

Report on 14th Biennial International Conference on Baroque Music

New Perspectives on Bach Sources:
Four sessions convened and presented by BNUK

Queen's University, Belfast
30 May–4 July 2010

The 14th Biennial International Conference on Baroque Music was held at the School of Music and Sonic Arts of Queen's University, Belfast, Northern Ireland.

Bach Network UK's association with the Baroque Conference began when we presented a four-paper session in Warsaw in 2006. Since then BNUK has been an important presence, proposing sessions of interest to members. In 2010, together with the Bach-Archiv Leipzig, the Society for Musicology in Ireland and the Royal Musical Association, we also sponsored the Conference.

Since Yo Tomita was the primary organiser and the conference was the fourteenth, it was inevitable that Bach should be the primary theme. Of the 150 presentations distributed in four parallel strands (including individual papers and round-table discussions) over three full days, almost forty were on Bach. One of the strands was dedicated to presentations relating to Bach, and papers in other strands had strong Bachian connections, including, for example BNUK Advisory Council member Szymon Paczkowski's paper on Count Flemming.

New Perspectives on Eighteenth-century Bach Sources Chair: Ruth Tatlow

In a presentation entitled 'Coffee, Courtship and Counterpoint in Bach's Leipzig: the Goldberg Variations and Women's Clavier Books', Burkhard Schwalbach examined the connections between keyboard culture and women, especially dance music and strophic songs found in clavier books such as Anna Magdalena Bach's *Clavierbüchlein*. As an appetiser for her forthcoming dissertation, Elise Crean examined the canons discovered in the 1980s: 'The Fourteen Canons: Foundation or Culmination? A Re-evaluation of their Position among Bach's Late Works'. She suggested that it is more likely that these canons point forward to those of the Canonic Variations (BWV 769), Musical Offering (BWV 1079), and Art of Fugue (BWV 1080), rather than back to those of the Goldberg Variations. Stephen Rose's paper 'Virtuosos or Charlatans? Musical Talent and Social

Mobility in the German Baroque', was a delightful, amusing and informative taster for his forthcoming book. Music enabled members of the lower classes to rise in society, but on occasion inept charlatans, as well as authentic musicians, took advantage of this route to social mobility, as the novels of Johann Beer and Johann Kuhnau warn.

New Perspectives on Nineteenth-century Bach Sources Chair: Richard Jones

Yo Tomita gave an update on his continuing research into Book II of *Well Tempered Clavier*: 'The *Well-Tempered Clavier* in pre-Classical Vienna: A New Source and its Implication'. Most of the surviving sources of the *Well-Tempered Clavier* from the Viennese region suggest that only fugue collections were transmitted. However, a manuscript originating from Vienna around 1800 and including fifteen preludes from Book II has been discovered in the Czech Republic, thus demonstrating that Vienna Bach reception is more complex than previously thought. In 'Off the Beaten Track: An Exploration of Bach Reception in Catholic Central Europe', Tanja Kovačević reported on recent research that is being undertaken in hitherto neglected areas with regard to Bach scholarship of central Europe (Slovenia, Bohemia, Croatia). Since this region is predominantly Catholic, it was mostly Bach's secular music, rather than his Protestant church music, that circulated in the first half of the nineteenth century. However, manuscripts have been located that demonstrate how Bach's keyboard *oeuvre*, at first used as study material, eventually became part of the Catholic church organist's repertoire; albeit the specific liturgical constraints often necessitated modifications to the original material, such as cuts, transposition, and even recomposition. Due to illness, Ian Mills unfortunately could not present his paper 'J. S. Bach, the Chorale *Vorspiele* and the Late Eighteenth Century Aesthetic Notion' but the time was used usefully for an impromptu information meeting about the Fifth J. S. Bach Dialogue Meeting in Edinburgh. A revised version of Ian's paper is included in the present volume of *Understanding Bach*.

Introducing Music and Emblematics Research (MER) Chair: Stephen Rose

Robin A. Leaver began this three-paper exploration into the role of emblems in Bach studies with a detailed coverage of 'Music in Published Books of Emblems', establishing the historical traditions of emblems so that Joel Speerstra could take over the question from the performer's perspective. Establishing documented usage, his paper 'Music in Published Books of Emblems' revealed many original and persuasive demonstrations of the use of emblems in music, crowning his talk with a startling performance that convinced any remaining sceptic that emblematics were more than an intellectual conceit. As a logical conclusion to the previous papers, Ruth Tatlow presented an in-depth inquiry into the meaning of an emblematic seal used by Buttstett, one of Bach's contemporaries. Her paper 'The Goblet of Anise: A Case Study' illustrated the potential pitfalls and rewards of future emblem research for Bach studies. Memorable for their lack of inhibition, the questions and answers following these papers were facilitated by the chairmanship of Stephen Rose.

Women's Contributions to Bach's Musical World Chair: Reinhard Strohm

The afternoon session began with Yael Sela's paper 'Anna Magdalena Bach's *Clavier-Büchlein* and Early Modern Women's Musical Training (read by Reinhard Strohm in her absence), revisiting the phenomenon of women and domestic music, the genre of feminine keyboard collections and the two music notebooks of Anna Magdalena Bach (1722, 1725). In her paper "'Buß und Reu": a Symbol of Female Sinfulness in Bach's *St Matthew Passion*?' Corinna Herr raised the question: Can we identify a concept of 'gendered voices' in Bach's music and its reception? If Mary Magdalene was intended as the female protagonist in the Bethany scene of Bach's *St Matthew Passion*, then the alto aria 'Buß und Reu' would be an image of her (female) sinfulness. Starting from Robert Marshall's seminal essay of thirty years ago, 'Bach the Progressive', Suzanne Aspden's paper "'Dresden Ditties" and the Feminised Galant' explored the complex social associations of the 'new' style, especially its problematic overtones and links with the burgeoning 'polite' sphere of the public concert and the feminised world of opera.

Bach Network UK sponsored a much-appreciated wine reception before the conference dinner on Saturday evening. BNUK is proud to have been associated with such a professionally-organised and intellectually rewarding conference and we look forward to participating in the 15th Biennial International Conference on Baroque Music to be held in Southampton in 2012.

For a full report covering all the Bach-related presentations in Belfast see Robin A. Leaver, 'Bach in Belfast', *Bach Notes: the Newsletter of the American Bach Society*, 13 (Fall 2010), 6-10.