

18-30 BACH CLUB LAUNCHED

One of the highlights of the LBS's 2009 Bachfest was the launch of the **18-30 Bach Club** on Friday 13 November in the gracious surroundings of London's Foundling Museum. This setting was chosen in tribute to Handel's 250th anniversary and the Picture Gallery was full for the occasion.

A new initiative to mark Paul Steinitz' centenary, the Bach Club will feature regularly at future Bachfests and, as it grows, at other times of the year.

Ventures into commissioning are planned as a reflection of the inspiration behind the founding of this Club - JSB's tenure as Director of Music of the Leipzig Collegium Musicum, the students musical society that met each Friday evening during winter at Zimmermann's Coffee House in Katharinenstrasse¹, at which new works of the day including Bach's Coffee Cantata BWV 211 were premièred and no doubt discussed in the Coffee House atmosphere of the time

FAMILY BACH

The picture of Bach that lingers in the mind is usually that of an older, bewigged, rather 'podgy' looking man as portrayed in the portraits by Haussmann painted at Leipzig in the 1740s. We forget that he was once a slender, vigorous young man, possibly rather arrogant and quick-tempered, although he always presented



Les Mélomanes, RAM Early Music Prize Winners in 2009 help launch new 18-30 Bach Club

himself in an appropriately deferential way - deferential that is according to the convention of the time. At the age of twenty-two, he married second cousin Maria Barbara at Dornheim in October 1707. Little information has survived about her, but the marriage is assumed to have been very happy and it secured Bach's early domestic life.

This year marks three anniversaries in the Bach Family: JSB 325th, his second wife Anna Magdalena's 250th

(d.1760) and Wilhelm Friedemann's 300th (b.1710). So here is an opportunity to reflect on Bach the family man, with all the parental ups and downs that entailed. Tragedy struck in 1720 with Maria

Barbara's sudden death, a shattering blow to Bach. Newfound happiness swiftly followed in 1721 on his marriage to Anna Magdalena, who not only bore him a further thirteen children, but also became stepmother to Maria Barbara's four surviving ones, the highly gifted but wayward Wilhelm Friedemann and the able Carl Philipp Emanuel among them. What Bach might have been like often provokes heated discussion and there is sometimes disappointment that what we *'think'* he was like cannot be regarded as gospel truth. Few letters and documents survive that reveal very much about him. Those that do are published in the *New Bach Reader*².



The Young Bach at Arnstadt
Bernd Göbel (1985)

More about The Bach Club inside...

In this edition...

Anna Magdalena – her 250th, SBP at Bath, Pen Portrait – Peter Schreier, A New Organ for St. George's Hanover Sq, Chopin's 200th, The Bach Club, Bach Notelets

¹ A few minutes' walk from Leipzig's St. Thomas Church

² Ed by Mendel & David, revised by Christoph Wolff, published WW Norton & Co

ANNA MAGDALENA BACH

For her 250th

They say that behind every successful man there is a woman!

In Bach's case there were two - his wives Maria Barbara (d.1720) and the better known Anna Magdalena (d.1760). Between them, they not only bore twenty children, but were also the rocks that kept this ever-growing family on an even keel during their respective lives. Whether Bach was 'successful', as we interpret the meaning today, is a matter of conjecture. He did not know great wealth nor did he achieve the social status he probably coveted. Evidence that supports this lies in his original burial being in the cemetery at the Johanniskirche (St. John's Church) where people of his 'station' were laid to rest³. It is fair to say that he was revered by some and highly respected by most.

Little is known about Maria Barbara, mother of Wilhelm Friedemann (b.1710) and Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach (b.1714), except for the sad circumstances of her sudden illness and death in July 1720 aged just 36; Bach was away at the time and only learnt the news on his return home, by which date she had already been buried. He was stunned. This is in stark contrast to the way we expect to receive such news today, isn't it? There were no emails or mobiles then.

However just seventeen months later on 3 December 1721 Bach married twenty year-old Anna Magdalena

Wilcke at Cöthen. Together for the next twenty eight years, most of which were spent at Leipzig⁴, they shared a deep devotion and affection that not only enabled Bach to fulfil his considerable and demanding duties, but also sustained a large household, complete with students and other visiting friends and colleagues, and all given warm hospitality at their lodgings in the Thomasschule, next door to the Thomaskirche in Leipzig's Thomaskirchhof. The *Anna Magdalena Notebooks* (1722) and (1725) Bach provided undoubtedly testify to the respect in which she was held musically and to her importance in his life.

Often referred to with endearments like 'our most honoured Mama'⁵, Anna Magdalena not only became step-mother to Bach's surviving children by Maria Barbara, but she also bore him a further thirteen, a number of whom either died within days or after a few months, a hardship commonly borne by families alongside the poverty, medical and other social inadequacies of the day. The Bachs also had their fair share of parental worries too. Sons Johann Gottfried Bernhard (b. 1715 by Maria Barbara) and Gottfried Heinrich

(b. 1724 by Anna Magdalena) both had personal and social difficulties to overcome. So any perception that such problems are merely a 21st century phenomenon can be quickly dispelled. Knowledge of life with the Bachs reveals more common ground and creates another bridge between the centuries that helps to draw the composer and his treasury of music perhaps ever closer to us today.

A matchless partner

Anna Magdalena was born into a musical family. A gifted musician herself, she became a successful professional singer and later appeared in concerts with her husband as circumstances allowed, for example with the Leipzig Collegium, within the family circle or when accompanying Bach on his many trips away from the city. Bach's Cantata for solo soprano BWV 204 (dating 1726-27) might well have been composed with Anna Magdalena in mind, for scholars now believe that it was probably written for a family occasion. However, performances of the weekly church cantatas Bach provided for the Leipzig services would have been precluded, with the soprano parts allocated to one of the boys of the Thomanerchor.



Bach's Lodgings at the Thomasschule



(middle) Zimmermann's Coffee House

Anna Magdalena's work as one of her husband's copyists surely helped to compensate for any restrictions that were placed on her public performances, and invaluable so. Examples of her musical handwriting include various cantatas, the Violin Sonatas and

Partitas, the Six Cello Suites among others. Apart from this and her family and friends, her pleasures also included gardening and her delight at receiving a gift of carnations is well documented.

Anna Magdalena's 250th anniversary in 2010

Life after Bach, however, was not so agreeable for her. Apart from the personal loss of her husband, family support was limited and she knew great hardship, eventually dying in penury on 27 February 1760 aged 59. The 250th anniversary of her death enables us to reflect upon the central role she played in Bach's life as wife and mother, hostess to countless guests, a copyist, fellow musician and Confidante. During arguably Bach's most significant composing years, marriage to Anna Magdalena co-incided with his provision of the five cycles of church cantatas, the great Passions and Oratorios and his assembly of material for publication during the 1740s among so much else. We remember Anna Magdalena with considerable affection. **Margaret Steinitz**

³ Possible remains re-buried at Thomaskirche in 1950

⁴ The Bachs left Cöthen for Leipzig in 1723

⁵ Johann Sebastian Bach, *The Learned Musician*, Wolff. Published OUP, 2000, page 393

THE BACH CLUB

CLUB LAUNCH REPORT

When Bach met up with his Students' Musical Society on Friday evenings at Zimmermann's Coffee House (page 2) in the fashionable Katharinenstrasse it probably proved a welcome respite. They must have been lively occasions, an important platform for Bach to première his latest compositions and showcase new talent. Concertos probably featured sons and pupils playing the solo parts and perhaps musicians travelling through the city would have taken the chance to see what was going on, bring new pieces, talk about the latest this and that. Who knows? No programmes survive, although the time Bach devoted to their preparation confirms that these were not just 'jolly-ups' but serious and purposeful. The 'meetings' were public concerts and, for the audience members, somewhere to be noticed perhaps, catch up with friends and make new ones, to discuss and, yes, enjoy the music.



Philip Higham

outnumbering the LBS members who came to support this new venture for 18-30s. Directed by **Anthony Robson** (pictured) and **Matthew Truscott** (violin) - Tony also played his oboe and on his birthday too! - the players welcomed cellist **Philip Higham** (pictured), the first ever British winner of the Johann Sebastian Bach Prize at Leipzig He kept us spellbound by his mastery of Bach's Sixth Suite for Unaccompanied cello. The new ensemble **Les Mélomanes** (means 'mad about music') contrasted this with a well-devised sequence of Trio Sonatas by Bach's contemporaries Handel and Telemann. All the performances met with rousing applause in the informal atmosphere, with musicians and students later enjoying wine and chat long after the concert ended.

Les Mélomanes: (front page) Alexandra Kloss (recorder), Stephen Pedder (violin), Kathleen Ross (cello), Rani Orenstein (harpsichord).

The next 'meeting' will be at Bachfest 2010...watch this space! **MS**

Anthony Robson



GETTING STARTED

Most musicians would agree that playing chamber music can be one of the most rewarding aspects of playing an instrument. However when my ensemble, **Les Mélomanes**, decided that we would like to attempt to perform together regularly, we began to realise that there was far more preparation to take into account than simply the musical interpretations themselves.

My chamber group is extremely important to me. It's a lifeline of sorts when I don't have much playing work. It reminds me to constantly push myself and strive for new ideas when I feel stuck in a rut musically. It's the idea that one day, we may have a definitive version (or versions) of a piece that we could attempt to record. Most importantly, I feel that all of our rehearsals are an arena where I can try out new ideas, make mistakes and perfect new skills without feeling judged by the other members. Consequently, this is the driving force behind any success that the ensemble may have. Having free rein to handle the workings of the ensemble has been a steep learning curve. It throws up a multitude of questions, from the more basic "how do I compose a succinct and persuasive letter to a concert venue?" to the laborious "how on earth do I begin to build a website?". So in contrast to my more competent creative side, I have recently been attempting to cultivate a more administrative nature. For example, these are tasks such as: dealing with our accounts, booking train tickets, courting and liaising with concert venues and running our website. It always amazes me how seemingly innocuous matters such as organising rehearsal times and venues can become such a headache! Simply getting four musicians with busy lives into a room together for a couple of hours can at times seem a monumental task. I would have to say that one of the most important lessons I have learned is to try and complete any tasks as early as possible.

Before forming the group, we didn't really take on board the fact that concert venues may ask for programmes and notes for these up to six months in advance. The group is gradually accumulating a set of programming solutions and repertoire that we will be able to roll out as necessary. It is vital that we don't stop our attempts at self-promotion and approaching concert venues, even if we do have a number of recitals lined up for the coming months. I would love for our ensemble to be able to accomplish more innovative performances. I feel that it is important to keep 'a finger on the pulse', as it were, from a cultural perspective. Collaborative presentations between different artistic genres are the norm nowadays, and I would very much like to see the ensemble take some steps in this direction.
Kathleen Ross www.les-melomanes.com

THE BACH CLUB - Keeping in touch Club Membership is FREE

For regular e-mail updates and news about the next meeting of the Bach Club at the 2010 BACHFEST Email lbs@lonbachsoc.demon.co.uk or contact us via our website www.bachlive.co.uk

SBP at BATH BACH FESTIVAL 2010

Bath Abbey, 23 October

Elizabeth Bates founded the Chantry Singers of Bath in 1980. She has directed their annual seasons since that have also included Bach Festival Weekends and Weeks given every three and five years respectively. It is no mean feat for any organisation to take on the presentation of such projects and Elizabeth's have always featured Bach specialist singers and players who are given a warm welcome in the World Heritage City of Bath. **Steinitz Bach Players** first took part in 2003 and have been regular guests ever since. They will join the choir and soloists **Catherine Bott, Robin Blaze, Julian Podger** and **Matthew Rose** for a performance of Bach's *Mass in B Minor* in Bath Abbey on 23 October that brings down the curtain on the 2010 Festival and is the choir's farewell. A huge amount of energy goes into making these occasions such a success and Margaret Steinitz caught up with Elizabeth Bates to ask her what she had planned for us and for her 'farewell'.

MS: This is your 7th and last Bach Festival. Tell us what you have planned. Is there a pervading theme or special inspiration for example?

EB: We have 12 concerts over eight days. My first priority was to ensure that the opening and closing concerts were of Bach's greatest choral works since it is my choir, the Chantry Singers that is promoting the Festival. Hence we start with the *St Matthew Passion* (complete) and end with the *Mass in B Minor*. Ten distinguished vocal soloists and



The Chantry Singers of Bath

two eminent early music ensembles have been engaged. For the *St Matthew Passion*, **Florilegium** will play and for the Mass, **Steinitz Bach Players**. The latter will be the fourth collaboration with the distinguished orchestra and it seems most appropriate that they will be joining us for our final concert. I also wanted another focal point midweek and on the Wednesday the **Academy of Ancient Music** will perform all six Brandenburg Concertos.

Bach was also a great organist and during the week there are two organ recitals: One '*The Intimate Bach*' will be given by **Dame Gillian Weir** and the second is entitled '*Bach - a composer ahead of his time*' given by **David Briggs**. Solo cantatas also feature in a chamber concert with **Dame Emma Kirkby** and **London Baroque**, and there are four further recitals given on the flute and harpsichord with **Ashley Solomon** and **Terence Charlston**, violin and piano with **Ruth Waterman** and **Florian Uhlig**, lute with **Jakob Lindberg** and piano with

Peter O'Hagan. **Peter Seymour** will deliver the illustrated lecture on '*The role and importance of ornamentation in Bach's music*'

MS: Is there anything specifically for young people?

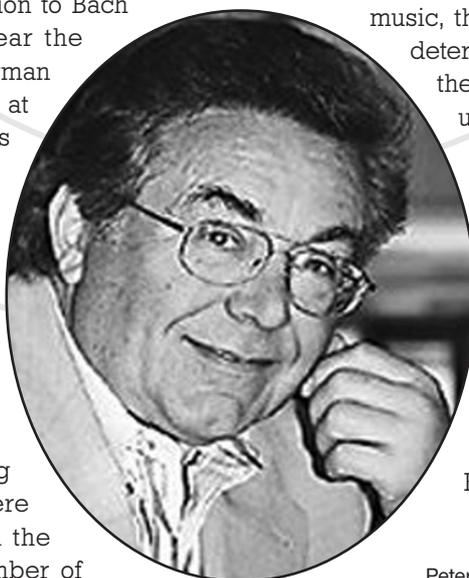
EB: **The Classic Buskers** made such an impact at our last Festival that we have invited them back again for an evening of '*More Baching Mad*'.

MS: Thank you Elizabeth. We can't wait to join you.

The Festival runs from **16-23 October** and full details will be available in May www.chantry-singers.org.uk

PEN PORTRAIT – PETER SCHREIER

Each year the Royal Academy of Music/Kohn Foundation awards a Prize to an artist who has made an outstanding contribution to Bach scholarship and performance. This year the recipient will be the celebrated East German born tenor Peter Schreier. He was born at Meissen, Saxony in 1935. WWII was at its height and most of Dresden in rubble when he entered the famous *Dresdner Kreuzchor*, a musical environment steeped in the rich tradition that defines the cultural heritage of this part of eastern Germany. His director, the 'Kreuzkantor' was none other than the charismatic Rudolph Mauersberger⁶, whose younger brother Erhard⁷ was later to become the Leipzig 'Thomaskantor'. Bach's vocal works were at the centre of the repertory even in the communist state⁸ and as a soloist member of



Peter Schreier

the Kreuzchor the young Schreier travelled abroad too, a state privilege for eminent 'exports'.

Thus Peter Schreier grew up surrounded by Bach's music, the study and performance of which he was determined to pursue. Following further study at the Dresden State Opera, Schreier rose quickly up the musical ladder and into the realms of international stardom. He became much in demand for Opera, German Lieder recitals and Bach performances around the world. Schreier soon began to direct his own performances as well, often from memory, and he recorded many on disc. Schreier's intimate knowledge of the Bach repertoire and the deep insight he has brought to its interpretation makes him a very deserving recipient of the 2010 RAM/Kohn Foundation Bach Prize. **MS**

⁶ From 1931-71

⁷ From 1961-72

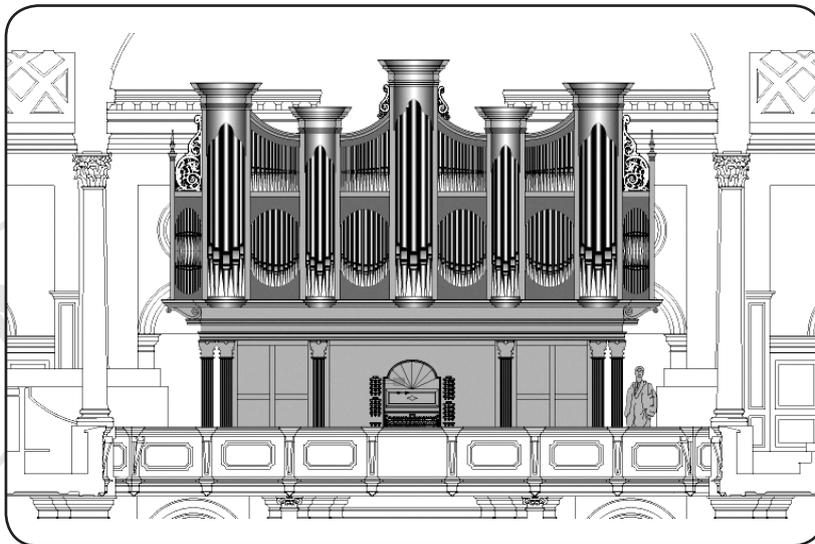
⁸ German Democratic Republic, 1949-89

A NEW (Bach?) ORGAN for St GEORGE'S, HANOVER SQUARE in LONDON

Simon Williams, Organist and Director of Music writes about an ambitious project to build a new organ in the heart of London, which more than nods at the Bach style.

Readers familiar with St George's may wonder why we are commissioning a new organ at all. A glance upward and westwards on entering the church reveals an expanse of gilded organ pipes set in casework of warmly burnished oak. Behind the impressive façade things are not so happy however, and the current organ is suffering mechanically and tonally. So we have commissioned Richards, Fowkes & Co of Tennessee to provide us with a new instrument. This will be the first American-built organ in London and the first in the UK since the 1974 Phelps instrument in Hexham Abbey.

But why should this project be of particular interest to Bach Notes' readers? The answer: how many sizeable



The new organ

organs are there in London that allow players to do justice to Bach's incomparable organ music? Richards, Fowkes, like many craftsman-builders in the USA have studied European organs of the 18th-century 'golden age' intensely. But, typical of their country's willingness to experiment, they are interested in working to meet the full needs of their clients. At St George's the aim is to provide an instrument

that, in the builder's own words, 'continues our North European inspirations for colour, clarity, and gravitas, while subtly shifting the emphasis towards the needs of the Anglican choir'. It may well be impossible to define the 'Bach organ' precisely, but by Christmas 2011 we hope to have one possible answer pealing forth in Mayfair, and we hope that you will come to hear it. **SW**

Editor:

Further information can be found at www.richardsfowkes.com. Anyone interested in finding out more about St George's appeal for £2.5m to restore the interior of the church and to provide the new organ is asked to email campaign@stgeorghanoversquare.org, or telephone 020 7629 0874.

EDITORIAL:

Chopin – a little Bach connection?

Composer anniversaries provide an irresistible source of inspiration for programme planners and 2010 is no exception. Members of the Bach Family including JSB, Alessandro Scarlatti, Pergolesi, Thomas Arne, S.S.Wesley, Schumann, Chopin and Mahler all have anniversaries this year. Often it isn't just their music that defines any celebration today, but *who* among them captures the public's imagination most.

Born in Poland where there is an extravagant celebration of his birth, Chopin's life, his prodigious talent, colourful and often tempestuous love life, most particularly with the French writer Georges Sand⁹, and his death from TB in 1849 after years of poor health, suggest he was a rather tragic, if contradictory figure, who perhaps epitomises the modern concept of a 19th century romantic and creative 'soul in torment'.

Playing most of Chopin's music requires a virtuosic technique. It ranges in mood from the most brilliant and highly charged to the achingly poignant. That is probably



why he is so popular. His music runs the gamut of our emotions. On the assumption that most post-1750 music is somehow influenced by Bach, is there the tiniest strand that could remotely draw Chopin and Bach together? There

is, though not decisively! Chopin's *Préludes* Op.28

is a collection composed in Bach's spirit, but

Shostakovich's set of *24 Preludes and Fugues*

Op 87 written a century later is surely much

closer. It is more likely that any knowledge of

Bach that he may have acquired would have

come via Schumann's influential Journal

'Neues Zeitschrift für Musik', which was

founded¹⁰ to promote composers of the day

and whose first edition featured an article

on Chopin¹¹. With Felix Mendelssohn, the

composer and journalist Robert Schumann¹²

was a leading light in the movement to revive

Bach's music in 19th-century Germany and he

used his Journal to ensure that the 18th-century

master, as yet inadequately commemorated at

Leipzig¹³, received due recognition. When copies

of this were circulated, then surely Chopin would have

received them? **Editor**

Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849)

⁹ Baroness Dudevant

¹⁰ 1834

¹¹ Reference: page 501, New Bach Reader

¹² 1810-1856

¹³ Memorial erected in 1843

BACH NOTELETS

Bach Network UK

The latest edition of the Bach Network UK's Journal 'Understanding Bach' is posted on their website www.bachnetwork.co.uk. This features various papers delivered at the 4th Dialogue Meeting in 2009 on the subject of **Bach: Text and Drama** and given by among others Michael Maul, Ruth HaCohen, Peter Smaill and Tatiana Shabalina. The LBS Artistic Director has also contributed a Discussion paper entitled 'Ways to Bach' that invites the reader to consider the future well-being of Bach study and performance and its promotion among young people.

Cambridge Academy of Organ Studies Spring Study Days, April 23 and 24, 2010

Bach's *Orgelbüchlein*

This is a rare opportunity to hear one of the greatest exponents of Bach's organ works lecture, teach and perform. **Lionel Rogg** will lead an in-depth study of Bach's *Orgelbüchlein* on the Metzler organ of Trinity College. Further details and applications visit www.cambridgeorganacademy.org

14th Biennial Conference on Baroque Music

30 June-4 July, 2010

Queen's University Belfast

Devotees of Baroque Music will be interested in the distinguished biennial conference that will be taking place in July. For its 14th offering the venue will be Queen's University Belfast. Full details, papers, concerts and recitals will be published in late March/early April, but in the meantime further details and advance information can be found by visiting www.qub.ac.uk/sites/BaroqueConference

The Bach Museum at Leipzig reopens

The Bach Museum has been undergoing an extensive refurbishment over the past year and re-opened on 20 March 2010. Details of this and for news of other exciting activities at the Bach-Archiv can be found by visiting www.bach-leipzig.de. The site is available in English - click on the very tiny Union Jack top left hand corner!

Bachfest Leipzig • 2010 – 11 - 20 June • BACH-SCHUMANN-BRAHMS • Visit www.bach-leipzig.de

LBS MEMBERS' CIRCLE

The LBS Members' Circle helps to 'make things happen'. Anyone can join and new members are welcome at any time.

LBS supports **Steinitz Bach Players**, which is resident at the annual Bachfest. The Society publishes a twice-yearly Journal **Bach Notes**, complemented by regular issues of **e-Bach Notes** that contains updates on activities and conveys the latest news in between. LBS also serves the community by running a Bach Orchestral Library and has an informative Website featuring Weblogs, access to a Bach database and useful links.

Gift Aid Subscription

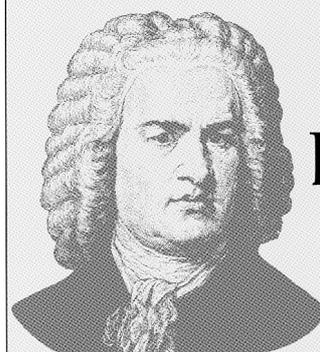
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