

***SBP shines at Bachfest – Sarah Power wins Bach Singers Prize – Bachlive Updated
21st Bachfest beckons – James Rhodes at the Bach Club – “Bach for Life” launched***

In the footsteps of Robert Schumann

Once again, we bring you a wide variety of articles and features about LBS and the world of Bach in this, our first issue for 2011. Copies of the Journal can be downloaded from our updated website. www.bachlive.co.uk or emailed - **see back page footer**

Bach Notes is inspired by the 19th century composer and journalist Robert Schumann, whose 200th anniversary of his birth was celebrated last year. He used his Journal¹ to promote the music of fellow composers and, as the revival of interest in Bach's music gathered strength in Germany, to extol the composer's genius that helped to gain him further recognition in Leipzig and his first memorial unveiled there in 1843. Schumann was later a member of the group who set up the Bachgesellschaft (Bach Society) in 1850 with the purpose of publishing a complete edition of Bach's works.

A global community for Bach

By following in Schumann's footsteps, London Bach Society is able to promote its own activities through the pages of **Bach Notes** and, as part of a Bach community that is truly global, to reflect a little of what's happening elsewhere. Enjoy! **Editor**

Autumn treasures

What a valuable treasure Steinitz Bach Players is! Once again our orchestra led the way both before and during the LBS's 20th Bachfest with some stunning playing. Although the occasion was tinged with sadness, the opportunity to join Elizabeth Bates and her Chantry Singers of Bath for their farewell performance - Bach's *Mass in B minor* given to a packed Bath Abbey last October - inspired some stellar obligato playing and truly committed singing as the wonders of Bach's final major choral work² unfurled in this historic setting. Following her late father, Bach conductor Cuthbert Bates, Elizabeth rekindled the flame of Bach Festivals at Bath in 1980 and since then has presented seven imaginative series that have now come to an end.

Continued in next column

The work complete, she leaves a community the richer for her relentless energy and drive to bring high quality Bach to the locality. At the end of the performance choir Vice President Margaret Cable paid her a moving tribute. This was followed by a prolonged standing ovation.



LBS President

Sir David Tang, heading up 'Bach for Life' – more inside

A lasting image from the performance is of natural horn player Ursula Paludan Monberg, standing majestically on the platform steps, instrument 'en l'air', joined by bassoonists Andrew Watts and Rebecca Stockwell giving us a *Quoniam* to remember! MS

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Family Bach at Bachfest – in retrospect

LBS 20th Bachfest was entitled *Family Bach*.

Here was an opportunity to reflect upon Bach the family man, but in a different way. We considered the parental ups and downs faced, for we know for example that Johann Gottfried Bernhard Bach³ and Gottfried Heinrich Bach⁴ both had personal and social difficulties to overcome. Juggling family issues with the completion of a work for imminent performance is an aspect of Bach's life we consider rarely. That he fathered twenty children is more a cause for ribaldry, unjustifiably so if the facts are examined. The Leipzig Bach-Archiv is unearthing some interesting information that will enlighten us on a number of aspects about Bach that have hitherto mystified⁵, perhaps even more on how child bereavements influenced his composing for example.

With Anna Magdalena, Bach had a matchless partner: wife and mother, musician and copyist, someone who coped with his demanding work and with their growing family. The loss of some children either within a few days or in early life was a hardship they shared with, and commonly borne by, other families in the 18th century because of the poverty, medical and social inadequacies of the day. Taking this all into account, how must the Bachs still have felt? Joseph von Eichendorff's⁶ touching poem 'Auf meines Kindes Tod' "**On the death of my child**" might offer some insight. *(Translated by LBS Trustee Margit Hosseini)*

*The clocks strike in the town
It's far into the night,
How gloomy burns the lamp,
Your little bed's turned down*

*Only the winds go round
Moaning through the house
We sit alone inside
Listening for every sound*

*And there it seems so clear
Your soft tap on the door,
You only lost your way
And now you're safely here.*

*Poor fools, could we not know?
It's we who got so lost
So frightened in the dark –
You came home long ago*

Three Bach family anniversaries⁷ influenced our planning; we welcomed some wonderful artists to our platform and introduced a new one, our 3rd Bach Singers Prize winner, the Irish-born soprano **Sarah Power** (pictured above right).



Gillian Keith
soloist in
Cantata 204



Sarah Power
Compelling Bach singing
at The Final

The 4th Competition will be in 2012. If it is anything like the 3rd, it will be hotly contested and immensely rewarding. www.bachlive.co.uk. Click on Bach Prize

In a packed Room 20 at the National Portrait Gallery we brought together members of Steinitz Bach Players in a recital "*At home with the Bachs*". This was not a reconstruction but a reflection of the importance Bach attached to the musical education of his children, their family music-making together and a chance to present some chamber music, a medium often crowded out for us. Personal observations by **Alastair Ross** punctuated his thoughtful selection from the Wilhelm Friedemann Bach Notebook; **Rodolfo Richter**, **Rachel Beckett** and **Anthony Robson** once more combined their virtuosic playing skills with deep musical insight in two Bach Trio Sonatas and, joined by cellist **Helen Verney**, delighted the audience in the D major Quintet Op.22 No 1 by Bach's youngest son, Johann Christian who lived, worked and who is buried in London.

A few days later we became immersed in Cantata BWV 204 and were joined by **Gillian Keith** (pictured above left). Anthony Robson directed the SBP once more in the historic setting of London's oldest church, St. Bartholomew-the-Great. The purpose of BWV 204 is unclear, but this substantial cantata for solo soprano was probably composed for a family occasion and originally sung by Anna Magdalena (Leipzig 1726/7), Bach having her particular voice in mind perhaps. If so, the testing recitatives and arias it contains – this is no lightweight Bach – tell us that Anna Magdalena must have been some soprano! It was brilliantly performed by Gillian.



James Rhodes

At The 18-30 Bach Club

Charismatic pianist **James Rhodes'** appearance at a sold-out via Twitter Bach Club meeting during Bachfest, playing a spanking new Steinway grand lent specially, drew into our circle an artist whose passion for Bach's music is just as intense and his interest as inquisitive... but from a different perspective. This was the first time that we had ever promoted a Bach-centred piano recital and James' unique style and narration chimes brilliantly with today's young people. The occasion opened a new chapter for us. Laura Matthews wrote to us afterwards: "**I just thought I would drop you a quick line to say 'thank you' for putting on such an enjoyable concert last Friday. Even on this cold Wednesday I'm still smiling from the weekend. Thanks again.**"

Enough said. Thanks James! You ended our 20th Bachfest perfectly. Now onto our 21st... **MS**

³Born 1715 at Weimar to Maria Barbara

⁴Born 1724 at Leipzig to Anna Magdalena

⁵See also New Bach Reader

⁶1788-1857

⁷W F Bach 300th and JSB's 325th (birthdays) Anna Magdalena's 250th anniversary of her death



Philippe Herreweghe

Belgian Bach specialist Philippe Herreweghe, who was awarded the 2010 Leipzig Bach Medal, opens another feast of music at the **2011 Lufthansa Festival of Baroque Music** on 13 May with a performance of Bach's *Mass in B minor BWV 232* by his celebrated Collegium Vocale of Ghent. Philippe tells us...

"If there's one work by Bach I like to conduct every year without getting bored, it would be the B-minor Mass! The richness of its architecture keeps intriguing me. Over the years, I've done more than 100 performances and recorded this masterpiece twice. Still, I look forward very much to an ultimate recording with Collegium!"

The festival theme is **Hanseatic to Adriatic: Journey through the Heart of Europe** and the series cuts a musical swathe from Hamburg to Venice, featuring Handel and Reincken with **The English Concert**, German violin music with **Enrico Gatti**, Telemann with **Ensemble Caprice**, music

Musicians Benevolent Fund at 90

It was the unexpected death of the tenor Gervase Elwes in 1921 that caused his friends to set up the Musicians Benevolent Fund. Legions of musicians have been supported since. This has taken the form of study scholarships and grants for specified performances to support for musicians experiencing hard times, illness and the loneliness of old age. On 9 February 1921, an hour-long meeting led to a discussion about six ideas for the new Fund, among them travelling scholarships, creation of a convalescent cottage for musicians, a prize for singers and composers and a concert fund for the promotion of good British music in all parts of the UK and Ireland. Forward thinking has been the byword for the Fund since foundation and the initiatives generated have touched the lives of so many, its 90th anniversary deserves particular attention. The Fund's annual Festival of St. Cecilia takes place in November and regularly commissions a new anthem for the Commemorative Service. For details about this and about events in the Fund's 90th year visit www.helpmusicians.org.uk

from Bohemia with **Ensemble Inégal**, and Buxtehude from **Cantus Cölln**. To close, **Sonatori de la Gioiosa Marca** perform dazzling concertos by **Vivaldi**.

Tickets available online www.sjss.org.uk 020 7222 1061
www.lufthansafestival.org.uk 13-21 May 2011

A Glut of Awards

Colin Firth may be sweeping the board at the Oscars, but so far it has been a bumper year of awards in our circle too. In January **Professor John Butt** received the 2011 RAM Kohn Foundation Bach Prize, in April legendary tenor **Peter Schreier** will be the 2010 recipient, having postponed last year due to illness, and just recently news broke that **Dame Emma Kirkby** has been awarded the 2011 Queen's Medal for Music. Many congratulations to them all and our thanks to those who make these awards possible.



Dame Emma Kirkby
(Photo Eric Richmond)

BACH for LIFE™

This is the London Bach Society's Development Plan for its Future

- To provide a central headquarters for the London Bach Society from which the Society can operate, house its library and archive, develop its performing and educational activities to become a Centre for Bach Performance and Study
- To enhance and extend the current network of supporters to include Memberships, support for performances, educational and outreach work and audience development

Visit our new website www.bachlive.co.uk to find out how you can get involved

21st ANNIVERSARY BACHFEST – 31 OCTOBER to 10 NOVEMBER 2011



Franz Liszt and the Bach connection

Bach's position as the father of European music after 1750 has been given fresh credibility with the recent bi-centenaries of Robert Schumann and Frédéric Chopin and this year, with that of Franz Liszt. These composer anniversaries offer us another chance to set Bach's music in context, not only for his own lifetime but down the ages too. All three have paid homage to Bach and played their part in the revival of his music in the 19th century.

Franz Liszt (b. 22 Oct 1811) is as much known for his eventful private life, shock of white hair, adoring female fans and flamboyant keyboard playing as he is for his corpus of compositions. A sizeable collection of sacred and secular works sits alongside symphonic poems, keyboard works

and an opera. However it is through his organ works and piano transcriptions that he best relates to Bach - hardly surprising really given that both have keyboard virtuosity in common. Liszt included works by Bach in his recital programmes too, where his piano transcriptions of numerous Bach Preludes and Fugues were featured. This will have helped to disseminate knowledge of Bach's music throughout Europe during the virtuoso's annual concert travels too, provided of course that the female fan club were not completely overcome with the vapours by his presence! I add a cautionary note. It is said that fellow composers, including Mendelssohn and Chopin perhaps a little jealous of Liszt's 'pulling-power', have greeted his dazzling keyboard displays with a fair measure of disdain citing 'too many wrong notes and too little regard for the harmony'... but I think it was that doting fan club don't you? There is a British Liszt Society that has a yearlong series of events to mark the bi-centenary. Visit www.liszt soc.org.uk. **MS**

The Faber Pocket Guide to Bach

Nicholas Kenyon

ISBN 978-0-571-23327-4 rrp £8.99

(special offer to LBS readers, 25% discount)

The latest publication in the Faber Pocket Guide series is another from Nicholas Kenyon and is devoted to Bach¹. Kenyon brings to the compilation a lifelong passion for the composer's music. This infuses every page and has inspired the pocket guide, a complement to the biographies and composer companions already on the bookshelf. The book is compiled in "sections" rather than in traditional chapter format, which is what the subject requires here given that the contents cover a broad spectrum. It is generously dedicated too: In memory of George Malcolm, for Lina Lalandi² and 'for all those performers who bring Bach's music to life'.

Commentary on the composer's music is central to the book, divided between Sacred Music (cantatas, masses and magnificat, passions, oratorios, motets and organ works) and Secular Music (cantatas, instrumental works, canons, *Musical Offering* and *The Art of Fugue*). The presentation is clear throughout, the content very readable although there are no illustrations or musical examples and Kenyon's personal selection of recordings follows the music narrative. The Guide also contains other sections ranging from "*Bach in sound and number*" to "*Things people have said about Bach*" and "*Bach in the media*" as well as a brief biography, a section on the Bach family and a chronology. The Guide ends with a selection of recommended reading, an alphabetical index of works and an index of works by BWV number.

The assembly of any Guide to Bach is a major undertaking because the subject matter is huge as Kenyon admits, has global interest and not merely confined to musicians working in Western Europe. More information will come to light as the Bach-Archiv research survey is already revealing, so a revised edition of the Guide beckons too. There is also the dilemma about what to include, what or who to leave out and what emphasis to be placed. That has clearly been the case here, especially in the section on "*Bach from 1750-2010*", an immense time span of activity covered in just twenty pages and with some significant omissions, for example S. Wesley and Sterndale Bennett's work, the Leipzig Thomanerchor's weekly commitment in the Thomaskirche today and their own public cycle of Bach's cantatas (1990s) presented as 'Bach's choir' emerged from the obscurity of the communist GDR to take its place among us in the unified Germany. A substantial celebration is planned for their 800th anniversary next year. Also, there is no mention anywhere, including both Indexes, of the Bach Aria discovered in 2005 and given the BWV number 1127, the first Bach discovery for decades. Mozart's visit to Leipzig is well documented and took place in 1789³, not 1786 as printed.

How books published today document the development, nay evolution, of Bach study and performance since his death matters. It matters hugely - from dates, events and key players to public reaction and of course the music itself. Equally, how books document the genesis and development of the period instrument movement matters too. Kenyon is

only able to give a fairly general account over eight pages in the section "*Performing Bach today: an autobiography in sound*" with little detail about the real work done to prepare the way for "*the winds of change*" to blow "*through performance styles*"⁴. There is much, much more to this subject than the book recounts.

Performances of the Bach Passions will soon resound globally. It's March. The tradition here has become embedded into the warp and weft of our musical life since the mid to late 19th century despite the editions used then, inadequate English translations around and the wide range of musical forces employed...but there is also an assumption in the book that Bach's music will survive. For most young people today his music is not just out of reach, but off the radar. Bach's music will survive as long as there are dedicated enthusiasts able to introduce it successfully to the next generations. When exposed to it young people are not indifferent but just need a way in. It is up to the Bach community now to open the door for them, just as George Malcolm, Lina Lalandi and all of us working for Bach have done for Nicholas Kenyon. **Margaret Steinitz**

Bach Network comes to Edinburgh

The Fifth J. S. Bach Dialogue Meeting will be held in Edinburgh, 12-14 August 2011. Full details of the location, brochure and method of booking can be found by visiting

www.bachnetwork.co.uk

¹By the same author the Faber Pocket Guide to Mozart

²Founder-director English Bach Festival

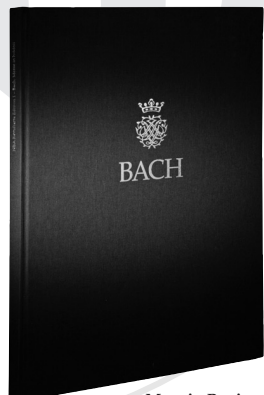
³See New Bach Reader p. 488 and Johann Sebastian Bach: The Learned Musician p. 463. ⁴P.122

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"It is tremendously important, this *New Bach Edition – Revised* of the Mass in B minor by J. S. Bach! One of the major works by J. S. Bach is now finally available in a scholarly edition, as it should be. Congratulations!"
Ton Koopman

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