

THE ARTS

Scotsman 16 June 1977

## Bach at St Cecilia's

By CONRAD WILSON

THE ANNUAL Jazz Invention has become one of the most popular events in Edinburgh University's cycle of Bach at St Cecilia's Hall. Usually the programme involves two bands — a Bach-inspired piano trio and a somewhat larger, more rumbustious group — but on Tuesday evening the formula was somewhat changed. This time there were Peter Williams and Miles Baster to perform some (more or less) straight Bach on harpsichord and violin, in alternation with Raymond Monelle's trio, who played jazz impressions of the same pieces.

It was an attractive idea which worked well enough most of the time, especially in the E-flat major French Suite, in which Mr Monelle incorporated a lovely, juicy version of the sarabande. In the E major sonata for violin and harpsichord, Mr Baster kept a foot

in both camps, as it were, because after giving a nice, light-toned account of it with Peter Williams he went on and supplied a violin obbligato to the jazz trio's version.

As a first shot at the Grapelli idiom it was perhaps a little cautious, more successful in the allegro second movement than in the two slow movements, where Mr Baster seemed short of improvisatory ideas. But by next year he will probably be swinging more confidently, and by that time, too, the jazz trio will have developed their adaption of the fifth Brandenburg Concerto.

This seemed on Tuesday an ambitious addition to their repertoire, complete with a jazz piano cadenza in the first movement in place of Bach's harpsichord one. Though still at an interim stage, it was a performance with considerable potential.

## Music in the University

### Bach at St Cecilia's programme May 28-June 14

Bach at St Cecilia's 1977 opens on Saturday, May 28, with a concert of Handel's string trios and chamber duets, sung by Margaret Aronson and Ivor Klayman, played by Christopher Field and Elizabeth Robinson and directed from the keyboard by David Kimbell. The extraordinary panache of this composer is nowhere better heard than in such pieces, and his fluency and sense of melody will create striking contrast with the thoughtful melodiousness of the concert on the following evening, May 29. This will be devoted to the first third of "The 48", i.e. beginning with C major Book I and ending with the G minor, played on harpsichords by Peter Williams. Prefacing this second concert will be the first of the 1977 Bach lectures, given by Michael Tilmouth and bringing the first of three different approaches to "The 48"; the Old Testament of music, as it was called by the most influential Edinburgh musician of this century.

Bach at St Cecilia's Hall 1977 is the ninth series of concerts, now established as a regular "festival" in St Cecilia's devoted principally to the chamber music of J. S. Bach and taking place over the last weekend of May and the first two of June. This year, three of the concerts and all three lectures will centre attention on the *Well-tempered Clavier* (or "The 48" as it became known in Britain), played by Peter Williams on two harpsichords of the Russell Collection: a Ruckers instrument of 1637 rebuilt in the 18th century and a late French harpsichord of the decadent period, when in tone variety and sensuousness harpsichords were competing with pianos. Although many pieces of "The 48" suit other instruments—clavichords, organ and even the early fortepiano—only the harpsichord manages to convey the rich texture variety and staggering inventiveness of *all* the pieces in the collection. This particular pair of instruments should bring out the character of the traditional counterpoint on one hand and the new stylistic experiments on the other. Every keyboard-player in the world, at whatever level, has worked on one or other piece of this extraordinary album, but the majesty of the conception can be sensed only when the 96 pieces begin to unfold their beauty one by one.

The four other concerts in the 1977 series are in complete contrast to "The 48". On May 28, David Kimbell directs a small vocal and instrumental ensemble in chamber duets and trio sonatas by Handel, whose work in these Italian idioms was scarcely surpassed by his grandiose achievements in any other. On June 4, Herrick Bunney directs a specially assembled choir for a performance of three of J. S. Bach's motets, including the well-known double motet *Jesu, meine freude*. It has gradually become clearer that these works were not sung unaccompanied as was once thought, so that on this occasion a full continuo group will back the choirs. The programmes will also be interspersed by relevant chorale-preludes played on the 17th-century chamber organ by Herrick Bunney.

On June 11, the recital will consist of four works by Paul Hindemith: the trombone sonata, the flute sonata, the piano-duet sonata and the 3rd Quartet, all played by members of the Faculty. It has been customary to include a 20th-century concert with the Bach series, and Hindemith was a natural choice for a series that is to include the great Album of Counterpoint so admired by the best fugue-writer of this century.

Finally, on June 14, the Raymond Monelle Trio rounds off the series with a jazz concert, concentrating this year on the Trio's own arrangements of Bach works, in which they will be joined by Miles Baster, leader of the Edinburgh Quartet and rarely if ever seen on the jazz platform. P. W.

### Programme

Saturday, May 28, 8 p.m.  
*Trio Sonatas & Duet Cantatas by Handel*—directed by David Kimbell.

Sunday, May 29, 8 p.m.  
*Well-tempered Clavier* Nos. 1-16—Peter Williams.

Saturday, June 4, 8 p.m.  
*Motets for 2 Choirs*—Bach Motet Choir directed by Herrick Bunney.

Sunday, June 5, 8 p.m.  
*Well-tempered Clavier* Nos. 17-24 & 25-32—Peter Williams.

Saturday, June 11 8 p.m.  
*Chamber Music by Hindemith*—Sonatas for trombone, for flute, for 2 pianos, String Quartet no. 3.

Sunday, June 12, 8 p.m.  
*Well-tempered Clavier* Nos. 33-48—Peter Williams.

Tuesday, June 14, 8 p.m.  
*A Jazz Invention*—Raymond Monelle Trio, Miles Baster, violin.

*Lectures* (admission free) at 7 p.m.—May 29 (Michael Tilmouth); June 5 (Raymond Monelle); June 12 (Hans Gal).

*Light Refreshments* between lecture and concert, May, 29; June 5 and 12.

Tickets from Edinburgh Bookshop and Concert Secretary, Music Faculty, 12 Nicolson Square (Ext. 2424). Concert 75p (students 35p). Jazz Invention 60p. Light Refreshments £1. Any 6 concerts £4.

### ... and this week

On May 12 the Edinburgh Quartet will be joined by the distinguished clarinettist Keith Pearson in performances of clarinet quintets by Mozart and the Scottish composer John McLeod. The programme will also include the rarely played but very characteristic String Quartet by César Franck. K. L.