



My paper (Edward Nye, University of Oxford) concerned the ways in which Noverre and all other choreographers of the *ballet d'action* are almost never understood by modern scholars as part of the history of mime. They are almost invariably studied by dance historians interested in the history of stage dance. I argued that there is less affinity with the *commedia dell'arte*, the contemporary form of physical theatre that many scholars tend to relate to the *ballet d'action*, and more with the modern, twentieth-century mime of Étienne Decroux. The *commedia* was as much in a state of rapid evolution and reform in the eighteenth century as the *ballet d'action* was, and it would be more accurate to think of both as products of growing contemporary interest in dramatic principles of narrative, character, sensibility and social realism. In contrast, there is more relation between the *ballet d'action* and twentieth-century mime than scholars acknowledge, principally in terms of their attitude to the way mime should relate on the one hand to language and on the other to dance.

The conference ended fittingly with Alain Borderie (Saint-Germain-en-Laye) and his paper 'Jean-Georges Noverre, the Closing Years in Saint-Germain-en-Laye (1795–1810)'. Noverre returned to France a year after the fall of Robespierre, and after fifteen years of living in England. He may have chosen this small, rather dull town because of professional and personal ties: the family of eminent dancers, the Malters, lived there, as did the educationalist Mme Campan. He lived in a relatively prosperous street alongside doctors and lawyers and later moved to a larger mansion, the Hotel de la Surintendance. He had close enough ties with the mayor of the town for his son Antoine to be chosen as a member of the *garde nationale* at the celebrations marking the anniversary of Napoleon's coronation. When Noverre died, he left a small legacy, totalling in value 3, 800 francs, to his son and daughter.

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BACH AND HIS GERMAN CONTEMPORARIES

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The theme of this Biennial Meeting of the American Bach Society – 'Bach and His German Contemporaries' – inspired the participation of fifty-one scholars and Bach enthusiasts from the United States, Canada, England, Switzerland, Germany and Poland. The event was expertly organized by Jeanne Swack (University of Wisconsin at Madison), Steven Zohn (Temple University) and Lynn Edwards Butler (Vancouver). The fifteen scholarly presentations were supplemented at regular intervals by excellent musical performances by flautists Steven Zohn and Mary Oleskiewicz (University of Massachusetts, Boston), harpsichordist David Schulenberg (Wagner College), the Baroque Band (an ensemble from Chicago led by Gerry Clarke) and students from the University of Wisconsin. Despite their best efforts, the organizers could do nothing about the cold, rainy weather that prevailed all weekend. The facilities, however, were first-rate, and perhaps the sight of Lake Mendota roiling just outside the windows helped to focus the minds of the audience members on events indoors.

Wolfgang Hirschmann (Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg), in his keynote address, '*Er möchte gern fremde Musik hören* – Individuality and Variety in the Music of Bach and His German Contemporaries', drew attention to the long scholarly tradition that has viewed J. S. Bach as distinct from other composers of his time, a genius, a lone wolf who combined all contemporary and past stylistic currents into a coherent whole. Without suggesting that this approach was entirely misguided, Hirschmann argued it also blinds scholars to Bach's limitations, and to the originality of several of his contemporaries. In my view the most



striking example of the presentation was the use of what Hirschmann called ‘mere sound’ – that is, the juxtaposition of blocks of sound to dramatic effect. Bach’s abiding interest in counterpoint actually prevented him from making innovations along these lines, as Georg Philipp Telemann (1681–1767) did in his ‘Heilig, heilig, heilig ist Gott, der Herr Zebaoth’, written for the inauguration of the Holy Trinity Church of St Georg near Hamburg (1747, TWV2:6). Hirschmann suggested that scholars would do well to adopt a more detached, forensic approach to music analysis that takes into account Bach’s limitations as well as his strengths.

Hirschmann’s thesis was supported by Steven Zohn’s presentation, ‘Aesthetic and Stylistic Mediation in Telemann’s *VI Ouvertures à 4 ou 6*’, which analysed a newly discovered collection of orchestral suites published by Telemann in 1736. These substantial works had previously been known only through advertisements and incomplete manuscript copies. Zohn argued persuasively that here Telemann blended styles deliberately and with abandon, combining urban and rural, serious and comic, pastoral and *stile antico*. The effect is confusing yet impressive, and offered further evidence that Bach was not the only composer of his time with an encyclopedic knowledge of contemporary stylistic currents. It is in the combination of such currents that the composers differ: where Bach sought seamlessly to integrate different styles, Telemann chose to juxtapose them in a manner Zohn interpreted as deliberately disorienting.

In ‘Old Debts from Leipzig – New Insight on Johann Friedrich Fasch (1688–1758)’ Barbara Reul (Luther College, University of Regina) offered a fascinating tour through the tragic biography of the Zerbst *Hofkapellmeister*. He began in 1701 as a ‘poor, poor student at the St Thomas School’ in Leipzig, and, despite a great deal of professional success, his financial situation seemed only to deteriorate from that point. Reul suggested that Fasch’s insurmountable debts stemmed in part from his devout Pietism, a cause to which he probably donated a large proportion of his income. His religious convictions also seem to have led Fasch to feel somewhat ambivalent about earning money by writing secular music. Reul’s presentation offered welcome insight into the mundane concerns and priorities of an early eighteenth-century musician. As an aside, she noted that the well-preserved 1743 inventory of court music in Zerbst lists plenty of music by composers other than Fasch, such as Telemann and Vivaldi, but nothing by Bach. If early eighteenth-century Germans ever dared consider whether music of their time and place would be performed regularly in the twenty-first century, they probably would have predicted far less Bach than is typically heard on concert programmes today.

Szymon Paczkowski (Institute of Musicology, Uniwersytet Warszawski) presented his research on Field Marshall Jakob Heinrich Flemming (1667–1728), Prime Minister in the Privy Cabinet of August II the Strong and alleged host of the abortive musical competition between Bach and Louis Marchand of 1717. Through archival research in Vilnius, Warsaw and Dresden, Paczkowski was able to illuminate the vibrant musical life of this wealthy dilettante, who liked to spend an hour or two with his viola da gamba after a long day of courtly diplomacy and regularly invited successful musicians to perform in his home, often lavishing expensive gifts upon them. Despite the many reliable eighteenth-century sources documenting Bach’s proposed contest with Marchand at Flemming’s home in Dresden, Paczkowski has been unable to find any record of the contest in the Prime Minister’s extraordinarily well-preserved account books, leading him to suspect that the contest either happened elsewhere or not at all.

To my mind the two most exciting presentations of the conference were given by Peter Wollny and Michael Maul, both of the Bach-Archiv in Leipzig. In ‘Bach’s Cantata Performances in the 1730s: New Findings, New Perspectives’ Wollny observed that Bach performed much music by composers other than himself in Leipzig during the 1730s and 40s, most especially by Telemann and Gottfried Heinrich Stölzel (1690–1749). Wollny discovered the earliest known cantata by Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach (1714–1788), written in 1733 or 1734 (when he was only nineteen or twenty years old), which sets ‘Ich bin vergnügt in meinem Stande’ by Christian Friedrich Henrici (also known as Picander) (1700–1764). The text comes from the so-called *Picander-Jahrgang*, a series of cantatas for church feast days published by Henrici in 1728. In the Preface to his book the poet expressed a hope that the texts would have the distinction of ‘being set by the incomparable Kapellmeister Bach’ and heard in Leipzig’s main churches. Bach did indeed set nine of these



texts (BWV145, 149, 156, 159, 171, 174, 188, 197a and 'Ich bin ein Pilgrim auf der Welt'), and it has long been assumed that many more were lost. Wollny's discovery of the C. P. E. Bach setting and the mounting evidence that audiences in Leipzig churches were accustomed to hearing music by others suggests that Bach may have outsourced the setting of cantatas in the 1730s to his sons and gifted pupils, at least for ordinary Sundays. In this scenario he would have reserved for himself the right to set the texts used for more important feast days. Certainly comparable situations are documented for the training of Leipzig theology students, who regularly gave guest sermons in the city and surrounding villages. Wollny observed that in setting this Picander text, C. P. E. Bach closely followed his father's style of four-part writing, use of modified da capo form and typical construction of a tight motivic web, suggesting that J. S. Bach exerted a great deal of influence. Wollny's theory suggests a particular reading of the Preface to the *Picander-Jahrgang*: Henrici was hoping not so much that his texts would be heard in Leipzig's churches, but that they would be set by J. S. Bach rather than by his assistants.

Michael Maul's presentation, entitled 'New Light on the Controversy between Bach and Scheibe', offered an exciting and rich context for Scheibe's famous 1737 criticism of Bach's music for being difficult, unappealing and turgid. It has seldom been noted that in the same article in which he criticized Bach without explicitly naming him, Scheibe attacked numerous other anonymous musicians. Though the criticism in all cases was detailed and provocative, Bach was apparently the only victim to organize a response, and the names of the other musicians have never been known. Maul has discovered an exemplar of Scheibe's criticism on which the Weimar organist, and Bach's distant cousin, Johann Gottfried Walther (1684–1748) had added the names of these musicians. It is particularly striking that Scheibe's comments on Bach were mild compared to the much more personal invective directed at the other musicians; indeed, Scheibe was probably shocked by the eight-year controversy that ensued as a result of his remarks on Bach's style. As a fascinating addendum to his initial discovery, Maul was able to document that the exemplar of Scheibe's criticism with Walther's marginalia came from the library of Johann Matthias Gesner (1691–1761), the one-time rector of the Thomasschule. Gesner's flattering comments about how Bach could 'sing with one voice and play his own parts, but watch over everything and bring back to the rhythm and the beat, out of thirty or even forty musicians, the one with a nod, another by tapping with his foot, the third with a warning finger' were published shortly after Scheibe's criticism in an unlikely place: a footnote to Gesner's edition of Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* ((Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1738), 61n). Maul argued persuasively that Walther sent the exemplar of Scheibe's criticism with his marginalia to Gesner, who shoehorned this praise of Bach into his Quintilian volume in response.

The presentations discussed here, as well as others, will be published as volume 9 of the Bach Perspectives series, produced under the auspices of the American Bach Society by the University of Illinois Press. The next Biennial Meeting of the Society will take place on 27–30 September 2012 at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York. The timing is designed to coincide with the Eastman-Rochester Organ Initiative (EROI) Festival 2012. More information on upcoming events in and membership of the American Bach Society can be found at <www.americanbachsociety.org>.

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