

A Glorious Summer Meeting: the 2015 Dialogue Report

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How to follow the phenomenal success of the 2013 Warsaw Dialogue meeting was the question facing the planning group in autumn 2013. The answer we came up with was to find something entirely different: the quintessentially English setting of Madingley Hall just outside Cambridge, with its Elizabethan building and gardens landscaped in the 1750s by Capability Brown. The decisive factor was that the elegant room in which we would have our formal meetings, was reminiscent of the beauty of the Warsaw Senate room. Our goal was to set up a programme to enable every delegate to gain maximum benefit from the dialogue experience, both as listener and contributor, while enjoying the uniqueness of Madingley. The aim of this report is to give a flavour of our meeting, while not including details of the papers or the many positive responses from the floor. Some of the presentations have been expanded and published in this volume of *Understanding Bach*—links to the full text given in this report. Reading these articles continues the dialogue experience; please feel free to drop a line to any of the authors with your responses or queries.

I think we were all prepared for the beauty of the building and gardens of Madingley Hall, but I for one had not expected the dizzying freshness of the air. Climbing out of the taxi with the sounds of plane, coach and car travel drumming in my ears, I was struck by the stillness and silence, and then by the smell of sheep. Slowly I realised how deeply I was breathing. Throughout the four days of our meeting, this invigorating atmosphere was ours to enjoy.

The driveway to the Hall and its grand entrance made it very easy to identify friends and newcomers as they arrived on Wednesday 8 July. Registration opened at midday, and afternoon tea was followed by the welcome at 4pm. Thirty minutes later the first dialogue session ‘Global Bach research’ began. Fittingly, it was BNUK co-founder **Reinhard Strohm** who kicked off the meeting with a vision for the cultivation of Bach’s music in different cultures, and the role of his Balzan project in developing this field of research. **Tobias Robert Klein** spoke on ‘Bach to Africa and forward towards a global aesthetics of music’. We ended the first session with live music, inviting **Chiara Bertoglio** to present a lecture recital ‘Enhancing the spectacular: Busoni on Bach’s Goldberg Variations’ in which she explained Busoni’s motive to rescue this remarkable work by shortening it to make it accessible to the audience of his day. Chiara gave a

deeply moving performance of Busoni's arrangement: this alone would have made the trip to Madingley worthwhile. At around 6.30 we made our way to the bar where an informal barbeque had been prepared ready for an evening of getting to know our fellow delegates.

For many it had been a long day of travel, which, combined with the stimulating conversations, heady fresh air and great music, made the prospect of sleep attractive. The rooms were very comfortable and the night was calm. All was as it should be until a deafening wail rent the buildings at around 3.45am. The fire alarm, set off by a closet smoker, seemed to last an eternity, which in reality was probably no longer than two minutes. It was an unpleasant reminder that even the most pastoral setting can be invaded by ugly noise.

Thursday morning arrived and breakfast was served in the dining hall between 7 and 9, a generous amount of time with a choice of food to suit everyone. Some of us were bleary-eyed and silent while others were chipper and chatty, but by the time we assembled for the second session 'Principles of performance lost and gained' at 9.30 there was a buzz of expectation. The programme description '**John Butt** on Bach-related subjects in conversation with **Yo Tomita**, **Michael Marissen** and **Bettina Varwig**' could have been more truthfully described as 'John Butt being grilled by colleagues'. Yo pressed John with detailed questions about *The Well-Tempered Clavier*. Michael switched the conversation to performance decisions and interpretations in the St John Passion; and Bettina turned the conversation to the future of our understanding of Bach. The detailed and knowledgeable questions and John's masterful and good-natured responses showed the dialogue concept at its best. We were all caught up in the issues and where time permitted contributed our own comments, but even with the generous allocation of ninety minutes, conversations were in full flow, and continued in the free time during the day. The coffee break that followed this morning session was both welcome and noisy. It was quite a feat to get delegates to break off conversations and reassemble for what has become our legendary Young Scholars' Forum. This session did not disappoint. Five graduate scholars researching their theses were given a maximum of ten minutes – aiming for eight – to squeeze and order their precious insights into a presentation that could be understood at one hearing. **Kaoru Matsubara** spoke on 'Recognition of counterpoint by Bach's contemporaries' and **Maria Borghesi** on 'Italian instructive editions of Bach's two-part inventions, c.1870–1985'. A full-length article by **Bradley Brookshire** on his thesis, can be read on of pages 107–127 of this volume of *Understanding Bach*. Reports by **Andrew Frampton** and **Thomas Cressy** on their research can be read in the Young Scholars' Forum on pages 131–9 and 140–46 respectively.

Being by this stage totally at home with the layout of the buildings and increasingly familiar with the grounds, many of us took time after lunch to talk and walk in the gardens. Refreshed after a good break, we gathered for our fourth session, 'Cantatas in context', in which **Bernd Koska** presented on 'Bach's Thomaner – disciplines of their teacher?' and **Christine Blanken** spoke on 'A university student as librettist', developing her research on Birkmann, published originally in *Understanding Bach* 10 (2015), 9–30. Afternoon tea was followed by

session five, 'Copyists, cantatas, chorales and censorship', beginning with **Tatiana Shabalina**. An expanded version of her paper is published on pages 9–38. **Peter Smail** then gave us a taster of 'Prince Albert and the reception of the chorale in England', pertinent to Madingley Hall, as Albert Edward, the eldest son of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, lived at Madingley for almost a year in 1861 while he was a student. The session ended with a lively presentation by **Stephen Rose** on 'Creativity versus censorship in the Lutheran church chorale', in which he explained a conflict experienced by Lutheran church musicians in Bach's time, with a suspicion of individual creativity clashing with the expectation that the church musician would regularly produce new music for services. The questions were numerous up to the very last minute and beyond. It was time to continue the conversations informally, and in due course to find an evening meal either at the Madingley bar or at one of the village hostelrys. We were fully in the swing of this meeting, and already wishing we could extend it by several days.

Friday dawned and bringing with it great breakfast conversations, and for some the unpleasant reality of checking out of rooms. Our sixth session was devoted to 'Music, musicians and patronage in Saxony'. The lively papers by **Samantha Owens** and **Janice B. Stockigt** were expanded into full article form, appearing in this volume as 'Music via Correspondence: A List of the Collection of Kreuzkirche Organist Emanuel Benisch', pages 39–56, and 'The Music of Leipzig's Royal Catholic Chapel during the Reign of August II', pages 57–66. Creating a perfectly complimentary session of three papers, **Szymon Paczkowski** spoke on music and musicians in the circle of the Dresden nobility during the reigns of August II and III, illustrating the nature and purpose of private musical patronage and ensembles through the examples of General C. von Wackerbarth and Marshall J. H. von Flemming, and raising questions about the intersection between state and private patronage in this period. Following the coffee break we had two papers on Bach's musical texts, **Gergely Fazekas** on 'The conflict of symmetrical form and text setting by J. S. Bach' expanded and published above on pages 83–105 and **Zoltán Szabó** on 'Developing principles of the critical edition', a compliment to his article in *Understanding Bach 10* (2015), 71–83.

The lunch break brought renewed planning among friends of how to use the precious hours of free time in Cambridge later that afternoon. There were many more ideas than time, and yet again we all wished the meeting could have been longer.

Our final session was devoted to looking forwards, to the future of Bach studies. Beginning with a forty-five-minute presentation on 'New online resources for Bach scholarship' **Yo Tomita**, **Christine Blanken** and **Christiane Hausmann** described and explained enthusiastically the numerous new technologies that are now and soon will be available to facilitate Bach scholarship. The session ran immediately into the final 'Dialogue roundup: BNUK in 2015', led by council chair **Ruth Tatlow**. Fresh in my mind was a quotation I had stumbled across in a sheltered corner of the garden 'No man can make a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he himself could only do a little' Edmund Burke (1729–1777). This inspiring thought summed up for me the aspirations and modus operandi of the activities of Bach Network UK, with

our need for each scholar to bring their unique contribution to the table. Many ideas and thoughts were raised at the roundup session, some of which we hope to implement in the future. The session also included a persuasive presentation by **Gergely Fazekas** on the Liszt Academy, Budapest, as a possible host venue for our 2017 dialogue meeting. Unfortunately, it became apparent six months later that it would not work for 2017, although it remains an attractive possibility for a future meeting.

Friday afternoon saw a fleet of taxis carrying delegates to the centre of Cambridge, dropping us outside the University Press bookshop to spend the afternoon as we wished before reconvening at King's College Chapel at 7.30pm. It was a beautiful sunny Cambridge afternoon. Some disappeared to explore the colleges and grounds, others went in search of a picnic supper, while others set off to experience the River Cam from the comfort of an upholstered punt. The evening was to provide an unforgettable experience of King's College Chapel with a programme of music written by Bach around 1715. It was chosen to fit in with the 500th anniversary in 2015 of the completion of the stonework of King's Chapel in 1515: 'A Bach Celebration' performed by **The Dunedin Consort** and directed by **John Butt**. The glorious architecture and acoustics of this ancient chapel combined with Bach's music was a perfect end to a marvellous meeting.

I would like to thank all who made the 2015 meeting so fruitful and memorable. A special word of thanks to our ever-efficient and friendly dialogue coordinator, **Matt Laube**, and to the several anonymous donors whose generous gifts eased the financial burden for students, and for every full-time delegate. Photographs can be found on the [Bach Network UK Facebook page](#). On the strength of the responses to our 2015 meeting, we decided to hold the 2017 meeting at Madingley Hall once again, this time booking the facilities for five rather than three days (Monday 10-Saturday 15 July) and changing the format slightly to give more free time. We hope you will reserve these dates and plan to join us. Full details will be announced on our website, on our Facebook page, and by email nearer the time. I for one cannot wait to revisit Madingley, to see the climbing roses in the walled garden, to enjoy the great company and to experience again the stimulating conversations about Bach and his music.