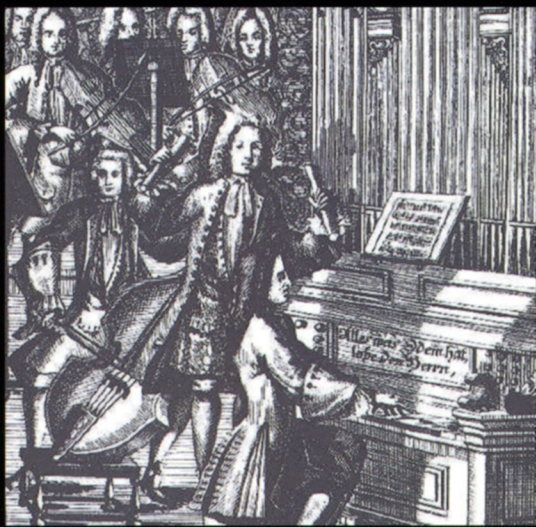


organ music - orgelwerke

Dietrich Buxtehude



David Hamilton

Aubertin organ of Kings' College Chapel,
University of Aberdeen

DIETRICH BUXTEHUDE (c.1637-1707)

- | | | |
|-----|--|--------|
| 1. | Praeludium in G minor, <i>BuxWV 149</i> | [8.35] |
| 2. | Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern, <i>BuxWV 223</i> | [8.36] |
| 3. | Vater unser in Himmelreich, <i>BuxWV 219</i> | [2.51] |
| 4. | Nun lob, mein Seel' den Herren, <i>BuxWV 212</i> | [3.55] |
| 5. | Ciacona (Chaconne) in C minor, <i>BuxWV 159</i> | [6.46] |
| 6. | In dulci jubilo, <i>BuxWV 197</i> | [1.53] |
| 7. | Magnificat primi toni, <i>BuxWV 203</i> | [9.08] |
| 8. | Ich ruf zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ, <i>BuxWV 196</i> | [3.37] |
| 9. | Praeludium in F sharp minor, <i>BuxWV 146</i> | [8.10] |
| 10. | Ach Herr, mich armen Sünder, <i>BuxWV 178</i> | [3.49] |
| 11. | Fuga in C major, <i>BuxWV 174</i> | [3.07] |
| 12. | Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland, <i>BuxWV 211</i> | [1.53] |
| 13. | Praeludium in C major, <i>BuxWV 137</i> | [5.36] |

total CD duration: **[69.25]**

Played by DAVID HAMILTON

at the Aubertin organ of Kings' College Chapel, the University of Aberdeen

dda 25041

Dietrich Buxtehude was born around 1637, probably in Helsingborg, and died on 9 May 1707 in Lübeck. As Organist at Lübeck's Marienkirche for nearly forty years he occupied one of the most prestigious posts in North-Germany, a post made even more famous during his illustrious tenure. For many years after his death, his fame was as much a result of his compositions as for the journey and stay made by a young J S Bach during the winter of 1705-06. Indeed the stories surrounding Bach's visit have shed an interesting light on the relationship between master and pupil, but the fact is that they tell us more about Bach than about Buxtehude. Thankfully, the last fifty years have seen a revival of interest in Buxtehude and his work to the point where nowadays it is not uncommon for organ recital programmes to include his works without these being paired with some by his more celebrated student.

There are gaps in our knowledge about Buxtehude for instance the details of his birth and education. The fact that not one of his organ works was published in his lifetime or that any autograph copies survive also presents some difficulties. We do know a good deal about the types of instruments he played and which inspired him, and this

knowledge is hugely beneficial in guiding the performer. The large instruments in wealthy cities like Lübeck and Hamburg had three or four manuals and pedals, each furnished with a complete range of stops. In terms of variety of registration, the possibilities were almost infinite: from the quietest stop on each division of the organ to the complete ensemble; the pedals could be used to underpin the texture with a solid bass or to play the *cantus firmus* in any chosen voice range; vocally influenced principal stops as well as instrumentally influenced reed and flute stops are usually found on each division of the instrument. The division of pipes into smaller groups or *Werk* enables the playing of a solo line on the *Rückwerk* – the pipes of which are always closest to the congregation – with the accompaniment on another, more distant department; and this spatial aspect allows for wonderfully idiomatic writing whereby a repeated phrase, played on a different keyboard, produces an echo effect. While the musical scores of this entire repertory give little indication of the composers' registration intentions, the instruments offer a wealth of suggestions.

Buxtehude's surviving organ works number about

ninety and may be divided into two types, chorale-free and chorale-based. Most of his chorale-free works are composed in the *stylus phantasticus*, a style which was common in seventeenth-century North-German organ composition. These pieces – usually called *Praeludium* – alternate sections of freer and stricter writing, typically improvisatory and fugal, but there is no set pattern: in Buxtehude's *Praeludia*, the number of sections ranges from three to nine and the non-fugal portions range between exuberant semiquavers and slow-moving Italian influenced chordal passages. Another form which Buxtehude explores frequently is the Ground Bass (sometimes called *Ciaccona/Chaconne* or *Passacaglia*), where a theme in the bass is repeated with variations in the upper voices.

Most of Buxtehude's chorale-based works are short, functional chorale preludes, though such a blanket description does not do justice to the richness of invention he brings to their composition. These would have introduced the chorale to the congregation of the Marienkirche prior to their singing of it. Of the longer works, there are variation sets and extended fantasias, where elements of the *stylus phantasticus* are

brought into play. Their likely use would have been as concluding voluntaries, or in concerts at the Marienkirche.

This recording, made in the tercentenary of his death, presents a representative selection of Buxtehude's organ works. In the Aubertin organ in King's College, Aberdeen University, an ideal instrument was found in terms of flexibility, variety of colour and sheer beauty of sound. Musical examples are printed at the end of the notes.



THE MUSIC

There is no doubting the maturity of the *Praeludium in G minor* (BuxWV 149) in emotional depth or the skill which permeates its conception. It is a supreme example of the *stylus phantasticus*, comprising several sections of contrasting character and form; yet Buxtehude derives his themes for the entire piece from the first fugue subject. Cascades of notes at the outset prepare for the entry of the pedal with what turns out to be a ground bass theme [Ex1]. Then the first fugue [Ex2] – rhythmically and harmonically

plain, almost old-fashioned after the towering opening – dissolves into a brief passage of daring harmonic progressions, thematically unrelated but with a slow-moving pedal part [Ex3] which retains the shape of part of the theme. This is followed in turn by an interlude where the bass line has the bulk of the interest [Ex4]. A substantial second fugue [Ex5] in triple metre comes next with a rhythmically punchy subject. This concludes with a reversal of the plan of the opening: a brief ground bass followed by a final outpouring of notes. It is a plan which has been carefully created to provide contrast between neighbouring sections and the organisation of thematic material is no less careful: all of the themes are linked. Yet to evaluate a piece like this solely in these terms is to ignore the power and *Affekt* of the work as a whole for this is one of the finest pieces in the North-German repertory and testament to Buxtehude's compositional genius and the sublime instruments which inspired him.

It was in 1597 when he was Lutheran Pastor in Unna (Westphalia) that Philipp Nicolai wrote the seven verses of the famous chorale *Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern*. Buxtehude's two verse setting (BuxWV 223) is undoubtedly one of his

most popular works. This is partly due to the lively dance-like quality which pervades the piece and also the lightly textured writing – much of it two or three part. Most of the first verse is treated in a fragmentary way by Buxtehude, inviting frequent registration changes; the final phrase however is set in a continuous fabric of flowing quavers, and occupies about half of the verse's 135 bars. It is as if Buxtehude has been particularly inspired by a single feature – possibly the melody (a descending major scale) or the text ('highly and magnificently exalted'). Likewise, in his second verse, a *Gigue*, he deviates from a fugal approach to each phrase briefly in the middle portion ('sing, leap, rejoice, triumph' in Nicolai's sixth verse). An interesting comparison with *Wie schön* is the traditional Baroque keyboard suite, which invariably concluded with a *Gigue*.

In 1701 the Marienkirche church authorities decided to hang hymn boards on the church wall as few of the congregation were able to recognise the hymn melodies from Buxtehude's preludes based on them. In *Vater unser im Himmelreich* (BuxWV 219), Buxtehude takes care to start each phrase of the soprano line with long notes, emphasising the melody, but cannot resist adding

a range of melodic, harmonic and rhythmic ornaments as each phrase progresses. His most audacious treatment is of the final phrase where the melody has a surprising unaccompanied leap and spans over two octaves.

Buxtehude's C major setting of the thanksgiving chorale *Nun lob, mein Seel' den Herren* (BuxWV212) is one of the composer's most joyful creations, with a lively figuration from the outset. In it, each phrase is repeated on a different keyboard, achieving an echo effect. This simple technique, more often found in larger chorale fantasias, is ideally suited to the organ and allows the organist to demonstrate a range of the instrument's colours. It is only in the final portion of the piece that the quaver motion is dissipated and the work arrives at its peaceful conclusion.

The *Ciacona in C minor* (BuxWV 159) is one of Buxtehude's three surviving organ works in ostinato form. The theme [Ex6] lasts only four bars and is quite straightforward, but, as such, allows the composer considerable inventive freedom in the variations. The work falls into four sections of similar length and Buxtehude exercises his imagination in many different ways and on

different levels: the focus of a variation might be melodic, harmonic or rhythmic; textures range between two and five part; at various times, the pedals have the original theme, decorated versions of it, a walking pattern and sometimes nothing at all; rhythmic figures are developed gradually over several variations or more suddenly, in the course of a single variation. As is usually the case in this repertory, there are no surviving registration directions from the composer which allows the organist considerable freedom in shaping their interpretation.

In his charming setting of the Christmas chorale *In dulci jubilo* (BuxWV 197), Buxtehude creates a mood of joy in the lively figuration of both the solo line and the accompanying parts, and in the rich harmonic suspensions which abound, particularly in the pedal part. A heightened sense of anticipation is achieved in the final phrase during which the pedals have four bars' rest and a remarkable chromatic passage appears in the remaining accompanying parts.

The free structure of the *Magnificat primi toni* (BuxWV 203) suggests that it was probably not intended for alternation performance with a choir

but rather was used as a concluding voluntary at the Marienkirche. More importantly, it is a rare example of a work in which Buxtehude combines elements of the *stylus phantasticus* with a chorale theme. The opening section achieves three goals: that of an introductory flourish; capturing the sense of the opening text ('My soul doth magnify the Lord'); outlining the start of the chant (F-G-A). Subsequent sections of the *Magnificat* also illustrate this triple function: using specific notes of the chant as thematic material whilst conveying the general mood of the text and contrasting with the character of neighbouring sections. Spaced throughout the work's ten sections are four which are fugal: given the influence of *stylus phantasticus*, it is worth noting that the last fugal section is followed by a final improvisatory flourish which balances the opening, as frequently happens in the *Praeludia*. The flexibility of the Aubertin organ allowed a varied registration scheme where full choruses, smaller combinations and single stops were all used and pitch was based at 16', 8' or 4' levels.

Buxtehude's *Ich ruf zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ* (BuxWV 196) owes much to an earlier style of composition, for example that of his predecessor

at the Marienkirche (and father-in-law), Franz Tunder. The melody is first presented unadorned but is subsequently worked, in a systematic way, through a series of figurations (including triplets, dotted rhythms, semiquaver scales). Furthermore, the melodic line migrates to the left hand and engages in complementary 2-part writing with the accompaniment during the extended postlude. These are features associated with chorale-variation sets but here Buxtehude transfers them to a single movement composition: not for the first time, he takes an existing form and moulds it afresh.

The *Praeludium in F# minor* (BuxWV 146) is one of the first pieces of keyboard music to be written in this key and a superb example of the *stylus phantasticus* with its combination of free and strict writing. An extended opening leads to the first fugue (*Grave*) whose subject contains the remarkable interval of a diminished 7th. This carries directly into a breathless second fugue (*Vivace*), the subject of which is fascinating rhythmically. There then follows a bold passage very much in the Italian *durezza* *e* *ligature* style (suspensions and dissonances) which wanders through several key centres,

thus providing a contrast with the previous fugue, which is harmonically unadventurous. The concluding 39 bars are a fusion of some of the preceding elements including figuration from both the second fugue [Ex7] and the work's opening bars [Ex8], and a fragment [Ex9] of *durezza e ligature* writing. Both fugues conclude with an echoed final phrase and Buxtehude achieves further symmetry in opening and closing the work over a tonic pedal point (in both cases nine bars in length). It is a compositional *tour de force* and one of the great standards in the organ repertory.

Based on Psalm 6, the penitential chorale *Ach Herr, mich armen Sünder* (BuxWV 178) elicits a reserved treatment from Buxtehude. Within the piece – which uses the same melody as the ‘Passion Chorale’ – he seems drawn to the imagery of the text of verse 1, particularly in the fourth line (‘otherwise I am lost’) where the melody falters, and the final line (‘and flee from the pains of hell’) where the pedal part twice has a rising scale.

The *Fuga in C major* (BuxWV 174) is a self-contained movement with a 12/8 time signature

and, as such, is unique among Buxtehude's extant works. It is possible that it once belonged to a longer multi-section piece, perhaps as the final fugue in a now lost *Praeludium*. In any case, it is a charming work which can be performed equally effectively on a plenum registration or, as here, on a single 4' Flute.

Despite being one of his shortest, Buxtehude's setting of the Advent chorale *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland* (BuxWV 211) shows several characteristic touches: the soprano melody is highly decorated and accompanied by three simpler voices; between phrases, these lower voices anticipate the next melodic shape; the work ends with an extrovert flourish in the soprano.

Often called Prelude, Fugue and Chaconne, the *Praeludium in C major* (BuxWV 137) has long been a favourite with organists and audiences alike. It begins with a pedal solo – one of the earliest organ pieces to do so – and continues in flamboyant fashion with abrupt cadences and demisemiquaver scales. The fugue which follows is altogether more playful, even breaking into a demisemiquaver scale at the end. A passage of

improvisatory character (including the by now obligatory demisemiquaver scale) leads directly to the short chaconne and even shorter concluding flourish (each with a demisemiquaver scale passage), bringing the work to a triumphant climax. So Buxtehude links an apparently disparate series of sections with the simplest of motives – a scale. And there is a subtler unifying touch – the melodically related themes. It is this balance between the spontaneous invention and technical mastery of compositional skill which characterises Buxtehude's greatest works.

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THE ABERDEEN AUBERTIN

The three manual organ in the medieval Chapel of King's College, University of Aberdeen, is the first organ in the UK by the celebrated French builder Bernard Aubertin. Housed on the screen, it is an all-mechanical action organ built on classical lines. The Principal choruses on the two upper manuals are complemented by the Flutes on the third, while the Cromhorne, Trumpet, Voix Humaine, Cornet and the mutations give the organ a wealth of tone colours, suitable for German, Italian and English and French repertoires. The

five stops on the pedals ensure the independence of the foundation of the instrument.

*Roger B Williams, Master of Chapel and
Ceremonial Music and Organist to the
University Of Aberdeen.*



THE ORGANIST

David Hamilton studied at the University of Glasgow, the North-German Organ Academy and Zwolle Conservatory with Stuart Campbell, Harald Vogel and Jos van der Kooy. He has performed throughout western Europe as well as in Lithuania, the Czech Republic, North America and Russia. He has recorded with Cappella Nova and for the BBC, and won third prize at the European Organ Improvisation Competition in 1990. He has a particular interest in music of the North-German Baroque (Sweelinck-Buxtehude) and its performing practices. He teaches at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama in Glasgow and the Music School of Douglas Academy.

Musical examples:

EX.1



EX.2



EX.3



EX.4



EX.5



EX.6



EX.7



EX.8



EX.9



Recording Engineer and Producer: Philip Hobbs

Post-Production and mastering: Julia Thomas

Recorded at Kings College Chapel, University of Aberdeen on 8 and 9 January 2007.

Original sound recording made by David Hamilton and issued under licence

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The Kings' College Organ

built by Bernard Aubertin (2004)

Playing and stop action: mechanical throughout

I

Flûte Traversière 8
Bourdon 8
Flûte 4
Flageolet 2
Quinte 1 1/3
Cornet V
Trompette 8
Voix humaine 8

II

Portunal 16
Montre 8
Gambe 8
Prestant 4
Mixture V-VII
Double Tierce 3 1/5

III

Principal 8
Bourdon 8
Portunal 4
Nazard 3
Doublette 2
Tierce 1 3/5
Mixture III
Cromhorne 8

Pedal

Principal 16
Octave 8
Prestant 4
Mixture V
Buzène 16

Couplers

I/II; II/I
II/III; III/II
I/P

Tremblant I & III
Tremblant II
Cornemuse

Compass

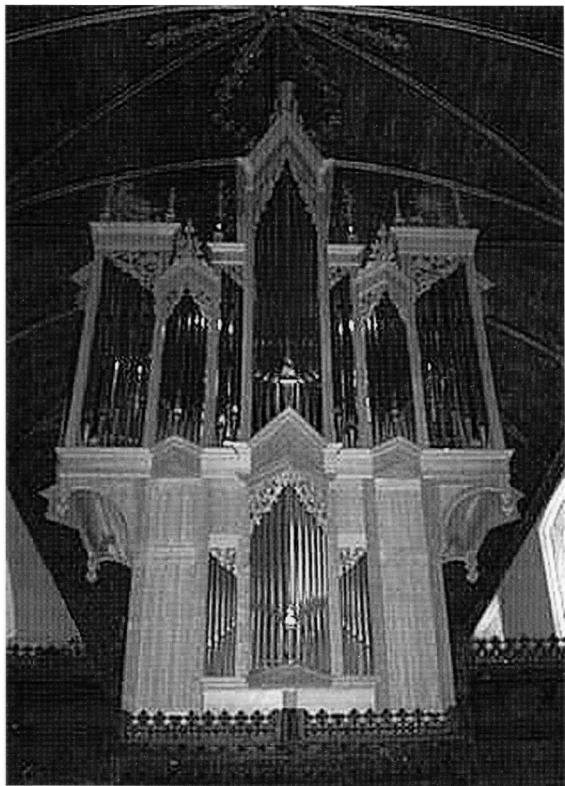
Manuals C-g^m 56 notes
Pedal C-f¹ 30 notes

Temperament – Young

**We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Dr. Roger Williams
and the University of Aberdeen's permission to use the organ in this recording.**

The Aubertin Organ

(photo: David Hamilton)





The console

(photo: David Hamilton)



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David Hamilton at the
Aberdeen Aubertin organ

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