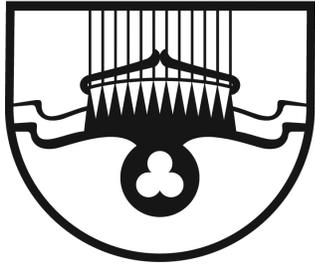


AUSTRALIAN BACH SOCIETY



## Report of the Melbourne Bach Forum, July 2014

by Frederic Kiernan and Shelley Hogan, University of Melbourne

In honour of *Professor Dr Christoph Wolff*, the esteemed Bach and Mozart scholar, a **Forum was held on 25–27 July 2014 in Melbourne**, Australia, jointly hosted by the Australian Bach Society, the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music (MCM) of The University of Melbourne, and St Johns Lutheran Church, Southgate. This event gave Melbourne and interstate Bach lovers the opportunity to hear and meet with Professor Wolff, and an associated symposium provided a showcase for Australian-based Bach research. Attendees were also treated to public concerts, the opening of an exhibition of historical maps of Leipzig, a panel discussion, and a performance of a Bach cantata at St Johns as part of the continuing Lutheran tradition of Australia. The three-day event began at the MCM and ended at St Johns Southgate.

The highlight of the forum was Professor Wolff's much anticipated public lecture: "*Johann Sebastian Bach in Leipzig: In Search of the Thomascantor's Human Face.*" Recent achievements in Bach scholarship were incorporated into a broad, accessible discussion of the context of Bach's life and work in Leipzig. Wolff explored the phenomenon of Bach's current popularity, and described his character as represented in portraits (both the well known official portrait and one recently discovered and presented at the Bachfest in Leipzig last spring). A vivid picture of Bach's arrival in Leipzig with his family was painted, and the conditions of the lodgings in which the Bach family lived were given. With gentle authority Wolff discussed Bach's major musical achievements, explaining how he functioned in a capacity far beyond that traditionally expected of a local cantor: as honorary composer to the Dresden court, Bach wrote music for special concerts in honour of his royal patrons, and in doing so he transformed the office of cantor into that of "civic Kapellmeister." The lecture was greeted with long, enthusiastic applause from an audience that filled Melba Hall at the University of Melbourne.

On the **morning of Friday's symposium**, guests were welcomed by the MCM's head of musicology *Kerry Murphy*. Her colleague *Jan Stockigt* introduced Professor Wolff, expressing great admiration for his work and contributions to Bach studies. The first session focussed on problems of analysis, with *Samantha Owens* (University of Queensland) judiciously guiding the proceedings as chair. Her colleague *Denis Collins* commenced with a paper situating Bach's compositional achievements in the area of invertible counterpoint within a broader, but less-explored, context of the writings of Russian theorist Sergei Ivanovich Taneyev (1856–1915). Collins showed how existing analyses of Bach's invertible counterpoint that ignore Taneyev's work—especially the ideas presented in his 1909 treatise *Moveable Counterpoint in the Strict Style*—fail to grasp fully the magnitude of Bach's achievements. Two papers by *David Black* and *Peter Tregear* (both from the Australian National University) dealt with the relationship between Bach, Mozart and the Viennese Saint Cecilia Congregation. In order to evaluate recent claims by Michael Maul and Ulrich Konrad that Bach's B minor Mass (Maul) and Mozart's unfinished Mass in C minor (Konrad) were connected to this institution, Black presented an organised and careful archival study of the Congregation. This elicited particularly interesting discussion from Professor Wolff and Jan Stockigt, both of whom, in agreement with Black, expressed reservations about the proposition that Bach's mass was intended for Vienna. Tregear's paper explored the possible influences of Bach's mass on Mozart's great C minor work by analysing Mozart's score and discussing the promotion of canonic ideology by the "high priest" of taste in Vienna, Baron Gottfried van Swieten (1733–1803). *Dorottya Fabian* (University of New South Wales) concluded the morning session with a thorough analysis of ornamentation in recent recordings of Bach's works for solo violin. Fabian contested the assumption that contemporary performances of these works lack diversity, and lively discussion again ensued. Of particular interest here were Fabian's comments about the sense of ownership modern performers seem to have over these works, and how this might contribute to spontaneity in performance.

The **second session** chaired by *Suzanne Cole* (University of Melbourne) commenced with two studies relating to Bach's copyists. *Andrew Frampton* (University of Melbourne) began with a paper titled "A Copyist of Bach and Zelenka: Identifying the Scribe of GB-Ob MS Tenbury 749", in which he argued that the hitherto-unidentified scribe of a score copy of Jan Dismas Zelenka's *Missa Paschalis* (ZWV 7) was Johann Friedrich Agricola (1720–1774), a one-time pupil of, and copyist for, Bach in Leipzig. Moreover, Frampton offered a likely dating of the copy (ca. 1751) based on the development of Agricola's notation style. This adds a further connection between Bach and the Dresden-based Bohemian, and Professor Wolff offered his congratulations on making a "very persuasive case." The paper by *Zoltán Szabó* (University of Sydney) continued the theme, discussing copies of the Bach string solo works in the hand of Johann Peter Kellner (1705–1772). He questioned Kellner's reputation as a rather poor copyist, arguing

that peculiarities in his copies are likely to be the result not of carelessness but of the exemplars from which he worked. Szabó's argument points toward the hypothetical loss of two Bach autographs, which, if substantiated, would require a revision of the value of Kellner's copies, as well as the edition history of Bach's string solo works, many of which overlook the contributions of Kellner. The session concluded with *Jan Stockigt's* paper, titled "'The Students Would Not Calm Down': Leipzig's Catholic Chapel and Sectarian Discord, March 1723," which explored the establishment of the Leipzig Catholic chapel in 1710 by Saxon elector and King of Poland August II, the development of its musical structure, newly-discovered details about the chapel's organ, and reports of local antagonism arising from a sermon given in the chapel just weeks before Bach's arrival. Of particular interest was lively speculation about a possible acquaintance between Bach and the Catholic chapel's organists.

**The symposium continued on Saturday at St Johns Southgate** beginning with a session on the reception of Bach in Australia chaired by *Kerry Murphy*. *Graham Lieschke's* opening paper, "*Liturgical Performances of Bach's Cantatas in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*", discussed the performance history of Bach's cantatas in Melbourne, before examining the place of these works within the contemporary practice of traditional Lutheran liturgy. Lieschke (Monash University, and Director of Music at St Johns Southgate) contended that incorporating the cantatas into liturgical proceedings allows listeners to experience the music within a richer context than is customary in modern concert performances. *Leo Kretzenbacher* (University of Melbourne) analysed the representation of Bach in two examples of late twentieth-century Australian literature: Helen Garner's novella *The Children's Bach* (1984) and David Malouf's short story *Buxtehude's Daughter* (1999). Kretzenbacher argued that both works bring a specifically non-European, Antipodean approach to understanding Bach's music. Two closely linked papers followed. *Alan Maddox* (University of Sydney) presented a detailed examination of the reception of the first Sydney performance of Bach's St Matthew Passion in 1880, finding that while the work was perceived as difficult both to perform and listen to—a "musical ordeal"—it was also elided with the nineteenth-century concepts of genius and transcendence, with reports casting the composer as a romantic hero driven to compose by an irresistible internal force. *Samantha Owens* presented a study of the Australian reception of performances of Bach's B-Minor Mass in the 1920s. While witty anecdotes kept the mood light-hearted, her nuanced discussion provided a window into the development of concert etiquette amongst enthusiastic Australian audiences, and showed that the work was received as a masterpiece, quickly becoming the object of competitiveness between Australia's major cities.

Associated events included the opening, by Professor Wolff, of an **exhibition prepared by Graham Lieschke** of his private collection of maps and images of Leipzig and Saxony, accompanied by an authoritative catalogue. Titled *Scenographiae Lipsiaca*, this wonderful display gives precious glimpses of the town as Bach would have known it. A **panel discussion ‘Exploring Bach’s B Minor Mass’**, chaired by *Andreas Loewe*, Dean of Melbourne St Paul’s Cathedral, was recorded for broadcast on Australian national radio station, ABC Classic FM.. This session was introduced by the President of the Australian Bach Society, *Hans Schroeder*, who arranged the visit of Professor Wolff. Other participants were *Jan Stockigt, Samantha Owens, Barney Zwartz, Stephen Grant and Barry Jones*, each of whom contributed to a dynamic exploration of the discourse surrounding Bach’s B-Minor Mass. Major themes included the purpose of the work, the problem of the “ideal” performance, musical symbolism, and the broader context in which Bach worked, with Professor Wolff emphasising the crucial contribution of composers such as Jan Dismas Zelenka. Hans Schroeder concluded the session by offering his wholehearted thanks to participants, sponsors, and especially to Professor Wolff for his immense contribution to the forum.

**Concerts** were given by students of the MCM’s Early Music Studio, who presented an engaging program titled “*Eisenach, Leipzig, Hamburg: Orchestral Music of the Bach Family*” under the direction of *Rachael Beesley*, while by the group e21 directed by *Stephen Grant* (University of Melbourne) presented “*The German Baroque Motet*”, which included works by Heinrich Schütz, Johann Schein, Johann Michael Bach, Johann Christoph Bach, Johann Sebastian Bach and Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach. **Sunday morning** brought the final item of the symposium, a performance of Bach’s cantata *Es ist das Heil uns kommen her* (BWV 9) given by MCM students (prepared by Vivien Hamilton and Greg Dikmans) within the liturgical proceedings at St Johns Southgate.

Overall, the forum presented a showcase of Bach scholarship and performance in Australia, and it gave local audiences a rare opportunity to experience the overarching knowledge and wisdom of the highly esteemed Bach scholar: Professor Christoph Wolff.

Frederic Kiernan and Shelley Hogan, University of Melbourne. / 29 July 2014



## Melbourne Bach Forum 2014 - Some comments:

'I hear the weekend was a stunning success' (Prof. Peter Tregear Head – ANU School of Music)

A wonderful event. Thank you so much for this opportunity of honouring Professor Wolff. I was very happy about the overall quality of the papers presented during the symposium (some were of a very high standard indeed), of Professor Wolff's wonderful lecture, and of the exhibition mounted by Graham Leischke. And although I have a quibble (or two) about the Panel Discussion it was – in your words – altogether a delightful meeting.

(Janice B Stockigt FAHA - Associate Professor - Honorary Principal Fellow  
Melbourne Conservatorium of Music – The University of Melbourne)

Many thanks Hans! A great team effort, KM

(Professor Kerry Murphy Melbourne Conservatorium of Music • The University of Melbourne)

Dear friends. Thank you again for participating in Saturday's panel. I very much enjoyed the conversation and many commented afterwards that they did so, too. Mairie Nicholson from ABC Classic commented how impressed she was with the fact that none of us interrupted one another, and mentioned that she'd have to do very little editing...

Thank you again, and all good wishes,

(The Very Revd Dr Andreas Loewe Dean of Melbourne St Paul's Cathedral)

Inzwischen in Freiburg eingetroffen will ich nur rasch mitteilen, dass ich die Strapazen der Reise offenbar mühelos überstanden habe—in unserem Alter nicht unbedingt eine Selbstverständlichkeit. Doch die wunderbar freundschaftliche Atmosphäre in Melbourne hat sicher entscheidend dazu beigetragen. Wie Sie gemerkt haben, fühlte ich mich wohl in Melbourne unter alten und neu-gewonnenen Freunden. Gern tue ich mein Bestes, um das Wohlergehen der ABS weiterhin zu fördern. Lassen Sie mich bitte wissen, wie ich mich am besten dafür verwenden kann. - Mit herzlichen Grüßen Ihr Christoph Wolff

(Having returned to Freiburg I wanted to let you know I have survived the travel stress without any problems – not taken for granted at our age. But a contributing factor most definitely was the wonderful and relaxed atmosphere in Melbourne. As you may have noticed, I felt well in Melbourne amongst old and new-found friends. I offer my support to foster the ABS' growth. Please let me now how I can help you. With best wishes, yours Christoph Wolff)

(Christoph Wolff Adams, University Research Professor, Department of Music,  
Harvard University Cambridge, MA 02138)

The Melbourne Bach Forum, in honour of Prof. Christoph Wolff's contribution to Bach studies and in anticipation of the MSO performance of the B minor Mass in August, was held over the weekend. The well attended events included three wonderful concerts performed by MCM students of the Early Music studio. Thank you to the Australian Bach Society for their hard work and to all those who attended. (*Faculty News* 0075 | 29 July 2014)

My wife and I attended the Bach Symposium last weekend, and we should like to congratulate you on a wonderful event. The papers were of great interest, the music was beautiful and the whole weekend was organised extremely well and ran most smoothly and efficiently. (Dr. Alan N Cowan, Yarralumla, ACT 2600)

Just a quick e-mail to say thank-you so very much for your role in the recent Melbourne Bach Forum. It really was a fantastic event!! And so wonderful to have Professor Wolff present and able to take such an active role in providing commentary and inspiring both the young and more established scholars who attended. (A/Prof Samantha Owens FAHA, School of Music, The University of Queensland)

It certainly went well. Such cooperation, involvement, participation and enjoyment is always great to see. Your Society is a special one and it is a pleasure to see the Faculty working with you for music and scholarship.  
(Professor Barry Conyngham, Dean VCA & MCM)

Heartiest congratulations to you and your collaborators for a highly successful weekend last week. It was a most enjoyable experience with great music, stimulating talks and opportunities to meet like-minded Bach lovers.

It was particularly interesting to have Christoph there. His contributions sealed the ultimate success of the various sessions. I know his writings pretty well, but his impromptu responses to issues raised brought great insight and clarity.

Do keep up the good work! (Garth Mansfield, Wesley Music Centre, Canberra)

(Compiled by Hans Schroeder 3 August 2014)