

“Bach at the Olympics?I don't think so!”

Editorial

...but he was! Thomas Bach, the German representative on the International Olympic Committee!!!

Seriously though, who can fail to have been anything other than incredibly excited and yet thoroughly exhausted by the exertions of Team GB! Praise indeed from one who was fairly luke-warm about the whole venture and who remains convinced that the much-hoped-for legacy is nothing more than wishful thinking in reality. I didn't need to be there in person to get caught up with it all either; it was equally thrilling to watch Mo, Jess and Greg, Brad, Sir Chris and Victoria, David, Oscar and Ellie on TV. I love talent, both raw and refined, in music and in sport. There is simply nothing to beat it to raise the spirits, motivate and drive me on to achieve. From the wondrous Michael Owen at 18 scoring fearlessly against Argentina in the World Cup to the stunning Laura van der Heijden at 15 winning this year's BBC Young Musician of the Year. This is the stuff of magic in human beings and to the wonderment of spectators and audiences. We should celebrate and nurture it wherever we find it...but will we?



Laura van der Heijden,
2012 BBC Young Musician of the Year

Echoing Rebecca Hutter's blog for The Gramophone (14 Aug) so much that is required of international sportsmen and women is common to musicians as well - natural ability, commitment and motivation, an inner dynamo, the dedication and patience to train, practice, rehearse plus mental toughness and a capacity to accept criticism - some of it pretty damning at times. The talent has to be spotted young too, with good training and teaching available, plus someone, somewhere to give the right advice.

Yes, there is much common ground; witness the cultural Olympiade that has been taking place alongside... *alongside*, but sadly not integrally at the Games' otherwise pulsating opening and predictable closing ceremonies. Did the powers that be even think of asking a leading British composer to come up with something spectacularly symphonic suitable for a 'live' première at the Olympic Stadium on 27th July, or did I miss something? Money wasn't the problem for once, so why not? Mr Bean is all very well, but....

In the lava-stream of sporting heroism, let us also celebrate our musical Olympians: Benjamin Grosvenor, Nicola Benedetti, National Youth Choir, National Youth Orchestra, National Childrens' Orchestra, Pro Corda and our Collegiate Choirs among them. Are we really content to settle for portraying ourselves as a nation that is all about pop partying, and '*celebrities*' most of whom have achieved nothing in particular? **MS**

LBS commissions a New Work for Bach Club



Robert Peate

The LBS 18-30 Bach Club takes its inspiration from Bach's work with the Leipzig students' musical society in the 1730s.

At the weekly meetings in Zimmermann's Coffee House throughout the icy winters and in his garden during warm summers, new works were performed, including Bach's famous '*Coffee Cantata*'. It was a 'cool' place to be and the music the audiences listened to was the 'contemporary' music of

the day. We have taken this into our 21st century version and commissioned one of today's up and coming composing talents, Royal Academy of Music graduate **Robert Peate**, to write a piece on the theme of '*Passion*' which will be performed at the Bach Club in the New Year. Robert has also been awarded an RPS¹ Composition Prize recently and has been commissioned to write a solo piano piece for the Presteigne Festival in 2013. More anon ...

In this issue: "Hearing Bach's Voice" at Bachfest, Awards for Suzuki, Sarah at Wigmore, Yo Tomita at the Leipzig Bachfest, Farewell Tributes to John Birch and Lina Lalandi

"Hearing Bach's Voice: Organ, Chorale and Passion"
LBS 22nd Bachfest – Saturday 3 November 2012
Royal College of Organists London Organ Forum



John Butt

The LBS's 22nd Bachfest takes the form of a series this season and is entitled "*About the St. Matthew Passion*". It begins at St. George's Church, Hanover Square on 3 November with the 10th Annual London Organ Forum, which the Society is presenting in partnership with the Royal College of Organists. Further events in the series will follow in the New Year and all are being supported by Arts Council England "Grants for the Arts" programme.

"Hearing Bach's Voice: Organ, Chorale and Passion" that gets our season off to a cracking start will be a rich mixture of talks, discussion, masterclass and performance led by John Butt, (Gardiner Professor of Music at Glasgow University) and Robert Quinney (sub-organist at Westminster Abbey), with counter tenor soloist Leo Tomita and members of Steinitz Bach Players appearing in the evening recital that completes the full day's events.



Robert Quinney

What better subject for the 10th annual RCO London Organ Forum than the organ music of Bach placed in the context of his professional activities as a musician? As always the Forum looks outside the organ works for insights into his repertoire. **Which** better presenters than John Butt and Robert Quinney. John is one the world's leading Bach scholars and delivered the 2011 Bachfest Lecture. He is also a noted performer of Bach's music as director and keyboard player. Robert Quinney's recording of the Trio Sonatas, the first in his planned Bach series, has met with much critical acclaim. **Where** better to hold the event than St. George's Church, Hanover Square where the new three-manual organ by US builders Richards, Fowkes & Co, opening on 18 October, is eagerly anticipated as an ideal vehicle for Bach's music?

The programme for the day begins at 9.30am with Coffee and Registration, moving through morning and afternoon sessions towards the evening recital that will round off what promises to be an unmissable event for all Bach enthusiasts. There will be audience participation in chorales, two of which are for Passiontide, and the Masterclass will involve students from the Royal College of Music. The programme details in full are on the Booking Form, which is downloadable from the London Bach Society's website www.bachlive.co.uk. Do come and join us. We all look forward to seeing you there.

Simon Williams (Director RCO Academy), Ann Elise Smoot & William Whitehead (Artist Directors, London Organ Forum) and Margaret Steinitz (LBS Artistic Director)



Masaaki Suzuki

Masaaki Suzuki, founder-conductor of the Bach Collegium Japan, will complete his cycle of Bach's church cantatas on disc shortly and the final issues are expected to be on sale next year. 2012 has been a momentous one for this highly respected Bach interpreter, for Professor Suzuki is the next recipient of the Royal Academy of Music Bach Prize, generously supported by the Kohn Foundation, and, just recently, he has also received the prestigious Leipzig Bach Medal, awarded to him during the city's Bachfest in June.

Directing from the keyboard, Suzuki founded the Bach Collegium Japan (BCJ) in 1990, rapidly establishing it on the Japanese musical scene and later internationally after he embarked upon his complete cycle of the cantatas for BIS in 1995. Among the regular soloists to appear with BCJ in concert and on disc have been the British singers Carolyn Sampson and Robin Blaze. A solo artist of distinction, Professor Suzuki is currently recording Bach's complete works for harpsichord and has already recorded all four volumes of Bach's *Clavier-übung*. Among Suzuki's own teachers were baroque specialist Ton Koopman and the organist Piet Kee in Amsterdam.

Photo Credit: Marco Borggreve



Sarah Power

The Irish-born soprano **Sarah Power** won the LBS 3rd Bach Singers Prize in 2010. Since then she has amassed an enviable list of performances in opera and oratorio, travelling the length and breadth of the country and throughout Europe.

This autumn sees her appearing at Wigmore Hall, 7.30pm, on 1 October in a Musicians' Company Concert supported by the Maisie Lewis Young Artists Fund. Accompanied by Anna Cardona, Sarah will perform a collection of French Songs by Rameau, Fauré and Poulenc among others and also Songs with texts by WB Yeats - Ireland, Bridge and Martin. Tickets are £15 to £8 from 020 7935 2141.

Leipzig's Bachfest shines again An appreciation by Yo Tomita

The annual Bachfest Leipzig took place from 7 to 17 June 2012. The theme for this year was "... a new song" - 800 years of musical tradition at St. Thomas'; it was felt in almost every event, and its meaning was resonant particularly when an event was held in a historic venue. The Bachfest showed many faces to the public - from the very dignified to the truly relaxed.

The most dignified was the presentation ceremony of the City of Leipzig Bach Medal in the very spacious and exquisitely decorated Altes Rathaus. This year's recipient was Masaaki Suzuki, who is about to complete his recordings of the church cantatas of J. S. Bach; on the following day he performed the early version of Bach's St Matthew Passion. This gave us a moment to reflect on choosing to perform early versions of Bach's works, how one might approach them and why. Equally dignified, and at the same time intellectually very stimulating, was the lecture by Christoph Wolff, held in the same venue. It articulately set Bach's 27-year tenure at Leipzig in the context of the 800-year-long musical tradition at St Thomas' and shone light on its significance. Both events were brimming with keen Bach lovers.

Of the 123 events held over the 11-day festival, there were fewer truly memorable ones this year. The acoustic experience in historic venues such as the Nikolai- or Thomaskirche largely depends on where one is seated. One can imagine the difficulties such an acoustically complex space can pose on the performers who are forced to make necessary adjustments during the limited time they have to rehearse. Still, as Ton Koopman and his Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra masterfully demonstrated in the Nikolaikirche, it was indeed possible to impress the sizeable audience, which responded ecstatically. Their Bach programme consisted of Suite No 1 in C, BWV 1066 and the solo Cantatas BWV 51, 199 and 202, which were colourfully enriched by the soprano Dorothee Mielsds who sang with breathtaking brilliance, making the evening unforgettable. Another group that received a rapturous reception was Marcus Creed with his Vocalconsort Berlin, who performed a programme entitled *'Baroque Funeral Music'* in the Thomaskirche. Featuring works by Joh. Herrmann Schein², J. M. Bach, H. Schütz, J. Schelle, J. Crüger as well as Bach's own motets BWV 227 and 229³, it stimulated the imagination of the audience as they experienced this broad historical overview of Bach's artistic heritage.

This year two English groups occupied possibly the most prominent slots in the Bachfest and made their presence felt with their well-crafted performances. The first was the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, led by Margaret Faultless in the Nikolaikirche, with a performance of Bach's Suite No 2 in B minor BWV 1067, his Concerto for two violins in D minor BWV 1043, Johann Adam Hiller's F-major Sinfonia and Mozart's Symphony No 40 in G minor, KV 550. The other was Harry Bicket with the English Concert and English Concert Choir, who performed Bach's B-minor Mass at the closing concert of the Bachfest. Bicket's thoughtful structuring of the Mass was creditable, but the countertenor Iestyn Davies's *'Agnus Dei'* shone among everything: this will be remembered as one of the most gripping and convincing performances.

The next Bachfest Leipzig, the theme of which will be *'Vita Christi'*, will take place from 14 to 23 June 2013.

Professor Yo Tomita (b.1961) is a scholar known internationally for his work on the manuscript sources of the works of Johann Sebastian Bach (esp. the Well-Tempered Clavier II), the Bach Bibliography and musicological font, Bach. He was appointed Senior Fellow at the Bach-Archiv Leipzig in September 2011 and this autumn, he is taking study leave to work on his on-going projects at the University of Louisville, Kentucky, USA, as Gerhard Herz Visiting Bach Professor.



Ton Koopman at The Leipzig Bachfest Photo Credit: Gerd Mothes

Farewell Tributes



Working with **John Birch (1929-2012)** was never dull. A fine musician, he was generous, stimulating company, witty, a man of taste and style, art connoisseur and always immaculately dressed. John's first engagements with LBS came about through his tenure as Organist and Master of the Choristers at Chichester Cathedral. A native of the city, Paul Steinitz presented an annual concert

in the Cathedral as part of our summer diary. John played the organ and always extended to us his customary warm welcome. On some occasions the cathedral choristers took part and in 1977 one of them, the treble Andrew Wickes, joined us as soloist for a London Bach cantata concert and BBC recording. John was immensely proud of this. There were many other concerts too, and broadcasts, some 'live', some recorded, and a memorable three-week concert tour to the USA in 1973 where he played a different keyboard realisation of the famous soprano and alto duet in Cantata BWV 78 each time we performed it - nine times! Among other appointments, John Birch was a Professor at the RCM, Organist of Sussex University where he held an Honorary MA, and to the RPO, and in 1982 he moved to London's Temple Church as Director of Music. He subsequently held the Lambeth Degree of Doctor of Music. Dr. John A Birch, rest in peace. **MS**

² A predecessor of Bach's as Cantor

³BWV 227 'Jesu meine Freude' and BWV 229 'Komm, Jesu, komm!'

Farewell Tributes /Continued



Lina Lalandi (1920-2012) was the indefatigable founder of the English Bach Festival and one of the most colourful figures on the Festival scene during her lifetime. Lina's vision and flair, backed up by sheer nerve, made her a formidable character to deal with, yet her achievements were considerable and far outweigh the feelings of consummate exasperation when working for and with her.

Madeleine (Lina) Lalandi was born in Athens in 1920 and graduated from Athens Conservatoire to pursue a career as a harpsichordist, studying privately in Britain where she later made her home. Her interest in the music of Bach and prominent French Baroque keyboard composers led her to found the English Bach Festival in 1962, establishing it as an annual series from 1963 presented in Oxford and also eventually in London. From the beginning, Lina's persuasive powers lured many prominent musicians into her orbit. Dr. Albert Schweitzer was the first EBF President, succeeded by Igor Stravinsky and then by Leonard Bernstein. Her success is also due in no small measure to those who advised and helped her. Co-Artistic Director Sir Jack Westrup (d.1975) and LBS founder-conductor Dr. Paul Steinitz (d.1988) were among those she consulted on musical matters. Husband Ralph Emery (d.2001) was a generous benefactor and long-serving secretary John Bertaut worked tirelessly on behalf of the Trust.

The EBF's 'golden decades' were the 1960s and 70s where audiences experienced German conductors Gönnerwein, Rilling, and Richter 'live' in performance. These were rare opportunities. With the emergence of period instruments Lalandi did not let the grass grow either. She invited Leonhardt and Harnoncourt with their groups who played to packed audiences on London's South Bank. Paul Steinitz, London Bach Society choir and Steinitz Bach Players were regular participants from the outset, as were Norrington, Corboz, Malgloire and Roblou. From the late 1970s onwards, Lina's attention turned more to baroque opera and dance, the perfect vehicles to indulge her extravagant tastes, with the fruits of her research into baroque costume, gestures and dance forms bringing us *Divertissements* in London's Banqueting House and rarely staged Rameau Operas at the Royal Opera House. These productions were then often taken to Paris, Madrid and Athens. She also championed

contemporary music - Xenakis, Skalkottas - and opened up opportunities for other creators and writers, including Sir Nicholas Kenyon. A full life and a remarkable one. **MS**



Nikolaus Harnoncourt (left) receives RPS Gold Medal at Barbican, pictured with Sir Nicholas Kenyon and Margaret Steinitz

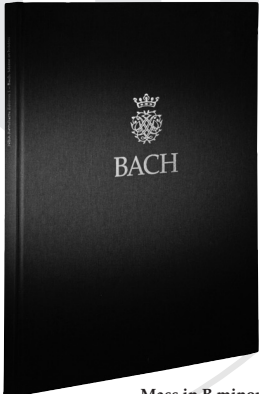
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