

No. 4 June 1995

I feel the need to editorialize here, as the events of the past year have clarified a number of issues. Firstly, I feel that the time has come to stop calling my conferences 'Bach *Inégale* days'. It makes it look as if I thought that the issue of inequality outside France is relevant only to JS Bach. Of course it isn't. It is relevant to every composer active in Europe between 1600 and 1750, and that's not to mention anything pre-1600. Furthermore, 'Bach *inégale*' savours of propaganda and I think think this is a good time to put this work on a scholarly footing. The big advance this year has been my awareness of the strong *inégale* evidence to be found in the suites of Purcell and Croft. This has encouraged me to spread my net much wider and I have started to look further at the keyboard music of Frescobaldi, Froberger, Böhm, Pachelbel, Buxtehude and, particularly Handel. I am also giving a lot of attention to English consort music by such as Jenkins and Lawes. My ignorance of much of this repertoire is shameful and I intend to do something about it. I am also looking through as much of Purcell's vocal music as I can. As I peruse the critical commentaries by such established performer/scholars as Howard Ferguson, Christopher Hogwood and Rudolph Steglich I begin to see that they are littered with notational anomalies that, on their own, may seem to be tiny idiosyncracies, but which combined with similar evidence in scores of other compositions, might add up to evidence too weighty to ignore.

It does indeed seem ironic that a year after Howard Ferguson's edition of the Purcell suites appeared (1964), with its tell-tale variants in the allemandes, Frederick Neumann was declaring that *inégalité* was only practised in France. It is a tragedy that so much time, energy - and, no

doubt money - has been wasted in attempting to dispose of Neumann's point of view that could have been spent doing useful, positive work.

BACH INÉGALE DAY II

Here is a report on the second Bach *Inégale* Day, which took place at East Devon College, Tiverton on May 21 1995. The following attended:

Alan Bartley (baroque flute, recorder) g

Catherine Bass (soprano) + g

Geoff Bass (bass) + g

Rosemary Berry (recorder) +

Colin Booth (harpsichord) g

John Broad (bass) g

Rosie Bruce (soprano) g

James Butler (listener)

Mary Carpenter (soprano)

Mary Coles (alto) g

Carol Crossman (listener)

Guy Crossman (tenor) g

Anne Curtis (alto) g

Bob Davis (recorder)

F.M. Deacon (listener)

Grace Dives (mezzo-soprano)

Ken Dives (tenor) g

John Draisey (bass) g

Cherry Gilchrist (alto)

Val Hind (viol) + g

Enid Hunt (soprano) +

Heather Kedge (alto) g

Rosemary Lamyman (soprano) g

Brenda McNicholls (alto) g

Chris Markwick (tenor) g

Tam Mucklow (flute) + g

Sue North (listener)

David Ponsford (harpsichord)

Geoff Pope (bass)

Helen Pope (alto) g

Sue Rivett (soprano) g

Paul Roberts (listener)

Claire Rowland (soprano, recorder)

Sylvia Samuel (soprano)

Delia Sharpe (soprano)
Prue Tasman (alto)
Mary Thomas (viol, alto) + g
David Toms (bass)
Jo Townsend (double bass) g
Margaret Warbis (alto) + g

+ attended BACH *INÉGALE* DAY 1994
g took part in BBC Gallery Choir concert Dec 1994

Apologies from Kenneth Mobbs, Reynold Swallow, Tom Warbis

The morning session

(Thanks to Celia Boden and Mary Thomas for transcribing the proceedings)

I started by playing the allemande from French suite 1. Maybe JS Bach did play his allemandes like this, but did we want to? Authenticity was voluntary. And if you do spend ages trying to find how Bach played his music you must be prepared not to like what you find. I spoke on artistic ancestor-worship - a favourite theme - and the harm it had done Bach..

A number of those attending Bach *Inégale* Day 94 had gone away enthusiastic about *inéga*les, especially Geoff and Catherine Bass and Rosemary Berry. The Unequal Notes Newsletters had been a great success and I owed a great deal to the contributors. I welcomed Colin Booth to the meeting - David Ponsford arrived in the afternoon.

Colin Booth spoke of the strong evidence for inequality before Bach. Was the expression '*inéga*les' too formal for what they actually did in those days? *Inéga*les should be treated as part of a wider context, which included the slow, strong pulse and an appropriate tempo. He spoke of Böhm, one of a number of French-influenced Germans who in turn was a strong influence on Bach (*Colin played a Böhm suite in the evening*).

I thanked Colin for sending me much useful material including a tape of a mechanical organ performing Handel. This was enregistered by John Christopher Smith, the younger, Handel's copyist. He considered that there was a lot of inequality in it but the only piece where I felt there was definitely *inéga*les was a minuet from Handel's *Samson*. (*This was played*). Colin had lately sent some notes taken by Dr Elsie Payne, a Somerset harpsichordist, from a lecture delivered in 1963 by Antoine Geoffroy-

Dechaume, who wrote a seminal book on *inégaies* and was an important influence on George Malcolm. I actually rang this lady and confirmed the details of this occasion.

I spoke warmly of **Kenneth Mobbs** and his contribution to the Newsletters. At first he had given me quite a hard time, finding the performances 'very oppressive en bloc'. But later on he came to like quite a bit of what I did on the tape, e.g. the D ma fugue (from Bk I of the 48) and the Eb major fugue (from Bk I). (*I played it*).

Cherry Gilchrist and **Grace Dives** spoke of the relationship between baroque rhythms and physical movement..There was more dancing in those days. Youngsters of today still like the heavy beat.

I pointed out how rhythm has been 'bled out' of so-called classical music ever since the days of Mozart. Maybe much of this process did not take place until our own century. Was this done to exalt the role of the performer and conductor? In orchestral music the conductor has now so de-rhythmicized the music that the players can no longer use their own sense of rhythm. This puts them totally in the hands of the conductor whom they have to watch constantly to find out where the next beat is. Soon they become a bag of nerves: no wonder they hate conductors.

There was a discussion about tempo. **Colin Booth** regarded the dance as a vital part of baroque culture and considered that rhythm in baroque music should be studied in connection with the dance. Each bar of 4/4 time had its own internal structure. This came first and then the notes were added. **Grace Dives** spoke of the importance of considering costume when calculating dance tempo.

Someone mentioned my recent St John Passion: some people had found the tempi rather slow. I pointed out that ones reaction to a new interpretation was a complicated one. There is a clash between what you hear and what you expect to hear. Perhaps Bach's contemporaries listened to music less intensely than we do. Did later composers, like Beethoven, come to demand more from their listeners? Was it to do with music's status as a profession? Even Haydn had to wear a servant's livery. Did music have a lower status than e.g. literature and philosophy in Bach's day?

Geoff Pope did not feel that Bach would write works like the B minor mass, with their great depth, for them to be treated as background music. **Cherry Gilchrist** felt that music already had a high status in the Renaissance cosmology.

After coffee I presented the following conundrum to the group.

In early 18th century France the Notes that went **four to a beat** were usually unequal. Since the **minim** was usually the beat, the **quavers** were usually *inégaies*, as here

Rameau *Les Indes Galantes*

but outside France the **crotchet** was usually the beat.

Q. What would happen if a French cellist tried to play an Italian running bass like this?

Corelli, Op.6 no. 3, 4th mvt. 1712

A. The cellist would play the quavers *inégaies*.

Q. If you were a contemporary musician writing a cello tutor, what advice would you put in your tutor to prevent this?

A. Play the quavers equal in Italian or foreign music.

Q. You are a 20th century scholar looking for evidence of *inégaies*. You come upon the words 'play the quavers equal in Italian or foreign music'. What conclusion do you draw from this?

A. That *inégaies* were only used in France.

But this is a fallacy - why?

One member of the group, **Claire Rowland**, spotted the logical flaw here:

If the crotchet became the beat, though quavers would indeed be equal, the *inégalité* would pass to the semiquavers, since these now went 4-to-the-beat..

I commended Stephen Hefling's new book, *Rhythmic Alteration in 17th- and 18th-century Music*, referring to the quotation from Anselm Bayly, Subdean of the Chapel Royal, dated 1771, which seems to document the decline of *inégaies* (see p 53). A review I have written of this book should appear in *The Musical Times* soon. Does CPE Bach's music show any evidence of *inégaies*? someone asked. **Colin Booth** thought there was more of an overlap than is usually accepted. Early CPE Bach often suggested *inégaies* but his later work moved away from the dance base as he embraced sonata form.

Then I started talking about allemandes. For me they had become the focal point of the year. (*The next few paragraphs quote from the Inégaies Day booklet*). When I took up my *inégaies* work again in 1993 I chose to make the allemande a starting-point. I wanted to focus on the absurdity that, while scholars and performers agree that French allemandes should be played *inégaie*, few would play Bach that way. I would argue that there is no essential difference between a Couperin allemande and a Bach one. We only play the French one *inégaie* because certain French theorists say that is how they were played in France. As for Bach the position is nothing like so clear but I have claimed for years that the evidence produced by Neumann (a leading American scholar who has recently died) and others

against playing Bach *inégale* has been misinterpreted. I am referring mainly to passages in

a) The flute tutor of JJ Quantz (18th century flautist at the court of Frederick the Great in Potsdam) whose evidence has been discounted by Neumann but I would say for inadequate reasons

b) Statements in French sources which have seemed to say that *inégaies* were not used in foreign music. I would say that this applied to quavers but not semiquavers.

These arguments are laid out in detail in my JAMS article (see bibliography) and in my recent self-published paper '*The Case for Inégaies in JS Bach*' 1995.

I have David Ponsford and Colin Booth to thank for alerting me to the important *inégaies* evidence lying on our doorstep here in England. The suites of Purcell and Croft both contain allemandes which are notated completely differently in two sources: one source has plain semiquavers, the other written out dotted rhythms. This can be seen illustrated at ex 1 and ex 2. For comparison I have included a part of the Couperin allemande from ordre 2 and the Bach allemande from French suite 1 which I deal with in my paper.

This English material, available in print for many years and in good editions since the late 60s and early 70s, make it plain that the *inégaies* convention was practised in England in the late 17th and early 18th century. They still do not prove that Bach used the convention but they make it a little more likely that he did. The most conservative view of the situation is that Purcell and Croft had copied the *inégaies* convention from France: **David Ponsford** subscribes to this view. The more I have looked into the history of the allemande, however, (see my paper, part III, section 4) the more it seems to me that the style is basically a German one, as you would expect from its name. Admittedly it acquired certain French characteristics, especially the *style brisé* texture, which comes from lute music. This style is surely established in the music of Froberger and Louis Couperin (mid-17th century). This can be confirmed by a glance at exx 3 and 4. I would claim that it is this style that was copied all over Europe, in France by d'Anglebert and François Couperin, in England by Purcell and Croft and in Germany by Pachelbel and Böhm and ultimately by JS Bach.

Since *inégaes* were obviously so vital to the performance of French and English allemandes the idea that the German allemandes should somehow be excepted from this convention seems more and more unlikely.

Ex 1: JJ FROBERGER Allemande from Suite 2 (before 1649)

Ex 2: L. COUPERIN, d. 1665 Allemande from Suite 22

Ex 3: PURCELL (1659-1695) Allemande from Suite no 3 in G

Ex 4: CROFT (1678-1727) Allemande from Suite 1 in C

Ex 5: F. COUPERIN Allemande 'La Laborieuse' from ordre 2 (1713)

Ex 6: JS BACH Allemande from French suite 1 (1722-5)

(*Back to Inégale day*). When I played the allemande from Froberger's 2nd suite **Colin Booth** admitted that *inéga*les works fine with these but pointed out that, since he did not write preludes, Froberger may have intended his allemandes to be played 'subjectively and slowly', in prelude style. He felt that this allowed one to give more space to the little notes. Then I played two of the English allemandes that Colin and David Ponsford had alerted me about. The first, from Purcell's Suite 3 in G, survives in a version with very few dots (Christ Church MS 1177) and another with almost continuous dotting (1st and 3rd edition). Then I played the allemande from Croft's Suite 1 in C, where similar discrepancies occur between two MS sources (there is no autograph). Then the time ran out.

Organ music at St Peter's

The company moved up to St Peter's, to hear the magnificent organ there - built by John Christopher Smith and rebuilt by Father Willis, with work on the choir by Noel Mander. I played 'Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland', 'Lobt Gott, ihr Christen, allzugleich', and 'Christ lag in Todesbanden' from the *Orgelbüchlein*. I pointed out how the *suspirans*, out of which the allemande style was formed, was a ubiquitous feature of Bach's organ music. I showed how it comes throughout the Partite and even begins some of the preludes. I played the preludes from BWV 533 (in e), BWV 545 (in C) and BWV 536 (in A) to prove my point. I stressed how I had learnt these pieces as a youth and mentioned how unexplained awkwardnesses, like the baldness of the chordal section of the e minor, and pedal problems, as in the C major prelude, had now fallen into place for me. I even went on to play the A major fugue *inéga*le, admitting that it was really out of my field, since I had been strictly confining my studies to 4/4 time!

The evening concert - taking part were
Colin Booth, David Ponsford and myself (harpsichord)

THE LOWMAN SINGERS

Catherine Bass, Mary Carpenter, Sue Rivett, Rosie Bruce, Anne Curtis, Heather Kedge, Chris Markwick, Guy Crossman, John Draisey, John Broad

In Cantata 106: Catherine Bass (soprano), Anne Curtis (alto), Chris Markwick (tenor), John Draisey (bass)

Alan Bartley, Rosemary Berry (baroque flute and recorder), Alison Mallett, Valerie Hind, Mary Thomas (bass viol), Jo Townsend (double bass)

Colin Booth kindly allowed us to share the use of his harpsichord.

For this rather impromptu concert we returned to the Lecture Theatre at East Devon College. Colin Booth started with a suite by Böhm in which he made judicious use of *inégaies*. Then David Ponsford, who had arrived during the day, played the preludes and fugues in C and b from Book I of the 48 - without *inégaies* but with great artistry. Afterwards someone said that I should have pointed out that David Ponsford was not using *inégaies* in his performances. Maybe - but I hesitate to theorize too much in a concert situation. Similarly someone made the point that I should have demonstrated what 'Fürchte dich nicht' sounds like *égale*. I can see that this could have been educational but something inhibits me from doing this. Perhaps I feel that it would sound like mockery; or maybe I like to allow a certain mystery to shroud the performances. The result, though, is likely be that ordinary people can't hear anything different about an *inégaie* performance. Is this a good or a bad thing?

There followed 'Fürchte dich nicht', sung by 10 local singers (one to a part except for the sopranos). I had put a lot of thought and effort into this performance, hoping that the quality of the singing would add persuasiveness to my arguments. I had prepared a tape, which I sent to every singer well in advance. I chose a steady tempo, crotchet = 60, and made the *inégaies* as inconspicuous as possible. While making the tape I was amazed at how convincing the style was. The *inégaies* didn't have all that much to do with it; it was the stronger, slower pulse and the feeling of swing that did it. It was only in the infrequent melismas that the *inégaies* rose to the surface. It wasn't that the *inégaies* transformed the music. It was more that, given the energy and swing that the music already had, equal semiquavers would sound rather boring and inappropriate. Equal semiquavers do sound boring at crotchet = 60. At a typical modern tempo (e.g. crotchet = 90) they sound strong and lively while of course *inégaies* sound frenetic and over-the-top at this speed. The faces of the singers showed how well our 'Fürchte' worked. Gone was the breathlessness and strain of many modern performances.

I shall be happy to send a cassette of our 'Fürchte dich nicht' performance: £2 including postage and packing.

After the interval came Cantata 106, which we had rehearsed in the afternoon. This had not received the careful preparation of the motet but the solo singers and instrumentalists had had a good look at their parts beforehand. *Inégales* throughout, of course. People who knew the work complained at the new rhythms in the sonatina, which I took fairly briskly. In the first chorus I aimed at crotchet = 60, but not everyone found the springy beat that I was looking for. I am not sure that the tempo relationship between the 4/4 and the 3/4 sections was correct: I made quaver = quaver. But in the alto and bass solos (starting at '*In deine Hände*') the viols began to weave an unequal magic and the alternating *suspirans* figures under the alto cantus firmus sounded pretty authentic. In the final fugue I listened to the rising (*superiectio*?) figures with great attention - if my theories are correct this is how Renaissance musicians must have improvised over a bare crotchet fugue subject. Could I be right?

I then played the f# and c preludes from Book II of the 48 on Colin's harpsichord and a further performance of '*Fürchte dich nicht*' took place. In the end the performance that went on the tape was a composite one, with a rather clever splice in the middle.

Here are some extracts from the booklet that accompanied the conference. I wrote of the evening concert programme:

It is purely a coincidence that the two major works being performed tonight are about death. But if this shows that *inégaless* are not just associated with happy events, so be it. I chose Cantata 106 because it is very early and therefore unlikely to be contaminated with the new 'equal' style that we know overtook inequality in the mid-18th century (associated with Vivaldi and the Italian concerto?). The motet '*Fürchte dich nicht*' is a later work but I chose it because I have some excellent singers at my disposal and what the *inégaless* cause needs more than anything is persuasive performances. As soon as I started preparing for this piece it felt 'right'. Conventional performances of these motets tend to sound rushed and confused - I hope you will agree that the *inégaless* version, with its significantly slower tempo, is very convincing.

Towards greater authenticity (*I quote from the booklet*)

Though *inégaless* have claimed much of my attention over the years they now play only a small part in my approach to baroque music. Tempo,

articulation and accentuation (including bowing, tonguing and voice production) now seem just as important. But without *inégaies* I should not have started to embrace the slower tempi that for me have opened a new window into the repertoire. Slower tempi create a profound change in the performer's psychology. He becomes more relaxed and begins to take charge of the music instead of being swept along by it. The power of the pulse increases and, proportionately, the power of the conductor diminishes until you don't need one. Instead of gliding over the pulse as you do at fast tempi you sink down into it. It is a warm, satisfying feeling. And then the *inégaies* celebrate it, like icing on the cake. All this makes the music both more earthy and more showy so that it comes closer to the costume and decor of the period. I find that gives a strong feeling of authenticity and an unusually clear view of the composer's vision.

I appended this bibliography, which readers may find helpful:

A SHORT INÉGALES BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Claire A. Fontijn, 'Quantz's *unegal*: implications for the performance of 18th-century music (*Early Music*, Feb. 1995)

John Byrt, *The Case for Inégales in JS Bach*, 1995

Since I have run out of space in this issue, I will carry over my next item of revisions from Donington until next time.

JOHN BYRT