

Reflection on the JS Bach's Music and Faith

One of the events held by St Paul's Forum at The Royal Foundation of St Katherine Saturday 14 March 2015.

I enrolled because I wanted to gain new knowledge and understanding with regard to Bach's music and in particular his choral music.

The speaker for the day was Andrew Carwood who is the current Director of Music at St Paul's Cathedral. He is an internationally regarded Singer and Conductor he is also the Founder Director of The Cardinal's Musick.

The talk commenced with some biographical details of Bach's life and career and a helpful map of modern Germany enabled me to see the towns that he was associated with during his life time.

Bach was a prodigious composer he would write a cantata for the local church on a weekly basis. After his death his music was catalogued and today we reference his work according to the catalogue number BWV.

His clear expression of faith in the B Minor mass is exemplified in the credo which is one of hope and joy. Bach in composing music was like a visual artist but with the use of sound he painted drama and created a musical picture.

The B Minor Mass has 9 movements divided into three for each movement to reflect the journey of Birth, Life and Death. The choice of voices reflect the emotion of the story for example the bass in the first movement is the walking bass to convey the heavy cross being carried by Jesus. In the Fugue he uses the melody to convey the subject the bass enters at the same time but at a different pitch the 3rd voice comes in singing the theme of the story.

Bach's music emphasises is one of, that life is not static but one of flexibility to grow and develop. We are on a life long journey for whom the journey is to arrive at home.

Bach expressed his faith in his music. Whilst he was a prolific composer throughout his life he always produced music of high quality. He did not write for the theatre as his contemporary Handel but used the Christian liturgy to create drama and theatre within the church.

In summary not only did I learn about Bach's life and beliefs but also musical composition and so I have an enhanced understanding of the music and adds to my enjoyment of the works of Bach.