



Seminar

RUTH TATLOW

Fellow, SCAS.

Visiting Researcher, Department of Musicology, Uppsala University

*Reading Belief through Structural Ordering,
1700–1850*

Tuesday, 31 March 2020, 2:15 p.m.

In the Thunberg Lecture Hall
SCAS, Linneanum, Thunbergsvägen 2, Uppsala
www.swedishcollegium.se

S W E D I S H
C O L L E G I U M
for ADVANCED STUDY

ABOUT RUTH TATLOW

After studying the clarinet at the Royal Academy of Music, London, Ruth Tatlow completed a BMus in 1983 at King's College, University of London, winning the Purcell Prize. She was then awarded a PhD in music theory and analysis in 1987, funded by a scholarship from the British Academy and a DAAD stipend to spend a semester at Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen.

Tatlow's background as a practical musician motivates her interest in musical structure. Her rediscovery of the history of the paragram form is published in *Bach and the Riddle of the Number Alphabet* (Cambridge, 1991, 2006). Her second monograph, *Bach's Numbers: Compositional Proportion and Significance* (Cambridge, 2015), awarded Choice's 'Outstanding Academic Title 2016' award, features the source-based foundations and demonstrations of her ground breaking theory of proportional parallelism. She has taught at the universities of London and Stockholm, and at Rochester's Eastman School of Music, NY. In 2004 she co-founded Bach Network, and in 2006 designed its open access, peer-reviewed journal *Understanding Bach*, which she co-edited until 2017. She serves as chair of the Bach Network Council and is a member of the editorial board of the American Bach Society.

During her time at SCAS, Tatlow will explore the transmission of proportional thinking by studying compositions by composers who took Bach's music and methods as a model, and by investigating the changing ideals and significance of proportional ordering and symmetry in writings by contemporary German thinkers. This is part of a larger study towards her third monograph on Bach and number.

ABSTRACT

The ancient belief system of Universal Harmony, based on the proportions of musical acoustics, was generally thought to have died out by 1699. I was therefore surprised to discover that J. S. Bach used the old proportional principles in the structures of his publications, until his death in 1750. Music treatises of his time show that the belief system had become intertwined with the Lutheran view of music. But what happened after Bach? I thought that even if the proportional ideals were transmitted by his sons and students, the transmission would stop there, not least because of the increasing secularisation of society. But the reality turned out to be far more complex.

In this illustrated exploration I will demonstrate how structural ordering can tell us about a composer's philosophy and choices, and why this is important. Musical examples will include Bach's Prelude in C major, BWV 846 (1721) and Chopin's 24 *Préludes*, Opus 28 (1839).