



BACH NOTES

THE JOURNAL OF THE
LONDON BACH SOCIETY

REDISCOVERING BACH THE WORLD OF BACH TODAY



*Bachfest 2025: c.31 October-10 November
Mark the dates, Programme to be announced*

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*Brilliant Young Artists share our platform at
autumn 2024 Bachfest*



Sebastian Hill Tenor

*Another stunning LBS Bach Singers Prize Winner, November 2024
Jury Members: Julia Doyle, Christopher Bucknall, Rodolfo Richter*

Education

September 2023 – present; Guildhall School of Music and Drama, Artist Masters with scholarships from Guildhall School, H R Taylor Trust, Drake Calleja Trust, The Countess of Munster Trust; Magdalen College, University of Oxford - BA Music, first-class.

Solo Experience including Evangelist role

Wigmore Hall Goethe concert with Graham Johnson September 2024

The Sixteen Choral Pilgrimage at Oxford, Cambridge and Chichester in 2024

**Coming up: Choir of Magdalen College, Evangelist in Johannes-Passion BWV 245,
21 March 2025, 7.30 Magdalen College Oxford www.magdalencollegechoir.com**

Young Solo Artists at Bachfest's Bach Cantatas - 31 October and 22 November

Aine Smith soprano Joy Sutcliffe alto Ben Alden tenor Tom Butler bass

Victoria Meteyard soprano Anna Semple alto James Robinson tenor Florian Störtz* bass

*Florian Störtz is the 2023 winner of the London Handel Competition



Working with Alexandra Davies and Eleanor Hunt of Tenebrae, we invited these past Associate Artists of the choir's young artists programme to take the solo roles in our two Festival Bach cantata concerts, performing with Steinitz Bach Players directed by Rodolfo Richter.

Very memorable occasions. Thank you so much. Look out for them in future....

**Rodolfo Richter, Director of Steinitz Bach Players
concerts and Jury Member**

INTRODUCING *JOHANNES-PASSION BWV245* (1725)

Bach's first version of his *Johannes-Passion* BWV 245 (*left*) received its première in 1724. It was first performed at Leipzig on Good Friday 11 April that year in the city's Nikolaikirche. It was their turn to host the Passion, so a last-minute switch of venue from the Thomaskirche was necessary, aided by some deft community leafleting, after the powers-that-be realised the mistake. Imagine that today!

Either Bach was not satisfied with the first version, or he felt that some revisions and new movements were necessary, a few deletions, and modifications made that, in the event, would give the text certainly a different character feel in performance. The text was mostly Chapters 18 and 19 of St John's Gospel and remained so in the four versions of the *Johannes-Passion* that Bach provided, the last being in 1749. Whatever! The second version followed on 30 March 1725, 300 years ago this year, this time in the city's Thomaskirche. It was after all their turn...

Imagine the *Johannes-Passion* without that powerful evocation of Trinitarian Symbolism in the first chorus. Imagine "*O Mensch beweine deine Sünde groß*" in E flat instead of E major and coming at the beginning of the work in place of "*Herr, unser Herrscher*". Imagine the closing chorus to be a setting of the German Agnus Dei "*Christe du Lamm Gottes*" (Bach's cantata BWV 23). These are just a few notables. Composed during a tight schedule, of course Bach would have had much of the alternative music on the stocks, but most of the composers I know care deeply about their creations and think very carefully before making any changes. Bach would have been no different I'll wager.

Paul Steinitz directed LBS/SBP in 1st London performance of the second version of *Johannes-Passion* in March 1978.

Some think this second version did not convey the Kingship of Jesus. What do you think? **MS**

Here is the link to a performance by the Netherlands Bach Society in their "*All of Bach*" series. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CpsLy3Wrwgs>

LEIPZIG'S BACHFEST TODAY

Bach's City of Leipzig, has been vastly expanded since German unification, rebuilt, cleaned up, become a hub for tourists, musicians and scholars, has a proliferation of eating places alongside historic restaurants and does not feel so out of the way now, although the air travel from UK could be greatly improved! At the time of writing no direct flights.



From the ashes of Leipzig's former Bachfest pre-1989 has arisen a Bach Festival that opens its doors to everyone, with some fabulous Bach performed in a sumptuous annual feast of music and discourses. Artistic Director Michael Maul expends his great energy throughout the year putting together a rich selection of concerts around a given theme, to greet everyone and enable audiences to enjoy Bach performed in its 'natural habitat', and to experience the performances given by those we would not otherwise have the opportunity to hear.

Thomaskirche



*Dr Yo Tomita (Prof of Musicology & Composition
Queen's University, Belfast, Senior Fellow Bach-Archiv)
writes...*

"The Bachfest Leipzig 2024 ran from 7 to 16 June with the motto 'CHORal TOTAL'. The programme was centred around two anniversaries: 300th with Bach's second annual cycle of cantatas and St John Passion, and 500th with the publication of Martin Luther's first Protestant hymnal *Etlich Cristlich lider, Lobgesang und Psalm* (Wittenberg, 1524). During the ten-day festival, 160 events were presented in over thirty venues in and around the city of Leipzig. The opening concert, held in the Thomaskirche by the hosting musicians—Thomasorganist Johannes Lang, Thomanerchor with the Gewandhausorchester directed by Thomascantor Andreas Reize—presented a programme exploring the affluent tradition of the chorale and how it was valued and appropriated by Berg and Mendelssohn in their own ways. Doubtless the most important feature of this year's programme was the presentation of all 66 cantatas that belong to the annual cycle of chorale cantatas, which were performed in the order of the liturgical calendar in a series of sixteen concerts that were spread over eight days in four venues: the Thomaskirche, Nikolaikirche, Peterskirche, and Paulinum. Of these concerts, three were presented by world-renowned professional artists, while the remaining were

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Bachfest Leipzig 2025 takes place from 12 to 22 June with the motto "Transformation".

www.bach-leipzig.de Booking is open

Leipzig Bachfest 2024 report by Yo Tomita...continued

taken by amateur choirs from around the world: five from the USA, two from Germany, and one each from Australia, Japan, Malaysia, Spain, Switzerland, and UK (Southport Bach Choir).

The performance in this series took the following form: before listening to each cantata, we first heard an organ prelude that was based on the featured chorale; the audience was then asked to sing the hymn together; after listening to the cantata, the audience joined in singing the final chorale movement with the performers. The whole experience of actively participating in the concert was intriguing, certainly awkward at first but gratifying. Another highlight was St. John Passion, which was presented in diverse manifestations. Among these was a historical reconstruction of this first version presented on 13 June by Andreas Reize directing the Thomanerchor Leipzig and the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin in the Thomaskirche. He used the Bach organ, played by Thomasorganist Johannes Lang, in the north gallery as the main continuo instrument, and gathered his musicians around it. This choice defined the character of Reize's rendition, which was interesting, and provided much food for thought on what Bach might have done with it.

Outside of these commemorative events, there were also a number of memorable concerts. A superbly polished rendition of St. Matthew Passion was presented by Václav Luks directing Collegium Vocale 1704, Collegium 1704, and Thomaneranwärtler der Anna-Magdalena-Bach-Schule and der Grundschule forum thomanum on 8 June in the Thomaskirche. Leonidas Kavakos performed powerfully all of Bach's Violin Solos in two late-night concerts on 8 and 10 June.

On June 9 at the Nikolaikirche, the Monteverdi Choir with members of the English Baroque Soloists directed by Jonathan Sells, and Isabelle Faust as solo violinist, presented a joint programme entitled *'Motets and Partitas in Dialogue'* tracing the roots of Bach's works in the respective genre and appreciate his achievement. On 14 June, we heard two wonderful harpsichord recitals, first by Andreas Staier, this year's recipient of the Bach Medal of the City of Leipzig, in a programme to showcase the quality of Bach's music among his contemporaries, and second by Christine Schornsheim in Bach's Goldberg Variations, which she presented with elegance. The B-minor Mass at the closing concert was performed by Philippe Herreweghe with his Collegium Vocale Gent, which was a clean and sincere rendition to remember.



Nikolaikirche

BACH NETWORK'S DIALOGUE MEETING 2024



Some 40 scholars and enthusiasts gathered at Madingley Hall, Cambridge (*left*) from 7th to 10th July and in the space of three days handled 23 ground-breaking papers, two singing sessions, an expressive performance workshop and sixteen flash announcements of new research territory, boding well for the next bi-annual Dialogue scheduled for 2026.



Amongst the highlights were the frontier-breaking jazz improviser Dan Tepfer (fresh from dazzling the Leipzig crowd with his take on the Two-Part Inventions), and the “Preludes and Grooves” demonstration by Sandy Burnett and David Gordon, pushing the boundaries of Bach adaptation.

Our Bach-Archiv friends revealed the further reaches of digitisation, diving deep into genealogical and documentary sources using automatic text and handwriting analyses. Future discoveries are thus a likelihood; but even now, traditional scholarship has unearthed lost odes for Leipzig professors (Szymon Paczkowski), forgotten estate manuscripts collected by the leading nineteenth-century biographer Philipp Spitta (Tatiana Shabalina), and an unknown early copy of the “48” in Stettin (Tomasz Górny). Important work-in-progress was represented by a new source for Cantata text material, the Lieder -Freunde collaboration of poets led by the theologian Martin Schamelius, whose spiritual imagery resonates with several Bach settings (Lydia Vroegindewei]).

New insights on reception focussed on the international impact of the half-English



Thomaskirche organist Karl Straube (*left*), agent behind a Leipzig honorary degree for the British scholar Sanford Terry in 1935 - against the wishes of the national socialists (Christopher Anderson); dodging the censors and politicians for Bach in the Soviet Union (Jan Lech) and in East Germany (Bethan Winter).

The whole was rounded off with a motet setting commissioned for Bach Network of the E major fugue (inspired by Sir Donald Tovey in 1937) to the joyous chorale text “*Lob Preis und Ehr*”, exactly 100 years after the publication of Tovey’s groundbreaking edition of the “48” Preludes and Fugues. www.bachnetwork.org Peter Smaill LBS Trustee

DRESDEN 80 years on... The Bach Connection

Being the LBS Artistic Director opens up many historical and often surprising musical avenues. This, given that today Bach's repertoire is almost completely in the public domain globally. In 1946 when Paul founded our Society it wasn't, nor was Bach's story. More information is unearthed year by year since. Paul and LBS contributed to that post-war renaissance with, among other achievements, our historic cycle of Bach's cantatas (1958-87), and ground-breaking St Matthew Passion in 1952, controversially all sung in German and promoted only a few years after the war with Bach's country ended. In 1952, we even dared to invite the audience at the Passion to join us in three chorales when the German language was still regarded as an enemy tongue. We continue in that spirit of musical exploration and innovation today.



The boundaries of Bach discovery extend beyond Arnstadt, Mülhausen, Weimar, Cöthen and Leipzig to the city of Dresden the capital of Saxony, its 18th century glittering Court presided over by culturally informed Electors including Augustus the Strong, its position of Court composer once held by Heinrich Schütz and coveted by Bach. The Leipzig Cantor's reputation in Dresden was already well known and in 1733 while visiting the city where his son Wilhelm Friedemann was Director of Music at the Sophienkirche, Bach presented the new Elector with the Kyrie and Gloria (The Missa BWV232) later expanded to include all five sections of the Latin Ordinary we know and love today as his Mass in B minor BWV 232. We assume the Missa was to encourage the Elector to give him a Court Title. This ploy didn't work initially. However, the title was finally granted in 1736 and to mark the appointment, Bach performed the inaugural recital on the new organ by Gottfried Silbermann (1683-1753) in the city's Frauenkirche (*pictured above*) on 1 December 1



Augustus, King of Poland, and from 1733 Elector of Saxony

Dresden 80 years on...

Along with most of the city centre and the church itself, the organ did not survive WW2, and it wasn't until 2005 that the combined forces of the church and city joined by the UK Dresden Trust saw the rebuilt Frauenkirche, mostly reconstructed original brick by original brick, was given new life and rededicated. With distinguished colleagues I had the honour to be a trustee of the Dresden Trust at the time, subsequently organising a special organ recital for them in 2007 played to a packed church and given by the British recitalist Margaret Phillips on the Swiss builder Daniel Kern's instrument.

80 years on from the 1945 air-raid a lot of water has travelled through the city. The beautiful Elbe River is still in full flow. The city is rebuilt. Its cultural life is flourishing, although the memories of the infamous bombing over 13/14 February 1945 are still vivid and certainly not forgotten.

On 19 February I attended a special evening at the invitation of HE The German Ambassador Miguel Berger where we considered "*80 years on: From Ruins to Reconciliation – Dresden's Journey of Renewal*". Invited guests were treated to discourses by distinguished speakers including the Dean of Windsor, the Right Reverend Dr Christopher Cocksworth, and Marcus Ferrar, Patron and the Chairman respectively of the UK Dresden Trust. <https://dresdentrust.org>

It may have escaped notice, but 2025 is also the 275th anniversary of Bach's death in 1750. The Frauenkirche community thinks of Bach as the city's *musical godfather* and is mounting a series of concerts/recitals to mark the musical landmark for them. The programme can be found by clicking on the link : -

Margaret Steinitz

<https://www.frauenkirche-dresden.de/bach-year-2025>

Editor's Note:

The rebuilding of the Frauenkirche was a marathon affair, gathering and assembling relics of the old church and setting them out ready to piece together to create the resurrected church. The Chairman of the UK Dresden Trust and a driving force behind the project was the late Dr Alan Russell OBE along with his British and Dresden associates. Their priority was the restoration and placing of the Orb and Cross on the Dome of the church where it belonged. Inspirational achievement. Today's Trust builds on the legacy of the founding trustees, continuing in Dr. Russell's spirit by maintaining contacts and establishing life enhancing scholarships and exchanges. **MS**

BACH NOTELETS



St George's at 300

Handel's Parish Church of St. George's Hanover Square in the heart of London's Mayfair will mark its 300th anniversary this year with a spectacular Handel concert on Saturday 22 March at 7pm, given by the London Handel Choir and Orchestra, soloists including Alexander Chance and Florian Störtz (past Handel Prize winners) conducted by the Director of Music Richard Gowers. Handel was a

parishioner here and resided nearby in Brooke Street, which is now The Handel House Museum. Will he be a fly on the wall for the 300th? Follow the link for more concert information and click on the Events page.

www.stgeorghanoversquare.org

At Leipzig 300 years ago on 30 March 1725, the second version of Bach's *Johannes-Passion* took place in the Thomaskirche. Glorious co-incidence.

BachCantataTexts.org

Compiled by American Bach academics Michael Marissen and Daniel Melamed, new and improved translations of Bach's vocal repertoire are being provided, and a website is dedicated to them. LBS has been accessing the website and using the texts by these two very fine Bach scholars. These are freely available. Go to....

www.BachCantataTexts.org

BachDigital.de www.bach-digital.de

This magnificent research database of works by Bach and his family members is an *essential* resource for scholars, musicians, music directors....in fact anyone interested in Bach's music and wanting to know more. Well worth a visit.



LBS Bachfest at Wax Chandlers Hall, 6 November 2024

Introducing a new group to a packed hall, Felix Ensemble, founded by violinist Jane Gordon. They played the original version of Mendelssohn's Octet and movements from Bach's Art of Fugue



LBS Bach Notes is compiled and edited by Margaret Steinitz. Next issue September 2025. lbs@lonbachsoc.co.uk