UCL Chamber Music Club

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Newsle t er No.5 October 2015

In this issue:

Welcome to our newsle t er

Welcome to the ˚ f h issue of the Chamber Music Club Newsle t er and its third year of publication. We o `er a variety of articles, from a survey of last season's CMC concerts – now a regular feature – to some re˜ections, informed by both personal experience and scholarship, on the music of Sibelius and Nielsen (whose 150th anniversaries are celebrated in the ˚rst concert of our new season). In the wake of UCL-Opera's production last March of J.C. Bach's *Amadis de Gaule* we have a brief review and two articles outlining the composer's biography and pu t ing him in with an interview with one of our neww]ɔ will be welcome. Do not feel obliged to restrict yourselves to items directly related to music at UCL. Please contact any member of the editorial team with your ideas and proposals: Dace Ruklisa (dd.rr. t @btinternet.com), Helene Albrecht (helene.albrecht@gmx.net), Jill House (j.house@ucl.ac.uk) or me (rabeemus@gmail.com).

Finally, my sincere thanks to all contributors, and especially to Dace, Helene and Jill, without whom... well, need I go on?

Roger Beeson, Chair, UCL CMC

the prolonged feast of muses that will now be described in all of its tedious detail.

A multitude of large-scale ensembles were established this year with a surprisingly wide-ranging repertoire in mind. Tus at the opening concert of the sixty-third season a group of strings and two horns accompanied songs from the incidental music for *Cymbeline* by Tomas Arne and parts of Arne's rarely played cantata *Te School of Anacreon*. Light, nimble and very baroque-like vocals together with sensitive playing by the ensemble quickly transported the audience to the scenery of a joyous feast. Radiance, well-thought balance of instruments and attentiveness to colleagues within the ensemble characterized the performance of

of instrumental foreground and background and developed without any haste. Shudder-inducing string tremolos in dry, altered timbres surprised listeners at the beginning of the sixth movement that soon afterwards erupted in a gleeful and defiant dance-like passage. Overall the club's musicians have put great effort into creating interpretations of large-scale scores. However, our perception of the final result could sometimes have been influenced by how well a composer has envisaged the form of a piece.

The tradition of the Chamber Music Club to mark anniversaries of composers was continued with a concert dedicated to the music of Richard Strauss. One of the largest works in this programme – the first movement of the Violin Sonata in E flat major, Op.18 – was played with both energy and romantic longing and the interpretation clearly revealed the composer's well-considered form and the dramatic developments of the piece. However, the main focus of the concert was on Strauss's solo songs, from early and middle periods of his output. Three different singers, not only in terms of voice type (tenor, mezzo-soprano and soprano), but also in their readings of romantic poetry and scores, interpreted the lieder. 'Alphorn' for soprano, horn and piano began as a reflection on a mountain scene, but then gradually uncovered a streak of nostalgia and more elusive yearnings. The performance of 'Die Nacht' from Op.10 was notable for the close attention to the text and rhythmical precision that helped to unravel late broodings of a lover. 'Himmelsboten' from Op.32 was sung with whimsical changes in intonation and tempo that were well suited to the capricious and sensual side of love, adorned with ancient myth.

Several programmes this year explored works of a particular composer. Concerts were devoted to keyboard music by Mozart written while he stayed in London at the age of eight, to chamber music works by Brahms and to pieces by two Viennese composers – Beethoven and Schubert – written at the same age. The programme of Mozart's works was presented by a guest pianist, John Irving. This concert was rich not only in unknown scores, but also in illuminating comments about the instruments available to young Mozart and writing conditions of that time, including contemporary plagues. Each short piece of music had a highly individualized character and was immediately distinguished from the previous; themes were well rounded and skillfully developed – an impression of harmony and balance amidst vivid and seemingly unlimited imagination of the composer. Professor Irving brought his own instrument for this concert – a fortepiano. It was interesting to hear that composers often wrote dense and forceful parts in loud dynamics for the left hand as the bass register of the instrument was not as powerful as it is on a modern piano. The highlight of the concert dedicated to the chamber music of Johannes Brahms was Piano Quartet No.3 in C minor. Well considered dynamical relationships, spirit of romanticism, forward-driving piano part and contemplative chords in strings immersed listeners into a plethora

of complexities of Brahms's emotional life. In addition the programme included four pieces from *Sechs Klavierstücke* Op.118 that were played with an impulsive feel and a good sense of polyrhythmic textures. The concert called *A Viennese Evening* explored large-scale works by Schubert and Beethoven written when each of the composers was in his late twenties. The evening began with the first four songs from Schubert's *Winterreise* sung by a mezzo-soprano. While the performance of the first two songs set the atmosphere and was carefully sustained, the third and the fourth song suddenly revealed previously hidden depths of a loss and slowly circumscribed various reactions to it, now in much more liberated tempo and phrasing. Similarly gradual release seemed to take place during the perfor-

another themed concert conceived around the role of the number 8 in music and other arts and sciences. Throughout the evening performances of music alternated with readings, for example, an excerpt from *Ten Books on Architecture* by Vitruvius. The concert began with a conceptual work written for this occasion – a composition by Philip Pilkington that used all eighty-eight piano keys simultaneously in a chord. Several such carefully administered sound clusters greatly entertained the audience with an exploration of piano resonances and acoustics of the Haldane Room. The performance of the *Acht Stücke* for solo flute by Paul Hindemith was notable for well-considered phrasing and precise articulation that emphasized unexpected melodic turns and thematic developments. The interpretation of the Eighth Nocturne by Gabriel Fauré (from *Huit pièces brèves*, Op.84) seemed to retain spontaneity and unpredictability until its very end, like the progress of a sleepless night. An early work of the present author – Variations for solo piano – was also played at the concert. The insightful reading of the piece highlighted progressive and nearly capricious changes of harmonies and a forward-driving energy that was counteracted with a chorale-like slow movement whose dynamic gradations were carefully underlined. This piece was surrounded by two contrasting readings, the first being about medieval music theory, in particular the role of various stable intervals in music, and the second being a fragment from Byron's *Don Juan* (written in *ottava rima* – an eight-line stanza with a characteristic rhyme pattern) delightfully describing a feast full of music and lovely women. Unsurprisingly the concert also included works by J.S. Bach. The Prelude and Fugue in C major from Book I of *The Well Tempered Clavier* sounded fresh in its timbral and sonic explorations; the lucidity of sequences of shorter notes was played against a precisely accentuated counterpoint.

Instrumental music written in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has been well represented in this year's programmes. The interpretation of the first movement of Shostakovich's Sonata in D minor for cello and piano showed both enthusiasm and engagement with the composer's ideas – various themes obtained distinct characteristics in terms of dynamics, phrasing and styles of playing. The sustained tempo of this movement was not an obstacle to creating a widely variable scenery leading to an unexpected albeit logical outcome. A new work by our own CMC composer, Roger Beeson, was premiered this spring – Three Pieces for flute, clarinet and cello. Laconic expression, transparent texture and several tightly entwined lines enclosed slightly hidden melodies (it would be interesting to hear this elusive piece again). The second movement, convincingly presented by the ensemble, was full of off-beat accents reminiscent of either jazz or even some more contemporary dance forms. The performance of the first movement of Prokofiev's Sixth Piano Sonata exhibited a high level of clarity – the piece was played in a subduedly caustic manner, with well-delineated registers and polyphonic lines. All of this helped in revealing an enthralling development of the themes, with a great many contrasts between them. The chief intrigue of the performance of the

edge between melancholy and a variety of impulsive gestures. The second nocturne brought the proceedings towards lighter realms, while not losing the freedom of pace, unexpectedness of development and rich colours of piano tone and registers. In contrast, nothing was obvious when the first few bars of Beethoven's Twelve Variations for cello and piano on Handel's 'See the conqu'ring hero comes' were played – it was like a suspicious and elegant putting of a foot in a cold lake. But then the scenes evoked became more and more scintillating, including sudden forceful cascades and swift modulations. The precision of dynamics and articula-

UCOpera’s production of *Amadis de Gaule*,

JP: My first instrument was the piano, which I started playing when I was seven. I was taught for nine years by a wonderful teacher, Milena Ivanova Buxton, and I think she was a great influence. She would put on yearly concerts where all of her students would play, which meant I was lucky enough to experience performance from a very young age. When I was fifteen I spent around three years studying jazz piano with Bob Hudson, and learnt a great deal from him – unfortunately, I think becoming a good jazz pianist takes many years more than that. Forcing myself out of the classically trained mindset was beneficial, however.

My first bass teacher was a peripatetic teacher at my secondary school – she taught me for a couple of months. I think she was principally a violist! I then studied with a jazz bassist, Neil Squires, for a couple of years. He taught me great left-hand technique but unfortunately my bow hand was lacking – I moved to London, joined the UCLU orchestra and was completely out of my depth. I found a teacher online, intending to have a handful of lessons, but now for the past three years I've been taught by Vera Pereira, who has been a great influence. I would not be involved with the CMC or any of the other groups I play with now if it were not for her.

In terms of inspirational musicians other than my teachers... Glenn Gould, Martha Argerich and Janine Jansen are phenomenal. I think Bozo Paradzik is without a doubt the greatest living bassist, and should be better known outside of the bass world.

HA: *How do you find time for rehearsals and practice and how does music relate to your academic subject?*

JP: I don't think I do find the time to do as much practice as I'd like! Hav-

haps I'll have an opportunity to do that at some point. I'm going to be performing in Nielsen's short mixed quintet, the *Serenata in vano*, in this season's opening concert, and I'd quite like to do Prokoˆev's quintet – although it's very diwcult. It would also be nice to o`er some of the (limited, but sometimes brilliant) solo repertoire for the bass. In particular there are a lot of beautiful contemporary compositions, perhaps a result of the huge improvement in bass technique and performance over the past thirty or forty years or so.

HA: *Beside chamber music what are your preferences in music in general? Do jazz and world music ma t er to you and are you interested in developments in modern music?*

JP: I play quite a lot of orchestral music, and listen to a pre t y wide range of things. As well as having played a reasonable amount of jazz, I've previously been involved with musical theatre, folk and samba. I think that the term 'world music' is pre t y hard to deˆne and is very much a construction of the Western classical music bubble that we're a part of. T e samba which I performed for a few years, for example, very much informs my playing in other areas of music and I don't see it as being a totally separate interest from chamber music. In the same vein I think it's sad that the improvisational elements of Western classical music that were so essential for so many years have now largely been lost, and improvisation is almost entirely associated with jazz.

I'm very interested in contemporary music and would like to see more of it in

years, and what role will chamber music play in this scenario?

JP: My plan is to continue on to a PhD in physics, but it's very hard to say where I'll be in five to ten years! I would really like to do my PhD somewhere in continental Europe, and there is of course a huge tradition of chamber music across the continent, so I can't see that my involvement will stop any time soon. It will probably be necessary to maintain any semblance of sanity, to be honest.

HA: *Jamie, thank you so much for your time and your most inspiring thoughts.*

A biographical sketch of Johann Christian Bach (1735-82): composer, impresario, keyboard player and freemason

Johann Christian Bach was born on 5 September 1735 in Leipzig, Saxony, the sixth and youngest son of the great Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750). Johann Christian's frequent European travels, the blend of Italian, German, French and British elements in his musical style, and the popularity of his symphonies, concertos and operas in places as far apart as Dublin and Riga, Stockholm and Naples, make him a truly international figure. In his lifetime he was the best known of all the Bach family.

In 1750, following his father's death, Johann Christian moved from Leipzig to Berlin where he was cared for by his half-brother Carl Philipp Emanuel (1714-88). Johann Christian's first surviving large-scale compositions, including at least five keyboard concertos, date from his years in Berlin, where he also gained renown as a harpsichordist. In 1755 he travelled to Italy under the patronage of the Milanese aristocrat Count Agostino Litta, and took counterpoint lessons in Bologna with the Franciscan musician 'Padre Martini', G. B. Sammartini (1706-84). Bach's portrait by Thomas Gainsborough (1727-88), now in the Civico Museo Bibliografico Musicale, Bologna, was the composer's gift in later life to his former teacher.

In June 17[illegible]

performance of Mozart's masonic cantata *Die Mauerfreude*, K.471. Adamberger was later to become a member of Mozart's masonic lodge in Vienna, '*Zur neugekrönten Hoffnung*'.

Bach's friendship with the composer and viola da gamba player Carl Friedrich Abel (1723-87) was firmly established by late 1763 when the two men set up home together in London, in rooms in Meard Street, Soho. Abel had studied with J. S. Bach in Leipzig and therefore may have known Johann Christian as a boy. At about this time the two men hit on the idea of promoting public concerts and their first such venture was at Carlisle House in Soho Square on 29 February 1764. Carlisle House was the venue for the fashionable and socially exclusive entertainments run by the Venetian-born opera singer Teresa Cornelys (c.1723-97); the site in Soho Square is now occupied by St Patrick's Catholic Church. From 23 January 1765 the two friends took sole charge of all the concerts at Carlisle House. Subscribers

> You can easily imagine his delight and mine at meeting again [...] one must admit that he is an honourable man and willing to do justice to others. I love him (as you know) and respect him with all my heart. (McVeigh, 2006, 37)

Despite Bach's work as a composer of orchestral music and of opera, it is for his championing of the pianoforte that he is now best remembered. The piano was at this time being developed in London by German immigrant craftsmen, and Bach's piano sonatas Op.5 are the first works published in England specifically for that instrument. Indeed, Bach is credited with giving the first public solo performance on a piano in London, during a concert held at the Thatched House tavern (St James's Street) in 1768. His reputation was consolidated in the following years through his frequent performances using pianos built by the three leading instrument makers in London: Americus Backers; the partnership of Burkat Shudi and John Broadwood; and Johannes Zumpe. Bach probably acted as an agent for Zumpe pianos, which in 1771 cost eighteen guineas each.

In 1768 the Bach-Abel concerts moved from Carlisle House to Almack's Great Room, King Street, in St James's, London. The increased success of the concerts in their new location encouraged Bach and Abel to enter into partnership with the theatre manager (and Papal Knight) John Gallini (1728-1805) and his brother-in-law, the music-loving fourth Earl of Abingdon, Willoughby Bertie (1740-99). Together they commissioned a new concert hall in Hanover Square, which opened in 1775. The opening of the Hanover Square Rooms, as the concert hall was known, marked the zenith of the Bach-Abel concerts' success. In addition to the series there they also offered a series of eleven evening concerts of oratorio at the King's Theatre, which also included new orchestral works in the sinfonia concertante form, all of which proved a popular attraction.

In 1771, having shared a home together for many years, Bach and Abel moved into separate residences, and Bach settled in a house in Queen Street near Golden Square in Soho, London. Bach eventually married Cecilia Grassi (1740- post 1782), an Italian singer. They had no children.

In 1773 Bach began a legal action to protect the copyright of his compositions in a case against the London music publishers Longman and Lukey, the first such case in English law. Its successful outcome in 1774 resulted in music formally being covered by copyright law in England. The case has guaranteed Bach's place in English legal history.

A quite separate series of concerts that had been started in 1774 at another concert venue in London, the Pantheon, eventually gave rise to an element of competition with the Hanover Square Rooms and began to undermine the success of the concert series run by Bach and Abel. In November 1776 Abel and Bach sold their shares in the Hanover Square Rooms to their business partner Gallini although they continued to run a concert series there. A further decline in their

fortunes was no doubt hastened when Gallini set up his own quite separate concert series at the Hanover Square Rooms. The Bach and Abel concerts played an important role in London's flourishing musical life, not least because they successfully introduced London audiences to many continental musicians and their music. Bach's influence was evident in the choice of singers who appeared at the Bach-Abel concerts; they were no doubt recruited as the result of Bach's regular visits to France, Germany and Italy, and of the performance of his own operas in Mannheim and Paris.

On 13 June 1778 we have the first record of Bach being a freemason, when he joined the 'Nine Muses' lodge in London, which had been established at the Thatched House tavern in 1777. Abel was already a member of that lodge, as was the violinist Wilhelm Cramer (1746-99). Records of the predominantly German-speaking 'Pilgrim' ('*Pflger*') lodge, London, identify that Bach was also a member there by 12 September 1781. Nothing in Bach's musical output reflects his masonic membership.

Bach's last years were troubled by ill health, financial worries from debts incurred at the Hanover Square Rooms, and the fact that he was losing his preeminence as a performer to others, not least his own piano pupil Johann Schroeter (1752-88).

Bach died on 1 January 1782, presumably in the house in Paddington, London, to which he had moved in November 1781, and he was buried on 6 January 1782 in St Pancras churchyard. The journal of Charlotte Papendiek, née Albert, tells us that Abel and the painter Johann Zoffany (1733-1810) had sent provisions to Bach in the period immediately before his death, and that Cramer and Schroeter were also in contact in these last weeks. Bach was accompanied to the grave by just four friends: Zoffany, Gabriel Buntebart (Zumpe's partner in making pianos from 1778), Mrs Papendiek's husband, and Frederick Albert, Mr Papendiek's father-in-law and hairdresser to the Queen. Mrs Papendiek noted with some disdain that no other musicians or friends showed any concern for Bach's condition (Broughton 1887 I 150-151).

Of this group of seven concerned friends four were freemasons in London at the time of Bach's death: Abel, at 'Nine Muses' lodge from 1778; Buntebart at the 'Pilgrim' lodge from 1780; Cramer at 'Nine Muses' from 1778; Zoffany at 'Nine Muses' from 1780. While Mr Papendiek later joined the 'Pilgrim' lodge in 1792, Albert and Schroeter had no known masonic memberships.

Bach left massive debts amounting to £4000, and the cost of his funeral was met by the Queen. Despite the sale of his assets at auction, not least his collection of paintings (including works by Gainsborough), many debts remained unpaid and his widow was eventually obliged to return to Italy, with a pension of £200 per annum from the Queen (Broughton 1887 I 153).

Andrew Pink

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forget old acquaintances, just behind Jean Sibelius's thirteen.

In her introduction to Sibelius in the 2015 Proms guide, Hilary Finch writes of the composer as 'a force of nature'. This is meant in two ways: Sibelius as a composer of singular individuality and 'force' (Julian Anderson suggests that there are few, if any, composers working today who have not been directly a`ected by his work); and Sibelius as a composer whose music is inextricably linked to the Finnish landscape. The more we examine the latter aspect, however, the less I think Sibelius's music is about landscape in any linear or representative way. Finch quotes Sibelius referring to the 'ubiquitous mighty outcrops of granite' as a signi ̂cant component of what made Finnish composers able to treat the orchestra in the way they did, suggesting that we could understand the natural landscape as having an abstractly inspirational function which in Sibelius's music becomes concretely structural or sonorous. Yet although we can thus ̂nd sounds we might hear as nature transferred into the music, the connection between nature and music in Sibelius's case is, I think, sometimes less tangible than that.

Another signi ̂cant inspiration for (or in ̄uence on) Sibelius's music was the Finnish national epic, the *Kalevala* – a collection of folk stories ̂rst published in 1835 and widely regarded as being of unquestionable national signi ̂cance (as all such projects were). Sibelius's use of and engagement with the *Kalevala* is an important contribution to his eventual status as a national composer, though for him it was not a matter of constructed or ideological rhetoric. It seems instead that it is the stories themselves, their narration, their mood and their language which are his primary focus, and which become 'translated' and reworked into Sibelius's compositions. In these stories the Finnish landscape is inextricably bound up – and in a way that is neither symbolic nor strictly narrative. The stories of the *Kalevala* and the *Kantelar* (a sister collection of folk poems) were 'to us like an untouched wilderness, mysteriously lighted', says Eero Järnefelt (Finnish painter and professor, and contemporary of Sibelius), and Sibelius's music, like for example the paintings of Akseli Gallen-Kallela, can perhaps be best understood as looking for new expressions, new sounds and colours for that wilderness and its emotional power.

So listening to *En saga* (*A Fairy-tale*, symphonic poem, Op.9) in Prom 58 on 29 August I was reminded, possibly surprisingly given the di`erent musical languages, of Hugo Alfvén's *Midsommarvaka* (*Swedish Rhapsody*). Alfvén at one po!

essential as it is raw and dark and constantly necessitating negotiations.

have meant in captive, Russian-dominated Finland, and what Oskar Merikanto

satis ed with their own situation'.

Nielsen's role in this, argues Grimley, was precisely to challenge such self-satisfaction and apparent lack of interest in exploration, development, and progress.

through is most often considered from a literary perspective first, art historic second, and of predominantly Nordic relevance third. 'Though recent studies have sought to promote a more pluralistic and geographically diverse understanding of modernism in these years', the conference call argued, 'the broader significance of the Nordic wave and its impact upon continental European modernism remains under-appreciated outside the Nordic zone'. Here was therefore a very welcome opportunity to contextualise those dominant narratives referred to earlier, and also to see Sibelius and Nielsen as integrated in, and contributing to, ideas and issues their contemporary context created. The aim, as the conference organisers put it in their opening remarks, was to lift Sibelius and others out of the 'lone wolf' box, and instead examine him/them as part of 'a messy and complex context'.

Thus the conference incorporated papers not only on the music of Sibelius, Nielsen and Glazunov, but also for example on Norse Sagas, the 18±

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Nielsen, Carl, *The Unknown Carl Nielsen: Danish songs in English*, Denise Beck, Johan Reuter, Ars Nova Copenhagen, Michael Bojesen (Dacapo Records: 8 226610, 2015) (Liner notes by Niels Krabbe)

Johann Christian Bach – the London Bach

Johann Christian Bach, composer, teacher, concert promoter and youngest son of Johann Sebastian Bach, had a varied life. He left Leipzig when his father died in

the Duke of York, the King's brother, and Bach faced political diɯculties when he turned to wealthy Whig socialites like the notorious Lady Melbourne, to whom in 1773 he dedicated his Op.10, a set of piano sonatas with violin accompaniment. Before 1776 he married the Italian opera singer, Cecilia Grassi, with the Q een's approval, and the now respectable Bach's relations with the o f en pregnant queen and her li t le daughters were happy. However in 1777 he dedicated his Op.13, a set of piano concertos, to 'Mrs Pelham' from another prominent Whig family politically opposed to George III.

In 1776 the Bach-Abel concerts moved to their new Hanover Square Music Rooms but faced a challenge from the Pantheon which had recently opened and where Giardini led the orchestra. A Concert of Ancient Music, formed in 1776 to perform music composed at least twenty years previously, ignored works by Bach and Abel. Bach, who composed songs for the London pleasure gardens, began se t ing Sco t ish songs hoping they would bring a welcome pro ͡t. 'Scotch songs', parodies of traditional Sco t ish songs, were popular on the London stage – T omas Arne and John Gay used them for their operas. In 1771 Bach may have set ' T e Braes of Ballenden' for Vauxhall and the popular 'Yellow Haired Laddie' for friends. About 1776 it is thought he set songs for the castrato, G.F. Tenducci, using the collection by a London Scot, James Oswald, with verses by Allan Ramsay Senior. Tenducci found the songs popular in Edinburgh, whose audiences were familiar with the music of Bach and Abel thanks to their publishers, the London Scots, Robert Brem ɹ{ ɜɵ U songu deu 'sodh]bes'E -
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paintings by the court artist, Allan Ramsay, Junior, who was in Italy having injured his arm in a fall. Abel loved puns and the choice of Bach's Scotish songs suggest the two were taunting Gainsborough's rival, Ramsay, who painted a portrait of Charles Edward in Edinburgh in 1745.

Scotland in music was still a political issue when Bach's opera, *Amadis de Gaule*, opened in Paris in 1779. Scots were forbidden to wear the kilt after 1745 and Quinault's libreto was a reminder that the Celtic inhabitants of old Gaul – then much of Western Europe – were entitled to wear the kilt – as were Saxons

art King, James II, but it was also the centennial of the birth of Handel and J.S. Bach, and George III may have deliberately ignored the Bach family for J.C. Bach set Jacobite songs and had Sco t ish friends and his brothers reputedly supported the American colonists.

A courtier, Caroline Herschel, later said Mrs Papendiek's recollections were lies; more probably she exaggerated or lacked information, for Bach's friends were prudent. William Cramer, a be t er violinist than Giardini, took over the Bach-Abel concerts a f er 1783 and performed their music until he retired in 1793 when it was forgo t en. Abel continued a prankster; Charles Edward was a known alcoholic and Abel appeared so drunk at concerts he was carried o ` before the audience could protest. He and Zo `any travelled abroad in the 1780s and held no place at court, for the King was declared insane in 1788 and Q een Charlo t e took up botany in place of music. Scots also ignored J.C. Bach's music, for an a t ack on the Ramsays, intended or not, was an a t ack on Scotland in music. In the 1780s Sco t ish scholars deplored the misuse of Sco t ish airs, but simultaneously praised the ageing Tenducci who was shunned by the Edinburgh Musical Society for breach of contract years ago. T ere was no mention of Bach's se t ings and the amateur collector, George T omson, for ˜ f y years published Sco t ish songs, some with lyrics by Robert Burns, in arrangements by Haydn and Beethoven. Scots might agree with J.C. Bach's seemingly cynical views of Jacobites and Ramsay the artist, but Bach was out of favour at court and a Catholic. Muzio Clementi took his place as performer and composer and was buried in Westminster Abbey as 'the father of the pianoforte'. However, Beethoven, a friend of the Bach family, decreed that William Cramer's son, J.B. Cramer, was the ˜ nest pianist in Europe – surely the start of a J.C. Bach revival.

Clare Taylor, 2015

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Music and numbers

[illegible]

'*Et hi tres unum sunt*' – 'And these three are one'. In the 'Duo seraphim' movement of Monteverdi's 1610 Vespers this statement of Trinitarian doctrine is set to music in an obvious but striking way: three voices sing '*Et hi tres*' on a triad and merge onto a unison at '*unum sunt*' – the theological 'three' and 'one' represented by a musical 'three' and 'one'.

In J.S. Bach's St Matthew Passion, at the Last Supper Jesus says that one of the disciples will betray him. The disciples ask 'Lord, is it I?' – '*Herr, bin ich's?*' In this short choral interjection the word '*Herr*' occurs eleven times: eleven disciples ask the question – all except Judas Iscariot, who has his own '*Bin ich's, Rabbi?*' shortly afterwards.

These are both simple examples of 'numerical' representation, the first certainly intentional on the composer's part, the second probably so. Now consider the chorale 'Dies sind die heil'gen zehn Gebot' ('These are the holy ten commandments'). Since its text actually names the number 10, music derived from or incorporating the chorale melody seems an obvious candidate for word-painting. The melody appears in four of Bach's compositions: in the first movement of the cantata 'Du sollst Gott deinen Herren lieben' ('Thou shalt love the Lord thy God') [illegible] fro thk [illegible]

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inl -o [illegible] masciple [illegible] U thS ope [illegible] ww 'se Nov
taief th [illegible] ivf th [illegible] movemen levdaa fevef Sinc [illegible]
bu ov th fouo [illegible] ov th choralv e e de [illegible] ovdin [illegible]
h th numbe 1 Ph thi thad thkfrd [illegible] c vinl [illegible] o [illegible] hrr [illegible] riall s [illegible] v p [illegible]
in! on [illegible] ch [illegible] e

conclude that he deliberately chose the lengths of BWV 678 and 635 to reflect the 'ten' of the chorale text.

These examples involve a specific textual reference to a number. But is straightforward number symbolism enough, or are there 'hidden' numerological elements in Bach's works? Bach's obvious interest in large-scale planning of his compositions, as well as his manipulation of detail, perhaps encourages this kind of investigation; after all, if Bach could, and did, plan the 'surface' of his music with great care, what might be going on below the surface?

A notable commentator on Bach's supposed numerology was Friedrich Smend, a distinguished musicologist. Smend contended that Bach employed a 'number alphabet', a simple way of encoding letters into numbers: A=1, B=2, C=3 etc., through to Z=24 (I/J being taken as a single letter and number 9, and U/V likewise, 20). From this Smend derived significant numbers which appear variously in Bach's works. Thus the letters B + A + C + H give 2 + 1 + 3 + 8 = 14, while J + S + B + A + C + H equates to 41 – so Bach is provided with two numerical 'signatures'. Smend finds apparently significant occurrences of these numbers. The subject of the C major fugue from Book I of the *Well-Tempered Clavier* has fourteen notes. The first phrase of the melody of the late organ chorale 'Vor deinen Thron tret ich hiemit' has fourteen notes, and the complete melody forty-one; both are pieces where a personal signature might seem appropriate. These 'signatures' are not all. Smend held that Bach used the number alphabet for theological purposes. The name CHRISTUS produces 112, while CREDO gives 43. The Symbolum Nicenum (or Credo) of Bach's B minor Mass contains 784 bars in all (112 7). In its first movement, the word 'credo' ('I believe') occurs forty-three times. Furthermore, its first two movements together add up to 129 bars, 43 3 – a threefold 'I believe'. Smend's interpretation is: 'There is no true belief in God outside the Trinitarian confession.' There are other occurrences of 129 in the Symbolum Nicenum: the adjacent 'Et in unum dominum' and 'Et incarnatus est' movements together number 129 bars, and the whole passage from 'Et expecto' to the end of the Symbolum Nicenum contains 129 bars. Smend does not limit himself to the number alphabet: he finds symbolic significance in various numbers in relation to their context. He relates the ten bars and thirty-nine accompanying chords of the recitative 'Mein Jesus schweigt' ('My Jesus is silent') from the St Matthew Passion to verse 10 of Psalm 39 ('Remove thy stroke away from me: I am consumed by the blow of thine hand'). He observes two occurrences of 365 – representing all the days of the year – in the same work: the accompaniment of all Jesus's words totals 365 notes in the bass continuo; and there are altogether 365 notes in the accompaniment to the recitative 'Wiewohl mein Herz'. Smend identifies many ways in which significant numbers can appear: the number of movements in a work, of bars, of parts, of entries, of notes in a theme, of notes between rests in recitatives, of appearances of important words.

which apparently calls for explanation. The comparison with Smend's numerology is striking: there does not seem to be anything which *needs* explanation in, for example, the forty-three 'credos' or the 365 accompaniment notes.

Guillaume Dufay (1400-74) composed the motet 'Nuper rosarum flores' for the dedication of Florence Cathedral on 25 March 1436. The piece falls into four sections (and a brief 'Amen' at the end), all constructed in the same way. Each section is twenty-eight breves long and divides into two halves: a freely composed duet for the two upper parts lasting for fourteen breves, and another fourteen breves in which the two tenor parts are added. The tenor parts both have the same fourteen-note plainsong fragment ('Terribilis est locus iste' – 'Redoubtable is this place') in different rhythmic configurations and at different pitches. The four sections, although of equal length in terms of breve-count, differ in actual length. The durations of the sections stand in the proportions 6 : 4 : 2 : 3 (In other words, a breve in the second section is four-sixths as long as in the first section, and so

(after the first two) is the sum of the two preceding numbers. As we proceed along the series, the relation of adjacent numbers approximates more and more closely to the GS: so, for example, 13 is 0.6190... of 21, 21 is 0.6176... of 34, 34 is 0.6181... of 55, and so on. In practice, therefore, Fibonacci ratios are close enough to the GS. Furthermore, they can be used for easy calculation of the GS. Suppose in a piece of music of 107 bars you want to find the GS, to see whether anything significant happens there: in Fibonacci numbers, $107 = 89 + 13 + 5$; take the preceding Fibonacci numbers, $55 + 8 + 3 = 66$, and you have the GS. Two points should be noted. Firstly, precision requires a consistent unit of measurement; if all our bars are of equal length, all well and good, but of course bars may differ in length. Counting beats, or some specific note-values, may be more appropriate in

the preceding movement, re-enter. Bars 1-34 are subdivided after bar 21 when the timpani drop out, while bars 35-55 are subdivided at bar 43 (i.e. after eight bars) by the bass move onto G sharp, the dominant of the main part of the movement. This results in an overall shape of 21 : 13 : 8 : 13. Another feature, however, is the return of a 'cyclic' theme from the first movement at bar 31 (with its accompanying chord starting in bar 30), and this, together with its repetition after the trombone entry already mentioned, gives a large-scale structure of 21 : 8 : 13 : 13. Howat also analyses the smaller-scale motivic organisation, but does not seem to attach importance to the motif at bars 25-26 (which harks back to the first movement) and its recurrence at bars 45 and 49.

One might ask whether GS/Fibonacci structures were consciously and deliberately created by composers, but this is of questionable relevance: what matters is whether the structures are actually *there*, in the music. Certainly, in the passage just discussed, Howat's observations are objectively accurate, and Debussy's awareness and intentions have no bearing on this. More important is to consider whether *significant*

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