

UCL Chamber Music Club



Newsletter No.11 November 2018

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Welcome to our newsletter

Welcome to the eleventh issue of the Chamber Music Club Newsletter. We have now notched up five years of biannual publication, and we enter our second half-decade with quiet satisfaction. (Of course, for longevity we cannot compare with the Club itself, now embarking on its sixty-seventh annual season!)

The current issue contains four items dealing with the Club's personalities and activities. John Lindon was a leading figure in the Club for much of its existence; he died in February of this year, and a short personal appreciation is contributed by Bill Tuck, another CMC veteran, who knew John well. The latest in our 'meet the committee' series features the younger generation in the form of an interview with Jason Chan, whose enthusiasm for music-making in both the CMC and the UCL Music Society comes over vividly. As usual we have a review of the last season's concerts, this time focusing particularly, though not exclusively, on ensemble performances; and there is an account of the masterclass on eighteenth-century performance given by our Honorary President, Professor John Irving – an enjoyable and enlightening event for those who took part. Two articles are of more general musical interest. 'Inspired by America' prompts questions about American music, its nature, source and influences – food for reflection in these days of debate about 'identity' and 'cultural appropriation'. Quite different issues, though perhaps no less contentious, are raised by a review of the book *Bach's Numbers: compositional proportion and significance*.

We are already looking forward to your suggestions and offers of contributions for the twelfth issue, scheduled for the spring of 2019. We hope especially that more of you who have not yet written for the Newsletter will think about doing so. We welcome concert and book reviews, letters to the editors and other short items, as well as full-length articles (c.3000 words). With the latter in particular we would ask you to send us your proposal first before settling down to the actual writing. Please feel free to contact any of the editors about your potential contributions; we are: Dace Ruklisa (dd.rr.tt@btinternet.com), Helene Albrecht (helene.albrecht@gmx.net), Jill House (j.house@ucl.ac.uk) and myself (rabeemus@gmail.com).

Thanks are due as always to Dace, Helene and Jill for their hard work in producing this issue, which we hope you will enjoy reading.

Roger Beeson, Deputy Chair, UCL CMC

Concert dates 2018-19

Lunchtime concerts begin at 1.10pm, and all others at 5.30pm unless otherwise stated.

Autumn term

Monday 15 October (starts at 7pm)
Tuesday 23 October
Friday 2 November, lunchtime
Monday 12 November
(joint concert with Oxford and
Cambridge Musical Club, starts at 7pm)
Tuesday 20 November, lunchtime
Thursday 29 November
Tuesday 11 December
(Christmas concert in
South Cloisters, starts at 6pm)

Spring term

Wednesday 23 January
(starts at 7pm)
Monday 28 January
Friday 8 February, lunchtime
Friday 1 March, lunchtime
Tuesday 12 March

Summer term

Tuesday 30 April
Friday 17 May, lunchtime
Thursday 30 May

Ensembles, memories, riots and transitoriness – nuances of the 66th season

The usual ingredients of a CMC season, namely themed concerts, wide-ranging collaborations and accomplished performances, have combined in unexpected ways throughout the 66th season. In particular, the Club's encouragement of forming ensembles has borne many a strange fruit, including rarely heard repertoire, the performances of large-scale chamber works and frequent participation of ensembles in themed events, such as the programme of Op.1 pieces. The concerts of this season have dwelt on several anniversaries: the death of Michael Tippett, the death of Claude Debussy, the centenary of the Russian Revolution of 1917 and also the Representation of the People Act 1918. The compositions performed throughout the preceding year are mainly written in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Plenty of pieces that seem undeservedly neglected have been presented – these have created a lot of surprising moments. Let us consider the potion concocted by these spices from various angles.

One of the most substantial endeavours last season was a collaboration between musicians from UCL Music Society and the CMC on a performance of *Appalachian Spring* by Aaron Copland. The clarinet's melodic lines provide conti-

nunity throughout this piece and also contrast with the brief phrases assigned to other instruments. The clarinet part was played in a slightly reserved manner with a beautiful tone and often evoked a lyrical mood. The piano sound consistently blended with other instrumental timbres providing a distinctive colouring to various passages. The composer has used a very broad range of registers that are accessible for various string instruments. Subgroups of strings sounded opulent and there was an extraordinary strength to the string-dominated passages.

Beethoven's Piano Trio in C minor, Op.1 No.3, was performed in its entirety at a November concert. The first movement began in a subdued mood, in particular the violin sound was muted. The scope of development of the first movement was remarkable in this interpretation – the main theme emerged in different dynamics and conveyed diverse energy levels. The musicians played a lot with tempo – they accelerated and slowed down the music in very short intervals of time. Several sections yielded an impression of deliberate haste and noisiness and there were outbursts of animated playing that were not sustained for long. The third movement was characterised by quick interplay between instruments: sometimes a melodic cascade was almost instantaneously carried through by three instruments. In contrast, the trio of the minuet provided a sense of relaxation and merriment. The main theme of the fourth movement was presented as if half running, although it also sounded full of acceptance. The piece ended quietly, without a pronounced culmination, thereby providing a connection with the beginning of the first movement.

In spring Tchaikovsky's Piano Trio Op.50 was performed in its entirety. The first movement was played in a flowing manner, with a melancholic first theme that later turned out to be crucial for the structure of the piece. In the second movement a chorale-like piano theme initiates a series of reminiscences. Then follow variations in which all three instruments are simultaneously involved and take the lead in turns. Piano passages in a very high register stood out and reminded us of Russian folk songs, both rhythmically and melodically. Later stylisations of various musical genres emerged, including a waltz, chord cascades worthy of a piano concerto (perhaps even a reference to the composer's First Piano Concerto), a fugue in three parts and also a Chopin-like ornamented mazurka. The musicians communicated clearly the differences in genres, textures and rhythms. The trio had a chilling ending with broad piano chords gradually descending into a funeral march comprising the first theme of the piece – only then did I notice that there is a hint of a juxtaposition of a funeral march and the first theme in the middle of the first movement already. However, at that point the characteristic rhythm of a march is not yet fully revealed by the piano. Thus the varied images conjured by the second movement might be interpreted as reminiscences associated with Nikolai Rubinstein to whose memory the composition is dedicated and as allusions to his work as a pianist.

Telemann's Concerto in E minor for flute, recorder, strings and basso continuo was performed at the Christmas concert. The string group played with a pronounced intensity and spiritedness. Sometimes the string sound was unexpectedly dense considering the relatively small number of musicians involved. Both soloists had found an appropriate balance of dynamics for the transparent and ethereal passages in two voices, particularly within the first movement. The strings and continuo exhibited a crisp articulation and were rhythmically sharp, especially in the fast movements. In the fourth movement it was exciting to observe how all instruments came together, while not losing their individual voices – it was certainly a culmination of the piece, together with several whirlwinds of melodies played by both soloists.

Various constellations of ensembles could be heard throughout this season. The performance of Poulenc's Sonata for horn, trumpet and trombone was particularly sparkling in the first and third movements. The musicians savoured and brought out the chords that were subtly distorted with respect to the default harmonic expectations and sounded as if out of tune. Appropriately the performers produced a very precise and motoric rhythm in imitation of popular songs. Within the third movement the repetitive rhythmical patterns were driven to a comical if not absurd effect. The trumpet player provided plenty of lyrical melodies, all played in a smooth and cultivated legato, to contrast with the rest of the music.

The first movement of George Enescu's Cello Sonata No.2 was presented this winter. Retaining a sense of form is a major challenge for its interpretation. It is not easy to emphasise the main aspects of the composition when the music is in constant flux and the harmonic space is never firmly established and often mutates in unexpected directions. The return of the first 'cello theme and a couple of other recurrent features were clearly marked by the performers. Some sections of the piano part were interpreted as providing the colour of the piece – several passages in lower registers formed a cloud of sound and were executed with a subtle use of piano pedals. In contrast, the piano part was played with a pronounced clarity when initiating a section or inspiring some development in the music, often by a single line of melody. The performers did not avoid some harshness in their reading of the score, as in the dramatic culmination with several wide and sonorous piano chords which were played entirely abandoning former restraint. At times the 'cello playing was deliberately ascetic and without additional sensuous attributes. All of this led to a calm conclusion, leaving an impression of beauty notwithstanding earlier conflict.

The performance of Ernest Chausson's Piano Trio in G minor evoked a captivating atmosphere from the outset, first and foremost due to distinct harmonic language. The chords of introduction slowly evolved towards unexpected resolutions giving rise to ambivalent mood before the tempo changed from *Pas trop lent* to *Animé*. The figurations in the piano engendered an impression of restlessness

and sustained metamorphosing. The violin timbre was rich and nuanced. Both violin and 'cello frequently came to the surface with a well-delineated theme, often playing in high registers and in octaves. The ending of the first movement was memorable and also surprising, with feverish motifs in the strings responding to the return of the first theme of the piece.

The marking of Debussy's death was remarkable by performances of both his 'cello and violin sonatas. In Debussy's Sonata for violin and piano, the violin playing underlined the melodious slower passages and also from time to time erupted in capricious arabesques which were smoothly executed. Some sections imparted a surreal impression – the harmonies tended to deviate from tonality and depart from tonal centres. The second movement sounded playful and also somewhat ponderous. The grotesque scenes of the last movement, which later morphed into something flirtatious and teasing, were resolved in a brilliant cadenza. In addition two songs by Debussy were performed alongside Erik Satie's 'Élégie, hommage à Debussy'. In Debussy's setting of Verlaine's famous poem 'Colloque sentimental' the singer effortlessly moved between nostalgic moods incited by a remembrance of past love affairs and complete indifference in the brief and casual responses to the evocation of the past. There were also vivid contrasts between dynamic questioning and a standstill in replies. The piano accompaniment conjured an impression of alienation making a conversation of two ghosts in a park believable. Nevertheless, the interpretation of the piano part also revealed occasional signs of warmth around the words 'C'est possible'.

The concert devoted to the anniversary of Michael Tippett's death included another substantial composition – String Quartet No.2. The performance uncovered many stylistic parallels with other works by the composer: the orchestral introduction to and interludes of the opera *Midsummer Marriage* (*Presto*); the dense string chords, several harmonic structures and even some melodic fragments of the Variations on a Theme of Corelli (*Allegro grazioso*); and anticipation of the sparse and atonal writing of his late chamber music (*Andante*). The musicians devised a captivating journey through this diversity of compositional techniques by their energetic playing of string chords, by rhythmic drive, especially at the beginning of *Allegro appassionato*, and also by leading the audience through complex webs of melodies, overlaid in a polyphonic manner. Two spirituals from *A Child of Our Time* were sung: 'Steal Away' and 'Nobody Knows'. The choir of CMC members performed these with an imperturbable sense of complex rhythms, flexibility and well-considered phrasing.

The varied directions in music that emerged around the Russian Revolution of 1917 were explored in a concert including the piano pieces *Danse* and *Poème* (1921) by Nikolai Roslavets. The *Poème* did not exhibit any major changes in tempo and the music seemed to be freely flowing. The composer has skilfully utilised both low and high registers of the piano – the pianist brought out different piano tim-

bres very well. The interpretation was anchored by imposing gradual alterations in dynamics and thereby creating a large scale structure for this piece. Among several vocal pieces Aleksandr Mosolov's *Four Newspaper Announcements*, Op.21, were performed – these short compositions are based on the texts of advertisements found in contemporary newspapers reflecting post-revolutionary life. The singing was very expressive and rapidly jumped from one state of mind to another. A somewhat objective manner of narrative was retained and the singing was deliberately monotonous in sections in moderate tempo. The culmination of the cycle was the fourth song promising to exterminate rats and mice and guaranteeing twenty five years of experience in the job. Throughout this movement the piano played a slow funeral march and provided occasional low and subdued accents in terms of chords, all lamenting the future of the animals.

The anniversary of the Representation of the People Act 1918 was celebrated with a programme of works by women composers, the majority of them written during the most active period of the suffrage movement. Capriccio for violin and piano, Op.18, by Cécile Chaminade was performed in a slightly restrained dynamic range. The violin playing was notable for its lush tone and varied shades of expression. The fast violin passages had a nimble and radiant feel. The introduction of the Nocturne by Lili Boulanger allured with the unusual piano sound, as if water was being dropped on a hard surface. Both violin and piano phrases became more extended later in the piece and a sense of aerial lyricism was achieved. Several rarely played piano compositions were found for this occasion, among them works by Morfydd Llwyn Owen, Cécile Chaminade (*Automne*) and Katharine Emily Eggar. Obtaining the score of *Moonrise* (1906) by Katharine Eggar had required a trip to British Library after it transpired that the Senate House Library contained only the composer's writings on Shakespeare, consistently arguing that Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, was the author of Shakespeare-attributed works. The light atmosphere of the concert was augmented with a work for solo piano by UCL-based composer Belinda Samari, *Près de l'eau*. The event ended with a performance of 'The March of the Women' by Ethel Smyth involving a cornet, a trumpet, a trombone, a euphonium, timpani and voices. The audience was asked to participate in singing and playing percussion and tambourines. After this experience it wasn't difficult to imagine how women were inspired to smash a couple of windows of MPs.

Among themed concerts, a programme entirely consisting of Op.1 pieces was presented last autumn. The first movement of César Franck's Piano Trio in F sharp minor began with instruments assuming contrasting roles. While the sound of the violin seemed fragile, the 'cello playing had some roughness and darker undertones, creating a potential for dramatic development of the movement, which had two culminations, both preceded by calmer sections conveying suppressed enthusiasm. The last of these was noteworthy for the depth of sound achieved within

spread out piano chords. Piano staccatos and their string equivalents, pizzicatos, were played in varied dynamics and articulation – there was no monotony in the performance despite frequent use of these techniques in the score. Hugh Wood's Variations for viola and piano were set in motion with a dialogue between both instruments, where phrases for viola solo were followed by piano replies. The piano part gradually became more complex and responses more extended until a local culmination in the Furioso variation. The piece had many irregular rhythms and diverse and distant-sounding melodic figures. Both slow movements (fourth and sixth variations) had plenty of long-sustained notes in the viola, while the piano part was often a sequence of scattered static chords. Eventually the theme of Beethoven's Thirty-two Variations on an Original Theme in C minor emerged and the performance reached a quiet conclusion with two very brief staccato notes.

Manifold reflections of nature in music were explored in a programme of mainly Swedish music. The evening began with old Swedish dances from various regions played on *nyckelharpa* and duet concertina. The music quickly swayed the audience with the bountiful resonances of *nyckelharpa*, composite dance rhythms (e.g. *Fanteladda*), steadily growing energy and ornamented melodies. Various guises of longing and melancholy were revealed in solo songs of Swedish composers: from restlessness and even anxiety in 'Vingar i natten' by Ture Rangström to metaphysical thoughts and a sense of unity with nature at dusk in 'Det är vackrast när det skymmer' by Gunnar de Frumerie. Transitoriness could often be felt in the interpretations. Both singer and pianist were sensitive to the volatile alterations of harmonies that were instrumental in revealing underlying moods and ideas of the poems. In the last song of the concert, 'Det blir vackert där du går' by Gunnar de Frumerie, the voice skilfully phrased fragments of the poem, simultaneously offering glimpses of tenderness.

A wide range of shorter compositions has been presented in CMC concerts. The performance of Isolde's Liebestod from *Tristan und Isolde*, arranged by Franz Liszt for solo piano, mesmerised with inventive approaches towards creating sound. The pianist played left hand tremolos and later repetitive left hand chords so that these created a resonant and sometimes eerie sonic background to the development of the main theme. The interpretation clearly distinguished various layers of the score and the music progressed without rush. The ecstatic conclusion was well prepared by the piano textures used earlier (tremolos, arpeggios and figurations adorning the main melody). At the annual concert with Oxford and Cambridge Musical Club three French songs from the late nineteenth century were presented. The first of them, 'Fleur desséchée' by Pauline Viardot, surprised with its swift transformations of atmosphere and also with the diversity of harmonic colours. The verses of the translated Pushkin poem sounded different from each other and the singing captured both reverie and a premonition of transitoriness, sometimes with a dramatic tinge. The piano part was even more prominent in Gabriel Fauré's

'Le parfum impérissable'. The middle section of this song was unexpected in terms of harmonies and their numerous dissonances – these were crucial for building up tension. The New Members' concert included a virtuoso performance of Béla Kovács's *Hommage à Manuel de Falla* for solo clarinet. Here, citations and stylisations of de Falla's compositions were interwoven in a rapid sequence of motifs and varied instrumental textures; the performer navigated these with ease. The sound of the clarinet was well controlled and timbrally diverse, also mellow in some passages. An unusual vocal piece was presented at the Christmas concert – *Puer natus est nobis* for a choir and solo 'cello by our own CMC composer Roger Beeson. An elaborate 'cello melody began the piece. The choir soon took over the musical material and transformed it further; it seemed that the preceding 'cello melody had infused subsequent choral harmonies. The choir developed various motifs by angular polyphonic lines. The 'cello bound the piece together by returning to the initial melody again and again. The overall impression was impassioned, with an uncompromising stance. The underlying text from the book of Isaiah was interpreted with an anticipation of the difficulties of the human condition mixed with joy at the birth of Christ.

As the musical feast of the 66th season gradually recedes in memories, a new series of concerts is in preparation. The annual joint concert with Oxford and Cambridge Musical Club will comprise songs related to WW1 and Britten's *Lachrymae* for viola and piano. A programme will be dedicated to the Niedermeyer School in Paris – it will explore various strands of French chamber music, including works by Gabriel Fauré and Camille Saint-Saëns. Another concert in November will be devoted to ensemble music and involve Beethoven's Archduke Trio, Op.97. The Christmas concert will feature Corelli's Christmas Concerto and Haydn's *Missa brevis* in F. The fifteen programmes of the 67th season could produce many a surprise at least as vivid as the ones experienced last year.

Dace Ruklisa

Recollections in memory of John Lindon

This note is by way of a personal recollection of John Lindon through my numerous encounters, collaborations and conversations with him over the many, many years in which we were both active members of the UCL Chamber Music Club.

John had already been a long-time member of the Chamber Music Club by the time I joined UCL in 1981. It was then under the chairmanship of the redoubtable Gertrude Keir – who retained this position from 1968 until her death in 1985. John then took over as Chairman for three years (1985-88), a time of rapid developments for the Club, including the purchase of new instruments. John was instrumental

in finding the resources for commissioning a new harpsichord, as well as for the replacement of our by then ageing piano (which I believe had been in the Club's possession since its beginning in the 1950s). These same two instruments have remained the mainstay of our activities to this day.

John was also Treasurer of the Club for many years and had a detailed and personal knowledge of almost all members, enabling him painlessly to extract membership fees with impressive skill. At the time, shortly after I joined, I think I had been persuaded by Gertrude to take on the role of Membership Secretary, but my only duty was to print the labels for the distribution of programmes as John had already compiled the membership lists in his little black book and dutifully ticked those who had paid, along with deleting those who had left the College. With modern technology, of course, personal contact of this kind seems no longer necessary and has largely been abandoned along with the printing and advance distribution of paper programmes. It's more efficient, of course, but I can't help feeling that something has been lost in the process – I rather enjoyed the somewhat tedious business of folding and sticking labels onto the forms as it was relieved by the recognition of familiar names and departments.

John's other role was as archivist. In compiling these notes I am grateful to have had access to a complete run of programmes from the very beginning of the Club's foundation back in 1952. John had been meticulous in collecting our programmes right up to the time we abandoned their distribution as print-on-paper. They now form the basis of the Club's archive and a fascinating source of information on the various changes we have been through, both in personnel and in the choice of music played. One impressive statistic that emerges from a simple analysis of the programmes is that in the ten years from 1980/81 to 89/90 we performed 125 concerts, an average of over twelve per year or consistently almost one every two weeks in term time. Even more remarkable is that John participated as soloist or accompanist in over sixty of these events. Had I time to go through the complete archive I would no doubt have come up with a similar percentage for each decade for which John was a member. His willingness to act as accompanist and his generosity in providing rehearsal time was remarkable and greatly appreciated. Most notable throughout the latter part of the 1980s was his accompanying work for 'cellist Joseph Spooner, at that time a student in Classics, but now a fine professional musician in his own right. But it may have been the opportunities to perform his favourite duets with whomever could be persuaded to join him that gave him greatest pleasure. His fellow Italian scholar John Moores stands out as his most frequent partner in the duets of Schubert, Schumann and Brahms, but many other names also appear.

My lasting memory of John, however, will be of numerous conversations in the Senior Common Room of UCL in which I learnt something of his past: his schoolboy trips to France and excursions alone to the Loire valley exploring the

chateaux; the exchange studentships and teaching in Lyon where a chance meeting led to him taking organ lessons with one of the foremost exponents of this instrument in France; but above all I became aware of his remarkable and lifelong dedication to the piano, and through it to the UCL Chamber Music Club.

Bill Tuck, September 2018

Meet the committee – Jason Chan

Helene Albrecht: Jason, you are a quite recent member of our committee, but we have already seen you in a variety of roles. It seems that music has played a substantial part throughout your student years at UCL where you have also worked for UCL Music Society and their chamber choir. Where does this passion come from?

Jason Chan: I suppose it came from the time when I was a member of my secondary school choirs in Hong Kong. It was a school that placed a very strong emphasis on sports and music, and the Deputy Headmaster himself conducted both the orchestra and the choirs. I remember when I first joined the senior choir, quite a few of the guys who were singing, they were two or three grades above, had such incredible voices and techniques. It was a bit intimidating to sing with them at first, but at the same time they were very instructive and took it upon themselves to help you improve your techniques, so you learned a lot just by listening and singing next to them. There was a great sense of camaraderie, especially since we travelled overseas together for competitions and concerts, and these were the same guys that also took care of everyone and managed everything on those trips. They even made honey pomelo tea and prepared lemon slices in the early mornings of the competitions so we'd sound better.

So taking up committee roles in UCL's music community, managing ensembles and organising concerts is my attempt at living up to the examples that they've set, bringing everyone together not just by sharing my own passion for music but also by empowering others to share theirs.

HA: You are not only an accomplished pianist but also a singer. What kind of musical training have you received?

JC: To be honest I've never had a single singing lesson in my life. Everything I've learnt about vocal techniques, projection, focus and all, came from my experience in the choirs. I had piano lessons until I was sixteen, but I started practising a lot more only after that, when I had the complete freedom of choosing which pieces I played.

HA: As pianist you have performed some of Liszt's transcriptions of Wagner Preludes and I remember the beauty and richness of your sound. Do you have a passion

for Wagner and possibly other transcriptions, or a passion for complex piano music, or is it both?

JC: Both, I'd say. But specifically I've always been drawn to pieces with complex harmonies in smooth but unexpected progressions, that and beautiful melodies. And I'd found those in certain works by composers like Rachmaninov, Scriabin and Szymanowski. And of course, Wagner fits in that category, especially with the music from *Tristan und Isolde*.

It's hard to explain my passion for his overtures though. One way to put it would be that I think they impart a very adventurous spirit that invites you to embrace all the hopes and joys and grief contained in the story that follows the overture and to experience that totality of emotions even though you already know that the tragic ending is inevitable. I'm a philosophy student, so that and the connection to Nietzsche and Schopenhauer is something that I hope to look into further and explore in-depth, maybe at some other time.

HA: *Which experiences were the most memorable for you with the Chamber Music Club and with UCL Music Society?*

JC: Well, to follow up on the Wagner theme, the most memorable experience is definitely playing cymbals for *Rienzi's* Overture with the UCL Music Society's orchestra in their winter concert. I've neither played any percussion nor played in an orchestra in my life, but we were short of percussionists at the time so I thought why not. Thankfully it turned out quite well even though it did take some furious counting in double time towards the end. But yes, I think I'm ready to take on the cannons now if they ever play Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture.

As for the most memorable experience with the Chamber Music Club, that'll be organising the *Appalachian Spring* concert, getting the people for the ensemble (twelve others plus the conductor!) and performing together. In hindsight there were a few things we could've done better, musically and administratively, but it was a thrilling experience all in all and I'm still really thankful to everyone who took part.

HA: *You are now pursuing a career in law. How much time will be left for music and what will you take from your previous musical activities into your future professional life?*

JC: A while ago I read a biography of Abe Fortas, who was an American lawyer and later became a Supreme Court Justice. He loved music and played the violin, and no matter how busy his work got, his Sundays were always reserved for chamber music. He'd play in a string quartet and invite friends over for evening concerts.

I think that captures pretty much what I aspire to musically in my future professional life. Then again, part of me will always have hopes of taking this further, and performing in concerts and more operas, no matter how unlikely. So that's

also my motivation to constantly improve my playing and singing, and I don't think that'll change any time soon.

HA: *Finally, what are your aspirations for the Chamber Music Club? What are your thoughts on strengths and weaknesses of the club?*

JC: From what I've observed in my year of being on the committee, the club benefits from having a tight cohort of longstanding members that manage it, and the resources at its disposal that include having the Haldane Room as a regular concert venue fitted with a grand piano. But I think it could do more in terms of getting students involved in its concerts and actively establishing its presence. Having been part of both the UCL Music Society and the Chamber Music Club in my final year, I think there's a lot to be gained through a closer collaboration between the two major classical music communities in UCL.

HA: *What valuable insights, Jason; thank you very much for sharing! We can just hope that you will still be around for some time to come and that the world might benefit from another musical Supreme Court Judge in the nearest future!*

Observations on the CMC masterclass on Baroque and Classical performance

The tradition of the Chamber Music Club's masterclasses continues. This year the theme of this annual event was Baroque and Classical performance. The class was organised by Helene Albrecht and Roger Beeson and was taught by Professor John Irving from Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance; he is also the Honorary President of our Club. It took place in late February. A broad range of compositional styles and schools was covered – from Italian seventeenth-century chamber music to a Viennese piano sonata by Haydn, from French music for flute and continuo to a prelude and fugues by J.S. Bach and Mozart's violin music. Such a choice of compositions provoked diverse discussions on historical aspects, discrepancies between modern and early instruments, acoustics and ways of reading and interpreting the scores. Often the trajectory taken by the conversations and musical experiments was entirely unexpected and illuminated hitherto unconsidered avenues and parallels between seemingly distant musical genres. It was well worth travelling from Cambridge to participate in this event as an observer.

Robbie Carney (Philosophy Department) opened the class by presenting the F sharp major Prelude and Fugue from J.S. Bach's first book of The Well-Tempered Clavier. The pieces were played on the piano. John Irving asked how he had chosen the tempo for the prelude in the absence of indications by the composer. Robbie responded that he had tried several tempos and had concluded that most of them didn't feel right for this piece. Then the tutor played the initial section in

various speeds and asked everyone to decide whether these could work out in a performance. It was proposed that a chosen tempo should not obscure the initial motif and the response to it in the left hand. It is also important not to blur changes in harmony, which can be difficult to follow if the tempo is too fast. Furthermore, the perception of harmony and motifs can be affected by the acoustics of the room and by the instrument used, both of which have to be examined as far as rehearsal time allows.

Afterwards various sections of prelude and fugue were explored and several ways of emphasising themes within a multilayered texture were considered. John Irving showed how it is possible to bring something to the forefront not by dynamics, but almost solely by articulation. In some passages left hand notes were played as shorter than written in the score – it helped in clarifying the development of the piece.

Next Mozart's Sonata in E minor for violin and piano, K.304, was played by Bronwen Evans (lecturer in Language Sciences) and Roger Beeson (UCL alumnus). Attention was drawn to the fact that in the composer's time violin bows were noticeably shorter than modern bows. This aspect added some technical constraints and challenges in performance. John Irving suggested that the violinist try using only two thirds of the bow length when playing. This change created a more intimate sound and perhaps added some tension to the themes – the overall impression was of a distinct chamber music setting. It seemed that such a use of a bow would be compatible with the size of typical spaces where chamber music is played and their acoustics. The violinist also experimented with the direction of the bow movement in some phrases.

It was remarked by John Irving that before Mozart's time sonatas for string instruments were dominated by a keyboard instrument and that strings tended to fulfil an accompanying role. Upon examining this piece both instruments turned out to be practically equal in presenting varied musical material. The violin tended to initiate new themes and then the instruments were alternating in development sections. The passages where the piano was playing on its own were clearly outlined in the performance.

The interplay between both instruments was even subtler in the second movement. Here the task was to maintain continuity in the melody while smoothly passing the leadership between violin and piano. It is interesting to note that towards the end of this movement violin and piano play in unison for the first time – it is as if the preceding calls and responses have been directed towards this goal.

The first half of the class was concluded by Helene Albrecht (UCL alumna) who presented the first movement of Joseph Haydn's Sonata No.60 in C major. This movement is rather fast most of the time and also very diverse in texture. Significant parallels with Haydn's symphonies were noticed early on in the discussion, both in terms of the orchestral style of writing and in the ways of elabo-

rating the musical material which are often based on juxtapositions of timbres and registers. To elucidate the contrasts and distinguish the textures it can be helpful to imagine various passages as performed by different instrumental groups with their characteristic playing techniques.

The pianist had carefully studied the score and clearly conveyed manifold approaches to making a sound on the piano, e.g. staccato and *fz* notes. Helene's interpretation was based on fully utilising the dynamic range of the instrument and on a large scale plan of development of the movement. John Irving suggested some experiments with the articulation of individual phrases. It turned out that the same degree of contrast between passages can be achieved while using a narrower dynamic range provided that the articulation is well chosen.

John Irving directed everyone's attention to the remark *mit aufgehobener Dämpfung* ('with raised dampers') in the score. This instruction for playing is related to the construction of early pianos for which it was possible to raise all dampers thereby allowing piano strings to vibrate freely. The effects of such an action would be particularly noticeable for lower strings. Here, this technique is assigned to a slow *pianissimo* passage with a melody in a low register in octaves. Later it is applied to a distinct theme in a high register; it is also the highest point of this movement in terms of registers. These uses of the technique hint at a large timbral variety envisaged by the composer. Various methods of achieving this effect with the pedals of the modern piano were discussed.

The second half of the class began by Miriam Nohl (Royal Academy of Music) and Tabitha Tuckett (UCL Libraries) presenting the Sonata in G major by Domenico Gabrielli on two 'cellos. When its first movement was played the sound somehow evoked an earlier musical era than the time of writing this piece (1689). The sparse texture and the spacious sound reminded one of Renaissance polyphony, although it might also be a consequence of the basso continuo being executed solely by a 'cello. John Irving noted that it was appropriate to play basso continuo on a bass instrument alone, without a keyboard instrument, and offered suggestions about how this might effectively be done. He referred to research on Corelli's Op.5 Violin Sonatas in support. Furthermore, John Irving commented that this composition is closer to the first half of the seventeenth century than to its second half in terms of style of writing. In addition he remarked that Domenico Gabrielli had been a virtuoso 'cello player. It might partially explain the instrumentation of the piece – writing for 'cello and basso continuo was quite unusual in the composer's time.

Swift reaction seemed essential to a performance of this piece – both players had to respond to brief motifs and communicate well to conjure the specific character of each movement. Such a level of collaboration was certainly attained in the *presto* sections of the first movement and in the second and fourth movements, the latter two being played in a fairly fast tempo and with a notable lightness.

Musicians and audience were reminded that plenty of Baroque composers were busily writing operas. Domenico Gabrielli is not an exception as an author of several works for the stage. It means that a plethora of techniques and idioms from opera writing transcended into the sphere of instrumental chamber music. One such aspect is the close relationship between Baroque arias and recitatives and various rhetorical devices – familiar figures of speech frequently determined the way in which emotions were expressed. It is often worth looking at the instrumental themes of the pieces from this period as if these are parts of arias whose aim is to render an affect.

The afternoon continued with a discussion on Mozart's Rondo in C major, K.373, presented by Kevin Ng (UCL alumnus; violin) and Roger Beeson (piano). This work is notable for its captivating melodies. The composition is now known as a concert piece that is performed by the violin with orchestra, but it was remarked that in Mozart's time the accompanying orchestra would have been much smaller, perhaps a formation that was available at a court. Furthermore, the construction of the violin would also have been different, with gut strings and quieter sound. After considering these aspects both musicians experimented with the sound and dynamics – a very clear and crisp rendition of some melodic phrases was achieved in the end.

John Irving emphasised that Mozart himself was a skilled violinist and that the violin was one of his main instruments. Thus he was very familiar with various techniques of playing and could use them freely to convey his ideas in scores. Attention was paid to accented notes, trills and staccatos – precise execution of these elements was essential for achieving the full expressiveness of the piece.

The final composition dissected in the masterclass was Sonata in E minor, Op.1 No.6, by Jean-Marie Leclair. It was presented by Nikki Wilkinson (baroque flute) and Tabitha Tuckett (cello continuo). It was noted that although the composer of the sonata was French, the piece represents Italian style which is distinguished by smoother rhythmical lines and a relatively frequent use of triplets in comparison with dotted notes.

The rendering of various rhythmic figures was examined in detail. The second movement has a few passages where triplets are systematically employed. The flute establishes this pattern and then the continuo responds in the same rhythm. Later triplets in the continuo are juxtaposed with a quaver followed by two semi-quavers in the flute. It was debated whether it would be desirable to 'tripletise' the latter rhythm in the flute to match the continuo phrase. The performers tried out several ways of playing where the rhythm was shifted towards triplets and concluded that using triplets makes sense in terms of the development of motifs. In addition, the piece sounded effective and lively. Elsewhere two quavers in the flute were overlaid with a quaver-based triplet in the continuo. In this situation a decision can be made to play the former two quavers as a crotchet and a quaver

within a triplet. Again, the musicians experimented with the rhythm of these passages.

However, if the second movement is re-interpreted thus, should the first movement be somehow stylistically linked to the second? The question is complicated by the fact that only a few situations would permit a tripletisation. For example, when the flute plays a quaver and then two semi-quavers and simultaneously the continuo plays two quavers, then it is possible to perform the former three notes as a triplet and the latter two notes as a crotchet followed by a quaver within a triplet. In contrast, four consecutive semi-quavers (a fairly abundant figure in the first movement) would not permit such a tripletisation without fairly artificial alterations of the score.

Thus ended the third CMC masterclass which was filled with spirited and rigorous debates and also high quality performances by the well-prepared participants. As per tradition it was held on a sunny Saturday afternoon in the Haldane Room. Many thanks to John Irving for his quick and enthusiastic response to the idea. And thanks in equal measure to Roger and Helene for arranging the programme, recruiting musicians and still managing to actively participate as pianists. The committee is envisaging a new masterclass on a different theme in early spring next year.

Dace Ruklisa

UCL Music Society presents a concert of vocal and symphonic music in December

UCL Symphony Orchestra and UCL Symphony Chorus are proud to present an evening of festive music in December. The programme of winter concert includes *Sorcerer's Apprentice* by Dukas, Prokofiev's *Lieutenant Kije Suite*, *Christmas Eve Suite* by Rimsky-Korsakov and Borodin's *Polovtsian Dances*. You are welcome to come and hear the colourful orchestrations of these composers in the spacious St Pancras Church. This is the most substantial of all programmes prepared by UCL Music Society in autumn term.

The concert will take place on 8th December and start at 7.30pm (doors open at 7pm). St Pancras Church is situated on Euston Road, NW1 2BA. Tickets are £10, £6 (concessions) and £4 (students). All tickets available on the door.

Inspired by America

By 1900 three late Romantic composers emerge as ‘inspired by America’: Antonin Dvořák (1841-1904), a Czech; Frederick Delius (1862-1934), born in England of German parents; and the American, Edward MacDowell (1861-1908). They were part of mainstream European music and looked to Richard Wagner, Johannes Brahms (in the case of Dvořák) and Edvard Grieg (in the case of both Delius and MacDowell). When Dvořák was appointed head of New York’s National Conservatory of Music in 1892 he was an established composer in Prague, noted for his use of Bohemian folk music; but he composed some of his most memorable work in America before returning to Prague in 1895. Edward MacDowell, then at the height of his fame, seems never to have met him. He studied music in Paris and Frankfurt from 1876 and taught in Darmstadt after marrying an American. In 1888 he settled in Boston where he was idolised as America’s foremost composer; in 1896 he accepted the Chair of Music at New York’s Columbia University. By contrast, Delius had difficulty persuading his father to allow him to study music; from 1884 to 1885 he ran an orange plantation in Florida and lived briefly in Virginia. But in 1886 he secured permission to study music in Leipzig, and later lived and composed in France. All three are noted composers, but this paper deals with another issue – their contrasting attitudes to the use of Negro melodies in ‘art’ music.

The popularity of African American music was well established by the 1890s. As a student in Paris in the late 1840s Louis Moreau Gottschalk (1829-69), an American pianist, published *Four Creole Songs and Dances for Piano*. Chopin and Berlioz praised him; Delius may have known the work. In 1867 after the American Civil War ended slavery, the abolitionist, T.W. Higginson, wrote enthusiastically about Negro spirituals, and the choir of Fisk, a black university, sang them on tours abroad – Delius could have heard them in England.

MacDowell had composed an Indian Suite, his Op.48, to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Columbus’s discovery of America in 1492. MacDowell relied partly on H.W. Longfellow’s poem, *The Song of Hiawatha* – a work admired by Dvořák and Delius. He gave the first performance of the suite in 1896 when applying for the Chair of Music at Columbia but it is his only ‘nationalist’ work; he saw nationalism as a political movement with no connection with music which he taught as an academic subject. Instead, nature was his inspiration – finely seen in his 1896 *Woodland Sketches*.

By copying the style of a Negro spiritual in his 1893 Symphony in E minor, ‘From the New World’, Dvořák was the first major composer to bring African American music international fame in the concert hall – thanks in part to Mrs. Jeannette Thurber, founder of the Conservatory, who urged him to incorporate American themes into his work. After hearing Negro spirituals sung by his black American student, Harry T. Burleigh, Dvořák appreciated their simple repetitions

and use of the pentatonic scale – as in Czech folk songs. In the second movement, *Largo*, the cor anglais introduces the spiritual-like melody. By capturing the simple profundity of the spiritual the music sounds authentic, though Dvořák's style of Romantic music remained unchanged.

By May 1893 the *New York Herald* reported him as saying 'in the Negro melodies of America I discover all that is needed for a great and noble school of music'. Boston critics like Edward MacDowell at once protested. 'What Negro melodies have to do with American [art] remains a mystery.' Dvořák, they felt, was a Negrophile. In the summer of 1893 Dvořák visited the Czech community in Spillville, Iowa and there composed his String Quartet in F major, Op.96, the 'American' Quartet, and the more complex String Quintet, Op. 97, the 'American' Quintet. In December 1893 the first performance of the New World Symphony took place in New York; it was well received and inspired a student at the New York Conservatory to write lyrics to the melody of the slow movement, calling it 'Going Home'. Dvořák arranged Stephen Foster's 'Old Kentucky Home' for the New York Conservatory, and was at the peak of creative ability in 1894 when he composed his Cello Concerto in B minor, Op.104. But Boston critics undermined the popularity of his music and in addition New York was in the grip of financial depression; by 1895 the Conservatory was unable to pay his salary and Dvořák returned to Prague and abandoned American themes. Even so, Dvořák remains the first great exponent of Negro melodies while Delius was an even more consistent champion. Delius's *Florida Suite* was performed in 1888 when he was a student at Leipzig, still inspired by memories of Negro workers singing as he sat outside in the evenings in semi-tropical Florida. By 1895 he began work on his opera, *Koanga* – taking the plot from George Washington Cable's novel, *The Grandissimes*, a tale of an African prince sold into slavery in America, who falls in love with a mulatto girl only for both to die. Delius had used the Creole Negro dance – *La Calinda* – in his *Florida Suite*; he also used it in *Koanga* creating a memorable tune for the woodwinds, though for authenticity it cannot compete with the Creole dances, *Le Bamboula* and *Le Bananier*, melodies which Gottschalk collected in America and published in Paris in the 1840s.

Delius briefly revisited Florida in 1897 and retained an interest in American Indian and Negro melodies. He had begun composing *Appalachia, or Variations on an old slave melody* for orchestra, baritone solo and chorus. ('Appalachia' is a Hispanic corruption of the Indian name for the southern Appalachians, part of the Allegheny mountain chain.) The influence of Negro spirituals is clear in the music though the composer's lyricism and use of chromatic harmony are part of Europe's late Romantic tradition. Having introduced the banjo into the orchestra of *Koanga*, as an element of 'local colour', Delius created, near the opening of *Appalachia*, a banjo-like timbre on plucked strings and harps. Singers and orchestra bring the work to a close in a mood of quiet peace – and Thomas Beecham became a

supporter of Delius's music when he heard it in 1907. By then Delius had returned to more conventional subject-matter with his opera, *A Village Romeo and Juliet* – it is famous for its interlude, 'A Walk to the Paradise Garden'.

In May 1896 the American Supreme Court legalised segregation in the case of *Plessy v. Ferguson*, and its indirect effect on music was insidious in terms of, for example, segregated audiences and facilities. The judgement sent a message to American society that African Americans were now to be considered as second-class citizens. Arguably the Supreme Court ruling explains the discomfiture of white American composers and critics; they ignored Scott Joplin (1867-1917), a contemporary black composer and pianist, famed for 'ragtime'.

Dvořák, Delius and MacDowell were not civil rights campaigners, but freedom to work in America and love of its scenery inspired some of their finest music. MacDowell made a practical contribution to the American art scene in 1907 by endowing his home in rural New Hampshire as a colony for aspiring artists in all fields. American composers continued the European tradition of using folk songs but exploited their own rich store of folk music.

MacDowell's contemptuous attitude to Negro melodies may have delayed their appreciation as American folk music with potential for exploitation by composers, but acceptance came in the 1920s and '30s when new forms of African American music – jazz and the blues – became popular: the Jewish George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* of 1924 and the African American Duke Ellington's 1935 *A Rhapsody of Negro Life* were rapturously received.

'Black' music, jazz and the blues, also had considerable influence on French composers like Darius Milhaud and Maurice Ravel. Interestingly, Aaron Copland (1900-90), a resident at the MacDowell Colony in 1925, needed French reassurance that jazz would make him an 'American' composer in a multi-racial tradition – such advice was given him by Nadia Boulanger when he was a student in Paris in the early 1920s. The result was his *Four Piano Blues* (1926-48). Copland tried to follow Stravinsky and Schoenberg and become an exponent of serial music, but in the 1930s and '40s he felt the need – financially not least – to compose more popular music, and the result was some of America's favourite vernacular pieces: his ballet music for *Billy the Kid* (1938), *Rodeo* (1942) and *Appalachian Spring* (1944), composed for orchestra, and *Fanfare for the Common Man* (1946). In *Appalachian Spring* he could be said to reverse Delius's *Koanga* – a tragic tale of love and parting among slaves. Instead Copland's *Appalachian Spring*, which makes use of the Shaker song 'Simple Gifts', tells of a Shaker couple who find love, despite warnings, and the ballet closes peacefully. It does not deal with matters of race, but it does achieve harmony, both communal and musical.

Clare Taylor

Bach's Numbers: compositional proportion and significance
by Ruth Tatlow
(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016)

A REVIEW

In an earlier article on music and numbers (CMC Newsletter No.5) I referred to Ruth Tatlow's 1991 book *Bach and the Riddle of the Number Alphabet* and its critique of numerological interpretations of J.S. Bach's music. In her new book, Tatlow presents her own approach to the role of numbers in Bach's music. The book is clearly the result of years of intensive research, and its content is quite dense. In a review of limited length one can only give some idea of the range of the book, raise some general issues germane to the analysis of music, and point to some questions of detail.

Tatlow has a specific thesis: that Bach made use of what she calls 'proportional parallelism' in 'all the collections and multi-movement works that [he] revised for publication' (p.6). Examples include the sonatas and partitas for violin, the 'cello suites, the four volumes of *Clavierübung*, the *Musical Offering* and the *Art of Fugue*, as well as major choral works. She deals exclusively with the music of Bach, and states that 'we do not yet know who besides Bach used the technique of proportional parallelism' (p.257 n.7); her next project is to investigate the 'provenance and transmission of proportional parallelism' (p.266 n.27).

She identifies three characteristics of proportional parallelism: (i) bar totals are multiples of 10, 100 or 1000; (ii) there are numerical references to Bach's name; (iii) most significantly, there are 'layers' of 1:1 or 1:2 proportions (pp.26-30). It may be noted straight away that the second of these seems to be in a rather different category than the other two: it depends on a relationship with something external to the music, rather than internal structure. Perhaps it is hardly necessary to the argument.

In the first part of the book, 'Foundations', Tatlow sets out the theory and its support from contemporary sources. She musters an impressive amount of evidence for the theological and musical significance of concepts of unity, proportion and 'harmony' (in its broad sense) in Bach's time, and for the importance to contemporary composers of pre-compositional planning. However, there is scarcely a hint in Chapter 4, 'Bars, planning and proportional parallelism' or in the Appendix of relevant quotations ('A theology of musical proportions and Harmony in Bach's time') of the kind of planning that she claims to demonstrate in Bach's music. Strangely, in introducing the concept of proportion, she gives considerable attention to a 'widely circulated' English treatise of 1589, *The Arte of English Poetrie* by George Puttenham (1529-90). 'Although Bach is unlikely to have read *The Arte...*, he may well have read about Puttenham's techniques in other poetic treatises.

tises' (p.40) – to which one can only respond 'he may or he may not'. The claim that Puttenham's categorisation of 'proportion by situation' (through the symmetrical arrangement of rhymes) and 'proportion in figure' (through the symmetrical arrangement of line length) 'gives a documentary basis for patterns found in Bach's works' (p.39) is simply unclear.

Tatlow insists that the use of proportional parallelism is intentional on Bach's part, and that 'every element of the technique ... can be found in treatises of his [Bach's] time' (p.102). It is in this context that she dismisses, in a single paragraph, the relevance of analyses of Bach's music involving 'golden section' proportions and the Fibonacci sequence. 'There have been several attempts in recent years to demonstrate Bach's use of this proportion, but historical evidence undermines the results ... [There] seems to have been no general interest in the proportion in Bach's time, either for its aesthetic properties or as a means of compositional invention' (p.105). This is hardly satisfactory, and the phrase 'undermines the results' is particularly unfortunate. Certainly Tatlow is saved the trouble of actually having to examine the 'results'; but what if a substantial number of pieces by Bach did in fact show important structural features around the golden section? In another (online) publication, Tatlow tackled this issue directly: 'There is a methodological weakness in much musicological literature on the golden section, whereby the author fails to appreciate a distinction between the composer's conscious compositional effort and the properties of the composition. The golden section is a naturally occurring phenomenon. Thus finding it in a work of art does not indicate that the composer deliberately put it there' ('The Use and Abuse of Fibonacci Numbers and the Golden Section in Musicology Today', *Understanding Bach 1*, 2006, p.85). Tatlow is concerned exclusively with Bach's conscious intentions as they are known or can be inferred; but more than this, she appears to consider other analytical approaches, not tied to compositional intention, to be worthless. This is surely a matter for debate.

Tatlow's use of the term 'proportion' (which she equates with 'ratio' in footnotes on pp. 29 and 74) is rather unorthodox, in that her unit of measurement is the bar, irrespective of length or speed. She attempts to justify this by reference to contemporary sources. For example, French-style dance movements were 'defined by their bar totals'. She quotes Johann Gottfried Walther on the gavotte: 'a dance in simple time with two reprises ... the first of which has four bars and the second eight' and the minuet: '...two reprises, each of which ... has four or eight bars, or at least, with a few rare exceptions, no uneven number of bars' (p.111). But bars here relate to metre and ultimately to dance steps, and the definitions (or better, descriptions) summarise *metrical* regularity. The same is true of descriptions of ritornello, rondeau and sarabande by Friedrich Erhardt Niedt and Johann Mattheson (pp.114-115). More to the point for Tatlow is an extract from Lorenz Mizler's *Musikalische Bibliothek* Vol.IV concerning the length – i.e. the actual tim-

ing – of church cantatas: ‘a cantata of 350 bars of varying time signatures will take approximately 25 minutes to perform’ (p.116). The formulation ‘shows that changes in time signature were disregarded when counting the number of bars in a composition, as they are today’ and that ‘the bar was the single fixed unit in a score with which to order the music beautifully and to create proportional order across a work’ (pp.119-120). In fact it only shows that changes in time signature *might* be disregarded for particular purposes; it does not show that the beautiful ordering of the music was such a purpose. Bearing in mind that the formulation is preceded by ‘From experience one can determine the length’, it looks very much as if this is simply a guideline for composers, giving an approximate average number of bars necessary for a twenty-five-minute cantata, if one allows for the usual variety of speeds and time-signatures within such a work.

For the purpose of serious musical analysis it seems unsatisfactory to take the bar, in its general sense (as against, say, the triple-time bar or the common time bar) as a unit of measurement for determining proportional relationships. To take an analogy: we do not consider that a 100-metre running track and a 100-yard running track are equivalent or in a 1:1 proportion just because each is laid out on the basis of 100 units; the units themselves are not the same in the two cases. Nevertheless, Tatlow’s contention is that Bach counted bars regardless of length, and that the simple bar-count is a crucial element in the construction of the works; and this claim must be judged by its results.

For an example of Tatlow’s method as applied in the second part of the book, ‘Demonstrations’, we can take the discussion of works for violin in Chapter 5. She describes the solo violin Sonatas and Partitas as ‘a textbook case of proportional parallelism’ (p.133). Table 5.1 on p.135 shows the layout of this collection as prepared by Bach himself. There are three sonatas alternating with three partitas. Altogether the six works total 2400 bars – a multiple of 100. Within this there is a 2:1 proportion: Sonata 1, Partita 1, Sonata 2 and Sonata 3 together total 1600 bars; the remaining Partita 2 and Partita 3 total 800 bars: 1600:800 is a 2:1 proportion. And within these, we can consider the internal proportions of individual works. In the four-movement G minor Sonata (No.1), the total number of bars is 272; the first three movements together add up to 136 bars, and the fourth movement itself is 136 bars long. In other words, there is a 1:1 relationship between the first three movements and the last. Partita No.1 in B minor has comparable though not identical structures. It consists of four dance movements, each followed by its own variation or ‘double’; in a sense therefore it has eight movements altogether. The overall total of bars is 408; the first six movements add up to 272 bars, and the remaining two to 136 bars; so in this case there is a 2:1 relationship. Tatlow also notes proportions within individual movements, based upon their binary subdivisions. (The sections are indicated by repeat marks, but in this context the repeats are irrelevant.) The Allemande has two sections of twelve bars each – a

1:1 proportion. (The same is true, of course, of the Double.) The Corrente has a 2:3 proportion between its sections, the Sarabande 1:3. The Tempo di Borea does not show such a simple proportion, since it divides into twenty and forty-eight bars – a 5:12 proportion. Tatlow also notes that ‘obvious 1:1 proportions are formed between parent movements and their Doubles, both with and without repeats’ (p.138).

There can be no denying the accuracy of Tatlow’s calculations here and in many similar examples from other collections. The 1:1 correspondence between the first three and the last movements of the Sonata, and the 2:1 correspondence in the Partita, are intriguing. We need, however, to be careful in drawing conclusions. Given that we are concerned with numbers of bars, not with absolute length as performed, it is not surprising that a fast movement might have more bars than slower movements – overall balance might require this. What is remarkable is the *precision* of the 136:136 relationship in the Sonata, and the 272:136 relationship in the Partita. Equally interesting is the relationship between the two works: the structures of the Sonata and Partita have a ‘common base of 136 bars’, which ‘must have been planned in advance’ (p.138; Tatlow suggests that Bach planned the Partita after completing the Sonata).

By contrast, the 1:1 proportion between movements and their Doubles are only to be expected – this is how variations in this period (and earlier, and later) worked. Likewise, the internal structures of the individual dance movements can be explained simply by the fact that they *are* dance movements, albeit stylised; phrases of two and/or four bars are natural to such pieces, and we can expect that a relatively straightforward proportion will hold between the two sections of these binary-form dances, regardless of larger-scale proportions in the works as a whole. So while these relationships within movements, and between movements and their variations, provide further *examples* of 1:1 and other simple proportions, they do not provide evidence to support the contention about Bach’s deliberate planning of such proportions at various structural levels. This is one instance of Tatlow’s tendency to overstate her case.

Of course, Tatlow does recognise that ‘a 1:1 or 1:2 division’ is ‘typical of French dance movements, where it is not uncommon to find a strict binary form with a literal 1:1 form, e.g. 32-bar movements with a double-bar repeat midway, after bar 16. The parallel layers of perfect proportion, 1:1 and 1:2, ... on a larger scale in Bach’s publications are a sophisticated version of this simple foreground division within a dance movement’ (p.115). The phrase ‘sophisticated version’ rather obscures the fact that they represent a quite different kind of proportion.

With regard to another supposed feature of proportional parallelism: despite specifying *numerical* references to Bach’s name (p.27), Tatlow in fact identifies two kinds of reference, by keys and by numbers. She makes the point that in Bach’s time ‘the musical letters B and H for B natural were interchangeable’ (ibid.), so B

could mean either B flat or B natural – H was indeed used for B natural, but it was not until later that it became the exclusive signifier of that note in German musical nomenclature. Hence she suggests, for example, that the keys B minor, A minor and C major in the solo violin works (Partita 1, Sonata 2, Sonata 3, respectively) constitute a ‘signatorial B-A-C’, as do B minor, A major and C minor in Sonatas 1, 2 and 4 of the six sonatas for violin and keyboard. Likewise there is a ‘permuted B-A-C-H pattern’ across the *Clavierübung* collections I and II (Partita 1: B flat major; Partita 2: C minor; Partita 3: A minor; French Overture: B (H) minor) (p.173). She acknowledges that one could ‘reasonably object that there are only seven or eight musical letters from which to choose’ but states that she has ‘not found this signature combination in many other collections’ (p.64). This may be so, but it is hardly adequate as a statistical summary. It would be good to know what collections of six or eight works by other composers were consulted by Tatlow.

Numerical references to Bach’s name are based on the ‘natural order’ alphabet, whereby A=1, B=2, C=3 etc. B-A-C-H therefore adds up to 14, a number to which various writers before Tatlow have also attached importance. This enables Tatlow to suggest, for example, that the total 3120 bars of the Well-Tempered Clavier Book I and the two-part Inventions and three-part Sinfonias, all taken together, may represent a reference to his surname (again in permutation: C-A-B). There is the same bar total in the *Clavierübung* collections I and II (pp.170-173). With regard to the Goldberg Variations, Tatlow remarks: ‘Its fourteen variations in 3/4 time, and fourteen variations for one manual, may well have been a device alluding to Bach as author’ (p.197). This is plausible, but difficult to prove; it would, however, certainly have been an easy way for Bach to ‘sign’ his work, unlike some of the more complex manipulations of proportion. But when Tatlow claims, of the same work, that Bach’s ‘choice of a physical 1-3-2 (1 work with 32 movements on 32 pages) may also have been intended as a permutation of his name, 2-1-3’ (ibid.), or that the overall total of 600 bars in three of the four so-called Lutheran masses ‘may be the customary reference to Bach’s name: the divisors of the perfect number six being 2, 1 and 3, or B-A-C’ (p.329), she seems to be descending into unverifiable (and unfalsifiable) speculation.

For Tatlow, her analyses sometimes have an explanatory function. One small example concerns Bach’s transcription for keyboard (BWV 976) of Vivaldi’s Violin Concerto Op.3 No.12. Fairly early in his career Bach transcribed – or rather, arranged – a number of concertos by his contemporaries. Tatlow suggests that at this stage Bach was using such transcriptions to ‘hone his skills in proportional ordering’ (p.256). The concerto BWV 976 belongs to a set of twelve in which Tatlow detects various proportional relationships. In some of these works Bach made changes to the original by the addition or subtraction of bars; the implication for Tatlow is that this was done in the interests of numerical planning. One such case is the third movement of BWV 976, where three bars of Vivaldi’s original (bars 64-

66) are reduced to two: in effect Vivaldi's bar 64 is omitted, so that Vivaldi's 65-66 become Bach's 64-65. This 'one-bar change perfects the 500-bar block' of BWV 975 and 976 together (p.263). What Tatlow does not consider is whether there might be other, purely musical, reasons for such changes. In the present case the omission of a bar can indeed be explained on musical grounds. In Vivaldi's original, the three bars are identical with each other except that bar 64 features the solo violin on its own, with the orchestra joining in at 65-66 to initiate a series of two-bar groups. While this might work well with the original instrumentation (and the actual figuration used), to reproduce it on a keyboard (with the rather simpler figuration that Bach deploys) would risk a sense of redundancy. (Of course, it is possible that Bach initially saw the numerical necessity of 'losing' one bar, and then chose the one which could best be dispensed with on musical grounds.)

The Brandenburg Concertos offer a different example of explanation for numerical reasons. In compiling this collection, Bach had, according to Tatlow, 'a series of perfectly designed [numerical] plans ... but because of a copying oversight and a subsequent new idea, the execution of the plan was never perfect' (p.267). This, it is suggested, explains the 'unusually obsequious' nature of Bach's dedication of the score to the Margrave of Brandenburg, 'begging [him] most humbly not to judge their imperfections' (ibid.). Why Bach should have chosen to make reference to imperfections of which he was aware but the Margrave cannot have been is a question that Tatlow does not broach; she simply says that Bach 'felt compelled to apologise' (p.273). Nor does she offer any further examples of contemporary dedications as comparisons to determine how unusual Bach's form of words in fact is for the period.

Curiously, Tatlow does not comment on one genuine puzzle in the Brandenburgs, namely the absence of a slow movement in Concerto No.3; instead of a middle movement there is just a single bar, Andante, containing the two chords of a Phrygian cadence. Despite the 'imperfections', Tatlow's calculations show some 1:1 proportions over the collection (p.269). The single bar, it could be argued, is necessary for the precise bar totals involved; its omission on the one hand, or on the other the insertion of a full-scale middle movement, would upset the proportions – a single bar is just what is needed. (Such an explanation, while it might be plausible in Tatlow's terms, unfortunately tells us nothing about what Bach *meant* by the one-bar Phrygian cadence, or what the performer should do with it.)

Essential to the assessment of Tatlow's method and findings are questions of probability and coincidence. She is well aware of this issue: for example, with regard to a 1:1 proportion found in Book 1 of the Well-Tempered Clavier she remarks that 'with twenty-four terms the probability of a 1:1 proportion forming naturally is fairly high' (p.160). Again, in connection with the fifteen two-part Inventions and fifteen three-part Sinfonias taken together, she writes: 'Thirty terms in a range of 21 to 72 [bars] are bound to create some proportions naturally' (p.165). In this

case, however, the disposition of the 'terms' 'must have been planned' (p.166). The 1:1 proportion arises because the first six inventions and the last six sinfonias together (the 'outer' groups, as it were) total 516 bars, while the last nine inventions and the first nine sinfonias (the 'inner' groups) likewise total 516 bars. Given Bach's evident penchant for symmetrical arrangements, this could well be the result of conscious planning. But 'smaller layers of proportion' are also involved. The inner groups taken together themselves involve a 1:1 proportion: five inventions plus four sinfonias total 258 bars, as do the other four inventions and five sinfonias. Furthermore, at a lower level there are 1:1 proportions of 129:129 bars. Even this is not all, but it suffices to raise the question whether Bach consciously calculated at all levels.

Another example in which coincidence is ruled out is the large-scale 2:1 (1600:800) proportion governing the collection of solo violin Sonatas and Partitas, mentioned above. 'The probability of six terms between 272 and 524 [i.e. the bar totals of the six works] falling randomly into a perfect double 2:1 proportion is minimal. Bach must have planned it' (p.140). This may be so, but there are surely two aspects that should at least be considered: firstly, it is not surprising that four out of six works should be *approximately* twice as long (by bar-count) as two out of six; and secondly, how is the probability affected given that every work in the collection has in total an even number of bars?

One might ask about the compositional feasibility of the kind of conscious structural calculation with which Tatlow credits Bach. Could he, and would he, have had these complex numerical plans in mind when creating these works? In fact the suggestion is not as implausible as it may at first appear. In the first place, at least some of the works in question are compilations which bring together revised versions of earlier pieces; reworking in order to make them conform to a numerical plan may not be too difficult. In any case, it is perfectly possible to compose a piece, either newly or as a revision, to fill a specific number of bars. Certainly a style like the late Baroque, with its small-scale and large-scale repetitions and its use of sequence, lends itself well to such planning and, where necessary, to adjustment of bar totals by the addition or subtraction of bars.

More problematic, though, is the *amount* of proportional calculation, at various levels, from the internal structures of individual movements to complete collections, sometimes involving putting together movements from different works within a collection. Intuitively it may seem, in fact, that the more proportions one finds, the less likely it is that they were *all* consciously intended.

Tatlow is clear that the structures she uncovers are not (and presumably cannot be) heard, except for the small-scale proportions of, e.g., binary-form dance movements. Does this mean that they are ultimately unimportant? Tatlow's view is that for Bach, the devout Lutheran, the unheard but perfect proportions would be evident to God, and hopefully pleasing to Him. At a more mundane level, how-

ever, the relationship, if any, between the analysis and the hearing of music is a matter of debate. In the present case there is an indirect connection: if Bach devised the numerical structures then the actual music as heard must be the result of this devising. To take a comparable example from a quite different repertoire: the precise serial structure of a twelve-note composition by a composer such as Anton Webern is almost certainly inaudible to the listener, and yet it is the composer's manipulation of the note-row that results in the music heard. The study and analysis of numerical plans or serial techniques can therefore tell us something about how the music came to be – how it came to take the specific form it did.

Yet Tatlow seems to want to go further. In the conclusion of her book she writes:

If such an influential composer as Bach deliberately manipulated the number of bars to create perfect proportions in his scores that cannot be heard, surely our appreciation of his scores will be impoverished if we ignore proportional parallelism. With the modern emphasis on sounding music we have lost the richness of many earlier written traditions. And yet generations of musicians have sensed Bach's unheard proportions and commented on the architectural grandeur of his works ... [Is] there something in his scores beyond real time that enables mankind to detect the perfect parallelism? (p.368)

This is unclear and unsatisfactory. What does 'our appreciation of his scores' mean? Whose appreciation? Performers and writers on music certainly study Bach's scores; but for many (most?) people, 'appreciation' of Bach's scores comes through *hearing* them performed. Generations of musicians have indeed been aware of 'architectural grandeur' in Bach's music, but it does not follow that they have 'sensed' his 'unheard proportions'; much more likely is that they have sensed, through hearing and performing, the satisfying structural coherence and broad shaping of individual works. Many of Tatlow's demonstrations are of large-scale proportional relationships *between* works in a collection, or even between collections – but surely this is not the basis of our awareness of Bach's structural mastery? It is a pity that Tatlow should call, quite unnecessarily, upon this awareness to give support to what is undoubtedly an intriguing and in many respects well-argued thesis.

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