surveys by present and future Bach scholars, perspectives that will add further substance to Bach Bookshelves to which Christoph Wolff has contributed with great knowledge and commitment. Such volumes help to disseminate to future generations observations and information about Johann Sebastian Bach, this fabulous creator whose music touches both the performer and listener on so many levels. **Margaret Steinitz**



**Throwback Bachfest 2019
Introducing organist Ben Bloor
LBS Emerging Artist 2019**

Ben's recital given on 4 November 2019 in St. George's Hanover Square was part of our ongoing Emerging Artists' programme. It was given as part of an evening to mark Victoria and Albert's 200th (born 1819) who reigned in an era that saw the continuing revival of Bach's music on our shores through the work of William Sterndale Bennett, with the Prince Consort having an influential role to play in support. We collaborated with the British German Association (BGA), bringing a new audience to the Festival.

www.benbloor.com

www.britishgermanassociation.org



**Throwback Bachfest 2019 - Bach Club's 10th
21st century Bach played on synthesisers**

Art of Moog

Annabel Knight, Robin Bigwood, Martin Perkins, Steven Devine - were special guests at the Bach Club concert on 1 November 2019 that marked 10 years of informal concerts for young people today. They presented a programme of Bach's music played on synthesisers, creating some incredibly beautiful sounds that were easily recognised as Bach's creation. A spectacle of synthesisers and blue lighting effects greeted a diverse

young audience, most of whom are not regular concert goers, but still curious, want the door to classical music opened, and who enjoy the friendly informal atmosphere we aim to create. This special was a Bach ear-opener, and we were thrilled that the audience response was to want to go to other concerts and hear the works as Bach originally composed them. Result!

We present the Club concerts in Voces8 Centre and are always warmly greeted by Centre Director Jan Kerilis. The centre hire fee we pay goes towards the cost of bringing a school from a disadvantaged part of London to classes and workshops at the centre. Another result!

No Club concert possible in 2020, but we will be back, hopefully in November 2021.



**Throwback Bachfest 2019 St
George's Primary School Choir**

Here is St George's Primary School choir rehearsing the chorale "*Jesu, joy of man's desiring*" with Steinitz Bach Players. Our musicians engaged with the choir members throughout the mixed programme of Bach and Handel. This new venture for Bachfest formed part of an education programme "*Bach, the Organist*" exploring the wonderful Richards, Fowkes instrument in St George's, led by Director of Music Simon Williams and Assistant Director Nick Morris. Altogether over 70 children benefitted from this pilot presentation and first Bach experience. Result!

Onwards & Upwards



For the 75th Anniversary next year, we have commissioned a new motet from the pre-eminent Scottish composer, Sir James MacMillan (pictured left). It is scheduled for performance in November 2021 and the score is due to be delivered next June. The commission has been made possible by a donation from the LBS Council Chairman Richard Jones for which we are hugely grateful and the consort with whom we are already working will be announced early next year.

James joins a very distinguished list of composers from whom we have commissioned including (Sir) John Tavener, David Rowlands, Stanley Glasser, Christopher Brown, Diana Burrell (as part of William Whitehead's Orgelbüchlein Project) and in 2012 from young Robert Peate, a prize-winning student at the Royal Academy of Music.

James is one of today's busiest and prominent composers, the music of Bach one of his chief influences, and in inviting him to be part of our 75th anniversary this reflects one of Paul's priorities which we have taken forward, the study and performance of music created in our own time. More anon. This exciting feature is set to run into next year's edition of our Journal as the commission develops, is revealed and we can share it with you and everyone.

Cantata of the month

New Bach Edition – Revised:
Setting a New Standard for Scholars and Musicians

Mass in B minor
(BA 5935) · Full score
cloth bound (format 25.5 x 32.5cm)

Available separately or as part of a complete subscription to the NBA^{rev} at a specially reduced subscription price.

The *New Bach Edition (NBA)*, completed and available in 104 music volumes and 101 critical commentaries, is regarded as a work of musical scholarship of the first rank. However, new sources have been discovered, new knowledge has been acquired and further editorial experience amassed. The Bach Archive Leipzig and Bärenreiter will therefore publish approx. 15 volumes or works in revised editions.

The *New Bach Edition – Revised (NBA^{rev})* resembles the *NBA* in its outward appearance, but each volume now contains a more detailed foreword in German and English, as well as a concise critical report in German. State-of-the-art scientific methods employed when examining Bach's manuscript scores enable in-depth analysis of areas which have been destroyed or made illegible.

"The NBA revised edition is an important resource now available to all performing musicians and scholars concerned to get as close to the surviving source material of J. S. Bach's music as possible."
John Eliot Gardiner

Ask for our detailed brochure (SPA 186).

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Composed for the 20th Sunday after Trinity (25 October 2020), Bach's Cantata "*Schmücke dich, o liebe Seele* (Deck thyself, o soul immortal) BWV 180 is another of my favourites. The gospel for the day is St. Matthew 22, vv 1-14, The Parable of the Marriage Feast. It is scored for flute, two recorders, 2 oboes (1 doubling oboe da caccia), strings including cello piccolo, and basso continuo. Sit back and enjoy the beautiful line, phrasing, and exquisite orchestration; take in the peace, calm and hope to be found in Bach's cantatas. I will. **MS**

Soprano Jan Patrick O'Farrell (Knabenchor Hannover)
Alto Paul Esswood, Tenor Kurt Equiluz, Bass Max van Egmond
Knabenchor Hannover - Heinz Hennig
Collegium Vocale Gent - Philippe Herreweghe
Leonhardt-Consort - Gustav Leonhardt

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sKeyzYVSJVw> to access YouTube performance of BWV 180.



Bach Friends

We have been deeply touched by the loyalty and generosity of the LBS Bach Friends whose donations have continued to be received throughout the pandemic period. If 2019-2020 donations are any guide, further gifts should be received in the coming months by Standing Order, which will help to carry us through into the next financial year; crucial to our on-going activity.

Thank you everyone for your kindness, messages, and support. It means a great deal to me, the Council Chairman, Council Members, and those who come into our orbit. The £50,000 grant may seem a lot of money. In concert promoting terms it isn't, but is valuable to us at this present time. Our Culture Recovery Fund Grant award is a testament to our standing and reputation, both of which you have helped to sustain. Fund-raising goes on. With YOUR help we shall achieve our aims together. **Margaret Steinitz**
You can renew your donation on our website

www.bachlive.co.uk

Germany United - 30 years on



Who would have imagined that on 9 November 1989, the Berlin Wall would be opened, enabling free access East to West and vice versa that had been inhumanly denied for forty years....but it did happen. It really did!

At Leipzig, the demonstrations throughout that year were huge, and the gatherings in the Nikolaikirche, a high risk strategy due to the tensions between the church and the state. Throughout eastern Germany the citizens called *time* on their oppressive political masters. *Glasnost* had arrived. On 3 October 1990 Germany officially unified, removing all the political barriers that

had made cultural exchange very problematic, even though the UK-GDR¹ Cultural Agreement existed and reciprocity was at its heart. We lost no time in extending the hand of musical friendship to those at Thomanerchor and Bach-Archive at Leipzig. It emerged during my talks that they knew about Paul and LBS; some had even been to the concerts we gave in the Thomaskirche in 1964 and 1983. Germany united sounds like their talented national footie team doesn't it? Rivalry with England on the field, no doubt about that...but off? We are firm friends with our musical colleagues at Leipzig, celebrate with them what unification means and the creative initiatives it has enabled. **MS**

How has the Pandemic affected us in 2020

Apart from the cancellation of precious performances, it is the huge reduction in our income that has affected us the most – box office income, organ hire, music hire revenue that helps to underpin expenditure (core costs & performances). We had to cancel part 2 of Bachfest in the Spring, which meant no Bach Singers Prize/Master Classes/workshops or showcase Bach concert for Steinitz Bach Players (SBP). No performances, no fees for our players, no box office income, no Prize winner all adds up to a likely reduction in our public profile as well. We have also had to cancel Bachfest 2020 and I have Plan A, B and probably later on Plan C in place for our Anniversary events in 2021/22. LBS was founded in November 1946 with the debut recitals given in June 1947, so we can legitimately spread our events across next season and still stay true to the 75th. In short, we will follow the cash AND the science.

¹ German Democratic Republic

...Then how was it in WW1 and the Spanish Flu pandemic



In spite of the pandemic called Spanish Flu a century ago, the country did its best to survive here in 1918. The country was broke, but the Proms were promoted throughout August, September, and October regardless of the '*passions of the hour*'² even though a second wave of the flu outbreak was in full flow by the autumn of that year.

Music by Arthur Sullivan, Tchaikovsky, Wagner, Mendelssohn, Delibes provided the mixed programme on 12 October 1918, with (Sir) Henry Wood conducting the New Queen's Hall Orchestra (*Hall pictured in 1912*).

The virus claimed thousands of lives here; 50 million died across the globe. The burgeoning Musical Theatres had to close along with churches, dance halls and other public spaces. Reports are that chemicals were used to spray the streets, people wore anti-germ masks, but social distancing rules, hand washing and avoiding face touch of today, these were the frontline of attack in 1918, in the absence of the NHS, drugs and ITU treatments that are available now in 2020. Silent Films entertained Servicemen on leave, providing valuable work for the keyboard improvisers too.

Remember David Briggs brilliantly improvising throughout the Silent Film "*The Phantom of the Opera*" at a film evening in St George's Church Hanover Square (Bachfest 2014 WW1 100th)? That film was dated 1925, but Silent Film as a medium was bread and butter entertainment pre-and throughout WW1. Rapt attention from our own audience burst into spontaneous and prolonged applause. We must do this again! **MS**

Around and About this Autumn - Italy

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Chiara Bertoglio and I am an Italian concert pianist and musicologist. I am also the cofounder (together with Maria Borghesi) of JSBach.it, an Italian Society with the aim of promoting research, performance, knowledge and appreciation of Bach's music in Italy. We have organized an International Conference scheduled to take place from Nov. 22-28, 2020. Due to the COVID pandemic, we will be offering the Conference entirely in a digital format and it will be accessible to all, for free, and forever. As you will see from the attached programme (which can also be viewed at www.jsbach.it/bach2020programma) the result is an impressive event, gathering many of the major scholars and musicians active in the field of Bach studies and performance. This event will represent a historic moment for the Italian musical and musicological scene, and a unique opportunity on the educational plane, as it will create an extraordinary repository of shared knowledge through the numerous videos. Both Dr Borghesi and I are available for further information and for giving you more details about our project. We hope that you will kindly help us to spread the word about this special event.

Chiara Bertoglio

Around and About this Autumn – UK

Brighton Early Music Festival goes digital www.bremf.org.uk from 23 October

Wigmore Hall 'live' streaming www.wigmore-hall.org.uk Check regularly for performances. Led by John Gilhooley and joined by BBC Radio 3, the Hall has kept our spirits high during the Lockdown and since, with some stellar performances from some of our favourite artists. More to come...

St John's Smith Square 'live' streaming and public concerts www.sjss.org.uk Check month by month to see what's on. Limited ticket availability for most events.

Please feel free to forward this Journal to others in your Circle

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² Queen's Hall & Proms co-Founder Robert Newman