

Understanding BACH

Understanding Bach is an aspiration of the twenty-first century. New experiences have resulted from the scientific revolutions of the twentieth century, its artistic movements and its critical theories and practices, and these are waiting to be measured against the Bach heritage. Johann Sebastian Bach understood his own creativity through science, art and criticism – in a word, comprehensively. We must respect his understanding for its difference from ours (for example with regard to his mathematical procedures, or his allegories); the postmodern mind may not find the same meaning in his music as his contemporaries.

In December 2001 about fifty music lovers, including amateur and professional musicians and academics from many disciplines, met in Oxford for the symposium, 'Understanding Bach through Science, Art and Criticism'. Many of us were shivering and cold in the freezing seasonal temperatures which crept their drafty way into the Holywell Music Room. Perhaps this contributed to the unusually warm and inspiring discussions we had over mealtimes. The burning issue was to know how we could broaden our audience so that others could actively contribute to these discussions. By 2004 the idea of **Bach Network UK** had suggested itself, and by 2005 Reinhard Strohm (Oxford), John Butt (Glasgow) and I had launched **BNUK** with the website www.bachnetwork.co.uk and its potential for international discussion. In November 2005 we held our first Dialogue Meeting. *Understanding Bach* is our next venture. It is a freely-accessible annual web journal (please read our Copyright Statement). Each issue contains articles and an important Bach and Society statement to which we welcome comments and criticisms on the secure Discussion Board. The first two issues of *Understanding Bach* have a selection of peer-reviewed papers given originally at the 2001 Oxford symposium. A paper copy of the journal can be purchased a cost price. We encourage readers to become members of **BNUK** as they download articles (two downloads are permitted) and then to contribute to the dialogue by commenting on the articles and to make active proposals through the website. We are a charitable organisation and welcome any voluntary contributions.

Just as Johann Sebastian Bach understood his own creativity comprehensively through criticism, art and science, it is our hope that *Understanding Bach* will stimulate your thinking and enrich your appreciation of every aspect of his music.

Ruth Tatlow (Volume Editor)
Stockholm
21 March 2006

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