



BACH NOTES

The Journal of the London Bach Society
For LBS 75th season Spring 2022

A Chorale for our time.

The closing Chorale from Cantata BWV42 “*Verleih uns Frieden gnädiglich*”

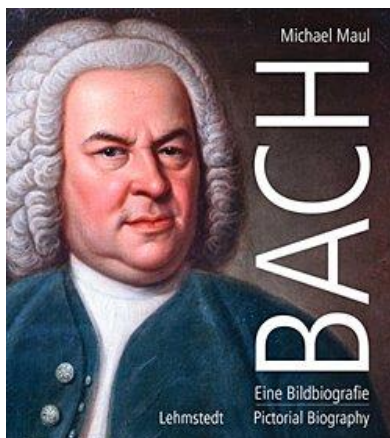
O grant us peace most graciously Lord God, while we are living; There standest not one other by that for us could be striving, but thou, our God, thou only. Grant to our sovereign and all magistrates peace and good government that we may thereunder live a peaceful and quiet life both now and ever in all ways of godliness and honesty. Amen.”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wAKn25Bw-XU>



**Introducing Pawel Siwczak at Fidelio Café on 5 November 2021
after triumphantly performing the harpsichord solo in Bach’s 5th Brandenburg.
He will be featuring in recital(s) later in the year.**

www.pavelsiwczak.com



A significant new Bach Book

When all around us seems to be in chaos, a country is being slowly and surely ripped apart by an avaricious aggressor, its people violated up hill and down dale, this arrived in the office. Joy of joys! It is the latest in a long line of Bach or Bach-related books that stream off the conveyor belt it seems almost daily. Chic, contemporary in style, presentation and language, the book is a very welcome addition, one that will open the door to Bach's music for many a curious newcomer and inspire music planners everywhere. What is different about being a Pictorial Biography? It is just that – the beautifully reproduced

images throughout, no fudging but clear and absorbing to reinforce the German-English text accompanying, and make sense of a life which still fascinates three hundred years later. It is bang up to date with the latest discoveries too.



This volume by Bach Scholar and Leipzig Bachfest Artistic Director Michael Maul (*pic*) is in a league by itself – very reader-friendly, well documented account of Bach's life, complete with beautifully reproduced images to illustrate each year by relevant year, and presented in such a way that it fits easily into a Bach Library in the study, University Library or even on the coffee table in the drawing room. The latter is no criticism either. The narrative in German and English is set in columns line by line. Also, I believe the book will eventually be published translated into Chinese by Dr. David Chin, so interest in the volume will be global. The opening chapters are about Bach's antecedents. From then on lively chapter headings follow heralding informed writing about each significant year from 1685-1750 and the events therein. For example "1719 Unfortunately cancelled: Meeting with Handel" pp146-147!

The book closes with a useful Register of Persons and Bach Works to round off what is a magnificent achievement to produce a scholarly 21st century style book about an 18th century composer. This book deserves not so much a review but a celebration. I shall refer to it daily. How about you? *Reference details, publisher, price on following page.* **MS**

Bach Pictorial Biography Details

Copyright Lehmstedt Verlag, Leipzig 2022 Printed in Germany ISBN 978-3-95797-101-2
Available to purchase online c.£30 via Amazon and book stores

BachCantataTexts.org

Texts and Historically-Informed Translations
for the Music of Johann Sebastian Bach

Michael Marissen and Daniel R. Melamed

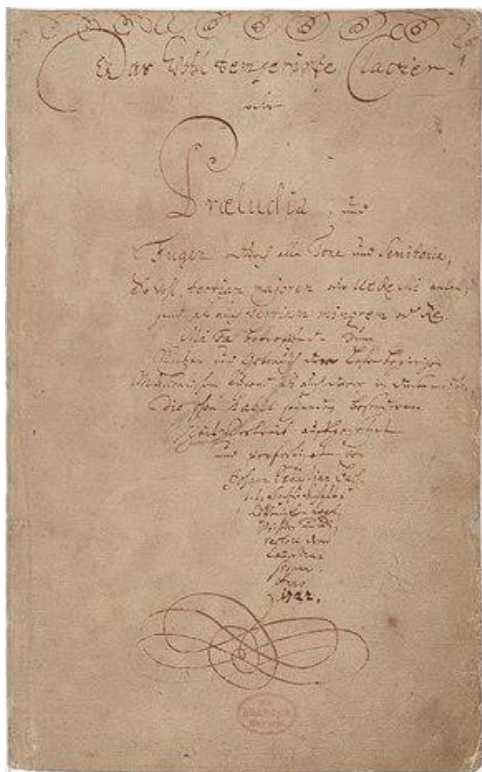
BachCantataTexts.org is a freely available source for new historically-informed English translations of J. S. Bach's vocal works, prepared and annotated by Michael Marissen (Swarthmore College, emeritus) and Daniel R. Melamed (Indiana University/Bloomington Bach Cantata Project). Please share this message and the post on our [Facebook page](#) with colleagues, friends, and audiences. There is a sign-up page [here](#) for this announcement list.

Michael Marissen, Daniel R. Melamed

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www.facebook.com/BachCantataTexts.org

Well-Tempered Clavier Book 1 BWV 846-893 (1722)

A set of Preludes and Fugues we think we know well – Revisited for the 300th.



This is the title page, with Bach's inscription "for the profit and use of musical youth desirous of learning, and especially for the pastime of those already skilled in this study".

Bach provided his first book of twenty-four preludes and fugues in all keys three hundred years ago in 1722 while still at Cöthen. He was also perhaps contemplating a move to Leipzig¹ where he completed Book II in 1742. This second volume was later added and created the '48' we refer to today and by its German title "*Das Wohltemperirte Clavier*, *clavier* meaning keyboard. In Bach's time that would be either clavichord, harpsichord or even organ. Today, concert programmes often contain the whole of Book 1 or 2 played in one sitting on the harpsichord or piano for example. It is an absorbing experience, each prelude and fugue providing its own individual challenge for the performer, with each key reflecting a particular mood to be considered as well. They each require wide ranging advanced techniques from brilliant

finger dexterity ([click on the link](#)) to the expression of deep pathos as in the Prelude in E flat minor (BWV 853). Both volumes are a life-time of study and practice, which the title page makes clear is its purpose, whether we are professional exponents or dedicated amateurs complementing work in other professions. For me, playing a Prelude and Fugue from WTC 1 is a matter between Bach and me....and no one else! Let's revisit this first volume in 2022. MS https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y17Rq_xY8QQ



Stop Press

One of today's finest Bach keyboard interpreters is the harpsichordist Mahan Esfahani (*left*). Not only will he be joining us at the 2022 Leipzig Bachfest in June as soloist and with duo partner Pieter Wispelwey, but at his Wigmore recital on 16 July he will perform Bach's "*Art of Fugue*" BWV 1080. On this occasion, Mahan will be presented with the 2022 Wigmore Hall medal. A full press release will be issued by Wigmore Hall about six weeks before the July recital, copied to LBS and a further profile published in *e-Bach Notes*.

Tickets from www.bachfestleipzig.de/tickets 17 & 18 June

Tickets from www.wigmore-hall.org.uk 16 July

Next LBS Bachfest 31 October-10 November 2022..... Digital

¹ Moved to Leipzig in 1723

LBS Alive and Kicking

Coping with Covid-19, yet still working and making plans



Those who joined us last November at our 'mini' Bachfest will have heard the latest of our commissions, a new motet by Sir James MacMillan for the LBS 75th made possible through a generous donation from LBS Council Chairman Richard Jones. Working with Tenebrae directed by Nigel Short (l), who performed the piece in St. Bart's on 9 November, was a dream and continued our tradition of presenting choral excellence as well as commissioning new work.. The commission "*I saw Eternity the other night*" featured alongside three substantial Bach motets, the pattern for so many LBS programmes over the years – new work and challenging JSB. There are plans to record the motet and feature it in programmes to be toured in 2023. Thank you too to the Rector Marcus Walker and his team at St Bart's for making us so welcome again.

A few days before we were at the Fidelio Café in Clerkenwell for an all-Bach Steinitz Bach Players (SBP) bonanza inspired by programmes given at Zimmermann's Coffee House in 1730s Leipzig. The new venue (for us) was very favourably reviewed; audience and musicians seated together for the music and at the supper after. More beckons.....

These programmes formed part of our Culture Recovery Fund Grant: Continuity Support award to build on the success of our first CRFG that funded our films and daily costs awarded in October 2020. We now have a duty to honour the faith put in us to deliver....we have and we shall!



Our film series made in March/April 2021 is entitled "*Bach: Family & Friends*" to complement the Leipzig Bach Festival special "*Bach-We are Family*" originally scheduled for June 2021 and now from 9-19 June 2022. Our series reflected Bach's environment, his musical friends and family members performed by an array of familiar faces on the concert platform. Rowan Pierce's powerful interpretation of Bach's solo cantata "*Ich bin in mir vergnügt*" BWV 204

rang out in the beautiful surroundings of St. George's Hanover Square. Organists Stephen Farr and Polina Sosnina had already put the Richards Fowkes organ at the church through its paces on film, so Rodolfo Richter (pic) and Steinitz Bach Players complemented with an intimate programme of intricate chamber music joined by the Rautio Piano Trio All four films plus the introductory and interview film are on our Vimeo Platform

https://vimeo.com/londonbachsociety/vod_pages



Introducing Leo Duarte, our new principal oboe.

Leo brought his very considerable oboe-playing skills to the SBP film. His playing is enhanced by his research work, direction experience and willingness to bring rarer pieces of music to our attention and he is fast becoming a very familiar face on our concert platforms. Visit his website to find out more. www.leoduarte.co.uk

**Next LBS Bachfest 31 October -10 November 2022Digital
Previewed at Langstone Recital – 21 May 2022. Read on.....**



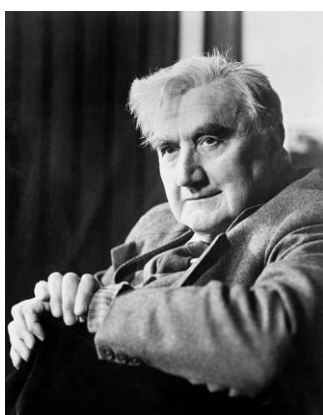
Bach at Langstone

"Bach at Langstone" evenings have become a welcome fixture in our music diary. Set deep in the beautiful Herefordshire countryside, this year's will take place on **Saturday 21 May from 6.00pm**. Details of the Reception, Recital and Supper in this elegant and historic family home of the LBS Council Chairman, Richard Jones will be announced shortly on. Let's hope the weather is good for the Garden Reception.

MARK THE DATE www.langstone-court.org.uk

RVW 150th – About his St. Matthew

(adapted from a Bach Notes article Spring 2004)



In the last century perhaps the most 'colourful' illustration of how the 'editor's knife' was applied to Bach's St. Matthew Passion appeared at the famous Leith Hill Music Festival (LHMF) performances conducted by Vaughan Williams² in the mid-20th century. VW was a skilful orchestrator and he used this to deal with those facets of the St. Matthew either *'he did not like or felt he could improve'*. He hated the harpsichord, so an elaborate piano continuo part was provided instead to work with organ. Movements were either re-ordered in places or cut completely. To see this first hand I was granted permission by the LHMF to study VW's score and a few years ago enjoyed a lively discussion about his performances with long-serving Secretary Renee Stewart, who sang with the great man. The memories of such people are to be cherished. The justification for the cuts would have been controversial today, but back then due to the work's length and because the style and form of the composition was still relatively unfamiliar in this mainly rural community, tolerance prevailed. However, audience participation was still provided in some of the chorales and the annual presentations in English became an eagerly awaited event in the calendar.

When a work is deemed to need the kind of attention I have outlined, the composer's creation is inevitably compromised, with the sad consequence that what the listener (or performer) experiences is only someone else's version, often far removed from its original creator. Also, people *'know that they like and like what they know'* and do not take kindly to having their musical *illusions* shattered when these 'arrangements or improvements' are then replaced by the original scoring and movement order, even though they might then come into the presence of a piece that is even greater than they had originally thought! The musical challenge to restore a piece to its original state is therefore perceived as daring, controversial, even radical. In the same way an art restorer lovingly cleans off the layers of residue accumulated over years to reveal a painting in its pristine glory, so a music scholar and performer applies the same care to the restoration of a masterpiece of music.

What Vaughan Williams achieved was to share with the local community an appropriate work for Passiontide – that meant the St Matthew – and provide for their involvement. The

² near Dorking, Surrey where RVW lived from 1930-1953

locals lived a distance from London and other centres with limited public transport compared to today. Back in the 1930s, Bach's St. Matthew Passion was not nearly as well known in UK as it is today, except for the gargantuan sized annual performances, left overs of the Victorian era, that paid little attention to period style or forces. A century earlier, it was Mendelssohn wasn't it who stripped the St. Matthew of all considered non-essential in order to win over a sceptical audience at the Berlin revival of March 1829, when fashion, taste and style had changed so much from the Leipzig of the 1720s? **MS**

Royal Academy of Music 200th

An appreciation. Part 1.



From the RAM website *"We are the meeting point between the traditions of the past and the talent of the future, seeking out and supporting the musicians today whose music will move the world tomorrow."*

It is no mean feat to have reached the 200th Anniversary of any organisation. The RPS³ reached its 200th in 2013 and now the Royal Academy of Music joins the distinguished institutions that began in the thriving Victorian era; Britain a confident, all conquering nation. According to their history, the first RAM building was in Tenterden Street, Hanover Square (*pic right*) near to the elegant Hanover Square Rooms (left) where concerts were given by the Academy in annual seasons up until c.1874. Founded by the 11th Earl of Westmoreland in 1822 and supported by Arthur, 1st Duke of Wellington, the Royal Charter was awarded in 1830 and the RAM continued its early development from then on. The current Duchess of Wellington OBE is a member of the Governing Body today, continuing the family tradition.

Every institution goes through hard times financially and at one point the Academy was in such a mess it found itself up for closure c.1866. With the appointment of William Sterndale Bennett⁴ as Principal, he not only brought his considerable administrative skills to the table and put the Academy back on its financial feet, but also his knowledge and prowess as an interpreter of Bach's music, having directed the first English performance of the St. Matthew Passion on 6 April 1854 in the Hanover Square Rooms with the English Bach Society. Thus the Bach tradition that has been built at the RAM since originally stemmed from the deeply anglicised 19th century way in spite of Bennett having studied Mendelssohn's German score for the 1854 performance.

Fast forward.. and in 1927, a young Paul Steinitz, yet to reveal to the world his own Bach musical instincts, entered the RAM to study organ with Stanley Marchant, gaining his letters in quick succession. It was a different world then; flappers, high jinks, excess and making up for the lost

³ Royal Philharmonic Society

⁴ 1816-1875

years from 1914-1918. I am sure he indulged in some of this in the Chichester of the 1920s,. However Paul was essentially a shy, deeply hard-working and focussed musician who even in his student years set his course and did not/would not look back. Some of the first London Bach Society choir members were his RAM students, opportunity that continued in later years allowing Simon Preston, Cornelius Cardew among them to develop their skills. Thus began a 60-year association with his *alma mater* ending at his death in 1988 as Consultant Professor.

In Part 2 published in the September edition of *Bach Notes* we shall explore the RAM's development over the last 50 years or so; the Royal Academy of Music today, smart, with up to date facilities, a broad range of Professors and Tutors, ambition and direction..... And of course the Bach Cantata Series. MS www.ram.ac.uk

Who is Heinrich Schütz? **(1585-1672)**



In the late 1960s and early 70s when I was a student, composers like Heinrich Schütz were enjoying a revival with the emergence of the instruments required to recreate the sound that the composer would have heard, like the cornet & sackbut. Audiences became totally absorbed seated in the midst of polychoral forces in ancient churches. As a patron of the International Heinrich Schütz Society along with Roger Norrington and Peter Pears, Paul was well placed to bring Schütz's music to the fore, editing various pieces for Oxford University Press that were widely used. It was a thrilling time for LBS too, combining BBC Radio 3 Series with concerts that gave the public the chance to hear the 'original surround sound' and much fun for choir members to make sure they were in the right choirs dotted about Cathedrals like Chichester and Salisbury. Like many of his time, Schütz's

music has been less in evidence except perhaps for named festivals and conferences, so for his 350th let's do something about that at Bachfest, Bach's precursor and regarded as the most important composer before him. An extended article will feature in the autumn edition of *Bach Notes* www.dresden-magazin.com www.baerenreiter.com



Georg Christoph Biller (1955-2022) **Thomaskantor 1992-2015**

This is how we should remember Georg Christoph Biller, 16th Thomaskantor after Bach, 1st Thomaskantor after Fall of Berlin Wall, appointed in 1992. Christoph passed away after a debilitating illness that finally forced his retirement in 2015 from a

position to which, he was totally devoted. Born in the small town of Nebra in Saxony-Anhalt and a former Thomaner, Christoph was ideally placed and qualified to set the tone in what was a new era for this world-famous choir and its unrivalled Bach heritage in the unified Germany, 1989 onwards. He had vision as well as sound musicianship and *Forum Thomanum* is a testament to both. I worked with him back in 1994 when the Thomaner came to the UK for their debut concerts here. We stayed in touch thereafter. Christoph was a fine musician, a very dedicated Cantor. Envied for his demanding job and facilities

and also for his equally fine baritone – he sang Peter’s interjections in the performances of *Johannes-Passion* on the UK tour - Christoph laid the firm foundations for what the Thomaner has become today, giving much helpful advice in conversations with his recently appointed successor, Swiss born Andreas Reize. Rest in peace Christoph. He is now free from pain and suffering. Our thoughts are with his widow Ute and the family.
MS



Organ recitalist, teacher and founder-director of the English Organ School, Margaret Phillips, (pic) is among four distinguished organists being recognised with the 2022 RCO Medal. Congratulations to her, to Kevin Bowyer, Kerala Snyder and Kimberley Marshall. The medals will be presented on 12 March. Congratulations to them.

Calling aspiring organists!

Visit the RCO website to find out how you can participate and improve your organ playing skills on some of the finest instruments in the land and tutored by the best.

www.rco.org.uk

Rautio Piano Trio

Enjoying much success, this diligent and resourceful trio is one of the busiest around. Their chamber music is beautifully filmed and can be accessed here. Venue: Hall 2 at King’s Place. Click on the link.

https://vimeo.com/londonbachsociety/vod_pages

Festivals to come

Thüringer Bachwochen 8 April-1 May 2022

www.thueringer-bachwochen.de

Leipzig Bachfest 9 -19 June 2022

www.bachleipzig.de

LBS Bachfest 31 October-10 November 2022

www.bachlive.co.uk

London Handel Festival 18 March -18 April 2022

www.london-handel-festival.com

London Festival of Baroque Music 13-21 May 2022

www.sjss.org.uk

We are planning ahead so we invite new Bach Friends to support us with their annual or one-off donations. Come and be part of our growing list. All gifts acknowledged.

To Join go to www.bachlive.co.uk and follow the links.