



## Dietrich Buxtehude COMPLETE ORGAN WORKS

Simone Stella

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Dieterich Buxtehude (c. 1637/39–1707) was a Danish–German organist and composer of the Baroque period. His organ works represent a central part of the standard organ repertoire and are frequently performed at recitals and in church services. He composed in a wide variety of vocal and instrumental idioms, and his style strongly influenced many composers, including Johann Sebastian Bach. Today, Buxtehude is considered one of the most important composers in Germany of the mid-Baroque.

"There's no question that Stella has the proper Buxtehude style, which is to play with irregular meter and with the parts of both hands slightly out-of-synch much of the time, which creates a weird tension[...]" – Fanfare  
A master collection of which BBC Music Magazine said "An Italian eager to touch base with his inner Teuton, as [Simone] Stella sets well-ordered lucidity above unfettered flamboyance". A superb recording signed OnClassical, in perfect-stereo [2 microphones only], with total absence of any mastering effects, has obtained several prizes around the world's music magazines including the 5-Diapason prestigious mark.

## Track-list

Disc 1			Disc 4		
1	Praeludium in D, BuxWV 139	05:52:39	1	Ciacona in c, BuxWV 159	05:53:21
2	Erhalt uns Herr, bei deinem Wort, BuxWV 185	01:54:02	2	Ich dank dir, lieber Herre, BuxWV 194	05:40:16
3	Toccata in G (manualiter), BuxWV 164	03:20:85	3	Ach Gott und Herr, BuxWV 177	03:03:10
4	Danket dem Herren, denn er ist sehr freundlich, BuxWV 181	03:27:81	4	Ach Herr, mich armen S	03:44:66
5	Passacaglia in d, BuxWV 161	05:40:29	5	Praeludium in E, BuxWV 141	07:01:40
6	Canzonetta in a, BuxWV 225	01:44:99	6	Canzonetta in e, BuxWV 169	03:18:62
7	Praeludium in F, BuxWV 144	02:59:80	7	Jesus Christus, unser Heiland, BuxWV 198	01:58:48
8	Christ, unser Herr, zum Jordan kam, BuxWV 180	03:58:39	8	Canzona in g, BuxWV 173	01:29:41
9	Praeludium in e, BuxWV 143	05:12:65	9	Es ist das Heil uns kommen her, BuxWV 186	03:12:49
10	Nun lob, mein Seel, den Herren, BuxWV 212	03:21:88	10	Praeludium in C, BuxWV 136	06:07:18
11	Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott, BuxWV 184	03:33:33	11	Kommt her zu mir, spricht Gottes Sohn, BuxWV 201	03:21:57
12	Mensch, willst du leben seliglich, BuxWV 206	02:33:01	12	Praeludium in g, BuxWV 150	07:29:90
13	Canzona in d, BuxWV 168	04:07:19	13	Wir danken dir, Herr Jesu Christ, BuxWV 224	01:29:46
14	Magnificat primi toni, BuxWV 204	03:31:40	Disc 5		
15	Magnificat noni toni, BuxWV 205	03:20:64	1	Es spricht der Unweisen Mund wohl, BuxWV 187	03:12:53
16	Auf meinen lieben Gott, BuxWV 179	05:02:03	2	Nun lob, mein Seel, den Herren, BuxWV 214	03:07:90
17	Fantasia super Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ, BuxWV 188	08:59:50	3	Nun lob, mein Seel, den Herren, BuxWV 215	02:04:70
Disc 2			4	Praeludium in e, BuxWV 142	09:17:42
1	Fuge in B, BuxWV 176	04:25:50	5	Von Gott will ich nicht lassen, BuxWV 220	02:33:74
2	Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland, BuxWV 211	02:58:81	6	Vater unser im Himmelreich, BuxWV 219	03:22:44
3	Praeludium in g (manualiter), BuxWV 163	08:07:06	7	Praeludium in A, BuxWV 151	05:14:44
4	Herr Christ, der einig Gottes Sohn, BuxWV 191	03:26:70	8	Von Gott will ich nicht lassen, BuxWV 221	02:41:92
5	Praeludium in C, BuxWV 138	04:12:98	9	Praeludium in fis, BuxWV 146	07:50:26
6	Herr Christ, der einig Gottes Sohn, BuxWV 192	02:51:54	10	Herr Jesus Christ, ich wei	04:26:99
7	Canzona in G, BuxWV 171	02:18:56	11	Ich ruf zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ, BuxWV 196	03:50:06
8	Praeludium in G (manualiter), BuxWV 162	05:35:09	12	Praeludium in a, BuxWV 153	06:41:65
9	Wie schoen leuchtet der Morgenstern, BuxWV 223	06:39:12	13	Nimm von uns, Herr, du treuer Gott, BuxWV 207	08:40:16
10	Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ, BuxWV 189	01:42:67	14	Toccata in F, BuxWV 156	08:15:97
11	Canzonetta in C, BuxWV 167	01:16:36	Disc 6		
12	Praeludium in a, BuxWV 152	04:46:93	1	Magnificat primi toni, BuxWV 203	07:59:22
13	Canzona in C, BuxWV 166	04:53:10	2	Nun bitten wir den heiligen Geist, BuxWV 208	02:47:05
14	Toccata in F, BuxWV 157	04:23:76	3	Praeludium in g, BuxWV 149	08:10:18
15	Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin, BuxWV 76	08:26:21	4	Canzona in G, BuxWV 170	03:59:17
Disc 3			5	Nun bitten wir den heiligen Geist, BuxWV 209	02:42:95
1	Praeludium, Fuge und Ciaccona in C, BuxWV 137	05:42:18	6	Praeludium in d, BuxWV 140	06:20:91
2	Der Tag, der ist so freudenreich, BuxWV 182	03:44:21	7	Komm, heiliger Geist, Herre Gott, BuxWV 199	03:44:67
3	Praeludium in G, BuxWV 147	03:23:75	8	Praeludium in F, BuxWV 145	06:49:48
4	Puer natus in Bethlehem, BuxWV 217	01:05:14	9	Komm, heiliger Geist, Herre Gott, BuxWV 200	03:20:76
5	Fuga in G, BuxWV 175	03:13:37	10	Gott der Vater wohn uns bei, BuxWV 190	03:16:75
6	In dulci jubilo, BuxWV 197	01:53:73	11	Durch Adams Fall ist ganz verderbt, BuxWV 183	04:43:96
7	Praeambulum in a, BuxWV 158	05:54:02	12	Te Deum laudamus, BuxWV 218	15:43:78
8	Ciacona in e, BuxWV 160	05:24:81			
9	Canzonetta in G, BuxWV 172	02:14:98			
10	Lobt Gott, ihr Christen allzugleich, BuxWV 202	01:13:84			
11	Toccata in G (manualiter), BuxWV 165	05:23:97			
12	Nun lob, mein Seel, den Herren, BuxWV 213	06:32:08			
13	War Gott nicht mit uns diese Zeit, BuxWV 222	03:37:14			

## Dietrich Buxtehude

A declaration published in *Nova Literatura Maris Baltici* shortly after Buxtehude's death is the only information from the composer's own lifetime to have come down to us. 'He considered Denmark to be his fatherland', the article declared, 'when he came to our region. He lived to be around seventy.'

The surname Buxtehude derives from the town of the same name in Lower Saxony, which the musician's family left in the 16th century for Bad Oldesloe in Schleswig-Holstein. Here, between 1565 and 1590, there was a mayor named Buxtehude, whose nephew Johannes (1601-1674) – known as Hans – was to become Dietrich's father. Johannes was a teacher of German in Bad Oldesloe in 1638 as well as organist at the Marienkirche in Helsingborg, a town that is now in Sweden but was originally part of Denmark in 1641. Dietrich was probably born either in Bad Oldesloe or in Helsingborg in 1637, a date we know for sure thanks to Johann Møller's *Cimbria literata*.

Between 1641 and 1642 Johannes Buxtehude moved to Helsingør, a few miles west of Helsingborg, to take up the post of organist at the church of St Olai (where he remained until 1671). This is where Dietrich spent his childhood, in all likelihood attending the school of Latin attached to the church, which had a well-stocked library and provided lessons in music and voice. The musicologist André Pirro suggests that Buxtehude completed a course of studies in 1650 with Johann Lorentz the Younger (circa 1610-1689), an organist in Copenhagen who introduced the young man to the works of northern German masters such as Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck and Heinrich Scheidemann. Though some biographers have maintained that he also studied in Hamburg and in Lübeck, others believe this to be unlikely, arguing instead that Dietrich was a pupil of Claus Dengel's in Helsingør, where he would have been introduced to the classical works of the period. This latter version would appear to make sense, given that his father's income would hardly have allowed Dietrich to travel widely.

In 1657 or early 1658, Dietrich Buxtehude took up the post of organist at the Marienkirche in Helsingborg, returning to Helsingør in 1660 to become organist of the Marienkirche in that town. Despite leaving Helsingborg, his relationship with the authorities there continued to be cordial, and in 1662 he was invited back to test the newly restored organ in his old church.

he came into contact with Marcus Meibomius, the publisher of early treatises on musical theory, and Gustaf Düben, thanks to whom a great deal of Buxtehude's music has come down to us. Following the death in 1667 of Franz Tunder, the organist of the Marienkirche in Lübeck, the church fathers appointed Buxtehude as his successor on 11 April 1668. A further responsibility, also shouldered by his predecessor, was his role as 'Werkmeister', or church bookkeeper. To take on both jobs Buxtehude had to obtain citizenship, which he did on 23 July of that same year.

The Marienkirche in Lübeck was equipped with two 3-manual organs: the choir gallery's 50-stop Grand Organ, first built by Barthold Hering and expanded by Jacob Scherer, Gottschalk Borchert and Jacob Rabe in 16th century, and finally restored by Friedrich Stellwagen between 1637 and 1641, and a 45-stop organ

originally built by Johannes Stephani in 1475-1477 and subsequently expanded in various stages, located in the Totentanzkapelle (or 'Dance of Death Chapel'). In the afternoon, before the stock exchange opened, the city burghers were wont to meet up in the Marienkirche, and it was for their entertainment that in 1646 Franz Tunder began playing the organ in a series of concerts that were known as 'Abendspiele', or 'evening recitals'. Although these concerts began as simple, informal performances, their huge success soon attracted considerable financial support from various merchants – which allowed Tunder to enrich them with the addition of other instruments. Buxtehude continued this tradition, deciding in 1673 that on account of their success it would be better to transform the concerts into feast day events. What started as simple recitals soon became sumptuous dramatic performances, containing a wealth of counterpoint and instrumental development. The Abendmusiken were held on Advent Sundays with the exception of the first, which was celebrated with a solemn liturgy.

In Lübeck there was an unwritten rule that the organist should marry one of his predecessor's daughters, and true to form on 3 August 1668 Buxtehude chose Anna Margaretha Tunder, Franz's daughter, to be his wedded wife.

Buxtehude's job involved playing chorale preludes, alternating the solo organ parts with the choral sections and conducting both from the organ balcony, probably during communion. In all likelihood he played his own compositions following the 'Komm, Heiliger Geist' (Come, Holy Spirit), which was the traditional introduction to the religious service, and also at the end. It is fairly certain that his duties were limited to the morning and afternoon functions of Sundays and feast days.

Apart from his engagements as an organist and teacher, the organisation and direction of the Abendmusiken, and his activity as a poet (he authored six epic poems, and it is generally thought that he also wrote some of the texts for his cantatas), Buxtehude cultivated friendships with some of

During the eight years he spent in Helsingør, Buxtehude made a number of important friendships: the foremost musicians of northern Germany. One of these friends was the organ builder Arp Schnitger (1648-1719), who had moved to Hamburg to construct the organ of the Nikolaikirche. In May 1687 Buxtehude himself travelled to Hamburg to test the new instrument, which so impressed him that for the rest of his life he tried – alas, in vain – to persuade the Lübeck authorities to engage Schnitger to restore the old instrument in the Marienkirche.

Another of Buxtehude's friends was Andreas Werckmeister, who in 1681 published the treatise *Orgel-Probe* in which he discussed the possibility of creating new types of organ temperament that would allow a range of tones and pitch quite unlike those in common use at the time. It is probable that Buxtehude chose the temperament known as Werckmeister III when in 1683 he retuned the organs of the Marienkirche, the aim being to achieve a wider tonal range from instruments originally built with a semitone temperament. The date itself has helped musicologists in their efforts to reconstruct the chronology of some of Buxtehude's compositions, for these include a number of pieces that do not fit with the constraints of the semitone temperament: the Prelude in E (BuxWV141) and the Prelude in F sharp minor (BuxWV146), for example, both of which seem to have

been composed after 1683.

When in 1703 George Frideric Handel and Johann Mattheson heard that the elderly Buxtehude was thinking of retiring, they set out to meet him in Lübeck. There they learnt of the local tradition according to which succession implied marrying Buxtehude's oldest daughter, Anna Margaretha, once she had reached adulthood. Both decided that this was not quite what they had in mind and left the following day.

In October 1705, the twenty-year-old Johann Sebastian Bach obtained a four-week leave of absence from his superiors at the Bonifaciuskirche in Arnstadt, where he was the organist. His aim was to go and hear Dietrich Buxtehude in Lübeck, a two hundred mile journey that he undertook on foot. At the Marienkirche he witnessed some special performances, as that year Buxtehude had organised two 'Extraordinarien Abendmusiken' on 2 and 3 December: the 'Castrum Doloris' for the death of Leopold I and the 'Templum Honoris' in celebration of the new sovereign, Joseph I. These performances involved forty musicians, positioned on four galleries so as to form an orchestra of exceptional quality. Bach's leave of absence ended up lasting four months, and when he returned to Arnstadt in February 1706, his superiors noted some remarkable changes in his manner of playing, including much richer modulation and various virtuoso contrivances.

His tomb, together with the church and his organ, were destroyed by allied air raids on the night of 28 March 1942. Today the reconstructed Marienkirche bears a bronze plaque, placed there in 1957, to commemorate where his tomb once lay.

### The works for organ

1974 saw Dietrich Buxtehude's compositions catalogued by Georg Karstädt in the Buxtehude– Werke–Verzeichnis ('Catalogue of the works of Buxtehude', or BuxWV for short). Republished in 1985 with certain additions and corrections, the list of compositions is arranged by subject matter and comprises 275 works, including pieces for voice and various instruments, organ music, harpsichord music, and various chamber sonatas. There is also an 'Anhang', or Appendix, which lists a further fifteen compositions that are spurious or wrongly attributed. Buxtehude's overall output is dominated by the organ, for which he wrote almost 90 works that reveal a great variety of forms, including preludes, toccatas, variations on a basso ostinato, canzonas, fugues and choral preludes. Such wide-ranging variety was only to be rivalled by Johann Sebastian Bach.

Buxtehude represents the height of the northern German school of organ composition in the 17th century. It was a tradition that had been enriched by the contribution of various brilliant composers during the course of the century, starting with Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck (1562–1621), organist at the Oude Kerk in Amsterdam. There are two main currents of influence within the school; the first, which is typically northern and decorative, derives directly from the art of the variation as practised by the English virginalists – especially William Byrd and John Bull – and features richly ornate counterpoint and vigorous rhythms. The second reveals the impact of Italian music, which inspired the organists of the north not

only in terms of form (fantasies, canzonas) and stylistic traits (written ornaments, virtuoso passages), but also, and above all, for its vivacity, mobility and fine Latin temperament. This permeability to outside influence is hardly surprising given the wealth of contacts and exchanges between music and musicians at the time. Suffice it to mention as an example Kaspar Förster, the Chapel Master at the Danish court, who completed his musical education with the Venetian masters, or Girolamo Frescobaldi – who spent a year in the Netherlands, where his music met with widespread acclaim.

With the contribution of musicians such as Heinrich Scheidemann, who had been a pupil of Sweelinck, Johann Adam Reincken, Nikolaus Hanff, Georg Böhm and Vincent Lübeck, the two currents of northern and southern influence blended together to create a brilliant new poetic style

Dietrich Buxtehude died in Lübeck on 9 May 1707 and was buried in the Marienkirche. His that later came to be known as *stylus phantasticus*. Buxtehude, who also used the organ–pedals with unprecedented virtuoso skill, proved to be one of the great masters of this, creating a musical idiom that reconciled tradition with incisive harmonies and richly inventive musical phrasing.

Buxtehude's impetuous genius reveals itself in grandiose pictures of sound that naturally lend themselves to public performance. This is hardly surprising, given his role as director of the Abendmusiken in the Marienkirche – the only place in Lübeck where music was performed not only as part of the liturgy, but as deliberate entertainment for the audience. Buxtehude's style, especially in his non-religious compositions, thus seems to be largely decorative. Only in the choral preludes, which were specifically written for religious services, is there a greater degree of contemplation.

With no autograph manuscripts having come down to us, Buxtehude's compositions for organ survive through copies that were made during or after his lifetime. Some of them are written in tablature, which was also Buxtehude's chosen form, but the majority use the modern stave. Many of the surviving organ works are contained in the Schmäler Tabulatur, which comes from Hamburg and dates back to 1696, the Lindemann Tabulatur, compiled between 1713 and 1714 and of Hamburg–Lübeck provenance, and the Codex E.B. 1688, written on two staves and compiled by a Dresden organist in 1688. Others are found in the Grobes Tabulatura, written in 1675 but now lost, the two Pittsburg Manuscripts, which are named after the city library where they are kept, the Leipzig Tabulatur, the Johann Günther Bach Buch, the Christian Heinrich Rinck Collection, and the Preambula et Praeludia collection, all of which were compiled between 1680 and 1690.

In addition there are several copies made by members of the Bach family: the Möllerschen Handschrift, compiled around 1707, and the Andreas Bach Buch, which was completed around 1715. There are also later sources such as the Rink Ms, compiled in 1790, and the Joh. Ringk Ms, not to mention the Werndt Ms and Vienna Ms, both of which date from the end of the 19th century.

## Preludes, Toccatas, Canzonas, Fugues

A good third of Buxtehude's organ works bear the title 'Praeludium', or sometimes 'Toccata'. The word itself is not that important, but what is worth noting is that all these compositions belong to the same genre, one that derives from the style of Frescobaldi's toccatas and canzonas. The northern toccata shared with such works the alternation of fugue and free passages with recitative, which acted as a modulating link or a renewal of harmonic focus and melody. As with the Italian canzona, the fugue passages are constructed around a single subject that undergoes variations in rhythm and melody.

Imitative or declamatory in character, the opening section of the Buxtehude Praeludium is generally fairly short, often containing arpeggios, octave intervals and rapid passages that underline the technical skill of the player. With the Fugue, Buxtehude limits development to an almost continuous repetition of the subject and the response. The various episodes are linked by free passages that tend to share much the same tonality, and the interest lies not so much in brilliant counterpoint, but in the melodic development of the parts, which reveals the influence of the Italian Ricercar fugue.

Buxtehude's oeuvre comprises three different types of 'Praeludium'. The first, which is the least common form, consists of three sections (Prelude or Toccata – fugue – conclusion) and includes the serene and remarkably consistent Praeludium in F BuxWV144, the Praeludium in F BuxWV145 (in which the energetic fugue ends with a recitative section), the Praeludium in G Bux147, where virtuoso effects and imitation soon give way to a Ricercar style fugue, and the Toccata in F BuxWV157 – an extremely brilliant, joyful composition.

The second type, the one most favoured by Buxtehude, consists of a number of sections that varies from four to six: Prelude or Toccata – Fugue – recitative – Fugue – conclusion. There are at least fifteen compositions that adopt this form, and many of them are singularly noteworthy – take, for instance, the grandiose Praeludium in E minor BuxWV142, one of the composer's most extensive and elaborate preludes; it contains three fugues whose ample development comprises transformations in both rhythm and melody, with a majestic recitative in the French 'plein jeux' style leading into the third fugue (which is actually a gigue in 12/8 time culminating in a brilliant conclusion). Another example is the monumental Praeludium in G minor BuxWV149 – one of Buxtehude's most popular works – which starts unexpectedly with astonishing manual sixths that fly above a basso ostinato, thereafter continuing with a first fugue of typically southern influence. This is followed by an episode that introduces a distinctive theme, reminiscent of the theme from the first fugue of the Praeludium in F sharp minor, and the virtuoso nature of the final part unleashes what is practically a roar on the part of the organ in full voice.

The Praeludium in G minor BuxWV150 also deserves mention: starting with an austere grand prelude, it later becomes serene in the central fugue – a section that is followed by an eloquent recitative performed with the pedals – ending with a highly intense, syncopated finale that leaves the listener in a state of breathless wonder. The Praeludium in A minor BuxWV152, on the other hand, is a masterpiece of balance and sobriety: following a solid prelude based on closely interwoven

imitations, the first fugue appears highly linear and at the same time somewhat lyrical, with the inversion of the repeated notes of the subject and the appearance of an elaborate counterpoint in semiquavers adding interest to the development. The second fugue uses the same subject, but with a chromatic presentation in triplets. All this contrasts with the fast pace of the final episode, where some arresting counterpoint and the return to earlier forms creates a remarkable atmosphere.

In the pieces that belong to the third type, the composer combines a considerable number of sections relating to the toccata, the recitative, the fugue and the fugato. They include the joyful Praeludium in D BuxWV139, the somewhat cerebral Praeludium in F sharp minor BuxWV146, the virtuoso and eccentric Toccata in D minor BuxWV155 (consisting of eight sections), and the Toccata in F BuxWV156 – a highly fragmented work comprising 13 sections whose cohesion lies in a shared ideal. The range of tessitura and compositional technique characteristic of Buxtehude's great Praeludia also feature one by one in the works structured around the fugue, and the same is true for the manual-based Italianate Fugues and Canzonas, which were written making regular use of what is known as the *stylus phantasticus*.

## Passacaglia and Chaconne

The passacaglia and the chaconne were originally dances, probably of Spanish origin. Both feature a basso continuo – usually of four bars – that is repeated throughout the piece, acting as a backdrop for a number of variations in the higher registers. Although Johann Mattheson tried to differentiate between the two, they are as forms extremely similar, and while popular with southern German composers such as Johann Pachelbel and Johann Kaspar Kerll, Buxtehude is the only composer of the northern school to have used them for organ works. Unlike his southern colleagues, however, he avoided the ritornella for the variations, was inclined to insert additional free parts, and often moved the ostinato from the pedals to the manual – sometimes even creating variations in a similar pitch.

The Passacaglia BuxWV161 (mentioned by Hermann Hesse in his novel *Demian*) and the Chaconnes BuxWV159 and 160 represent excellent examples of stylistic rigour, often enriched with unexpected variations and cadenzas in the *stylus phantasticus*. The musicologist Piet Kee has likened the cycle of variations in Passacaglia BuxWV161 to that of the moon: the total number of variations equals that of the days in the lunar cycle. In his view, Buxtehude, who also composed a collection (since lost) of seven suites dedicated to the seven planets known at the time, might have drawn inspiration from the grand astronomical clock in the Marienkirche, destroyed in 1942.

## Chorales

The chorale is traditionally one of the most important elements in Lutheran liturgy, a fact that explains why compositions based on the chorale were essential to the burgeoning of the northern school of organ music. Preceded by a prelude played on



the organ, the chorale became one of the main features of German organ compositions, its development embracing variations and fantasias alike. The texts for Buxtehude's organ chorales are to be found in the Lübeckisches Gesangbuch of 1703, while the melodies were collected in a tome compiled by Johann Jacob Pagendarm that same year. Most of Buxtehude's chorales have come down to us thanks to copies made by Johann Gottfried Walther, who received the originals – alas no longer extant – from Andreas Werckmeister. Other chorales are found in the Rink Ms, in the Andreas Bach Buch, and in the Agricola Ms, compiled by Johann Sebastian Bach's homonymous pupil.

Although these extant compositions all come under the general heading of 'Chorale', there is a convention among musicologists to separate them into three different categories: the 'chorale prelude', which is the most common form; the 'fantasia on the chorale', typical of the northern organ school; and the 'variations on the chorale', a genre little favoured by Buxtehude himself.

The chorale preludes of the northern organ school owed much to the work of organists such as Jacob Praetorius and Heinrich Scheidemann, who had studied with Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck. Buxtehude was the only musician to carry on the tradition, however, since neither Tunder nor Reincken ever tackled this form. Intended as part of the church service, these works are a uniquely eloquent example of Buxtehude's deeply sensitive creative genius; indeed, far from the impetuous nature of his concert pieces, they reveal a more intimate, poetic vein, using very simple compositional devices. Buxtehude does not appear to have been influenced by the rules for the composition of chorales established by Scheidt in 1624 in his *Tabulatura Nova*. Far from composing overly rigid counterpoint, he opted for freer, ornate forms that were apparently less scholarly, but more accessible and moving for the listener.

The ornamentation follows the character of the chorale closely, becoming extremely rich when the situation is joyful ('Der Tag, der ist so freudenreich', 'Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott', 'Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ'), and more simple and discrete when the atmosphere is supposed to be peaceful, serene or sad ('In dulci jubilo', 'Vater unser im Himmelreich', 'Ach Herr, mich armen Sünder'). While the accompanying counterpoint is often of only secondary interest, the use of modulation is contained and the cadenzas are always in the tonic or dominant key.

The chorale fantasies embody the most brilliant sound of the concert: because of their vast proportions, they could only be performed during the Abendmusiken, or occasionally at the end of a religious function. Reiterated paraphrase of melody created a form in which the northern masters excelled from the beginning of the century.

An example of this genre is the Magnificat BuxWV203, which consists of nine interlinked sections. The distinct themes and the linear quality of the composition invest the work with a tangible sense of cohesion.

The fantasy on the chorale 'Nun freut euch lieben Christen g'mein' is a much freer, more improvised composition. Its spontaneity, rhythmic vivacity and lively melodies are entirely persuasive, though in fact there is not much original form in the

thematic material taken from the chorale itself. Without lingering on them for any length of time, Buxtehude introduces certain elements at the beginning with the soprano and pedal, and later in the central development section. While the theme that on occasions provides the material for a certain number of sections is reworked with various ornamentations, imitations and echo effects, the embellished expressive chromaticism of the central phrase reflects the anguish and desperation of certain passages of the literary text of the chorale. The fantasy ends in a triumphal fanfare on the pedal, accompanied by a perpetual run of sixteenth notes on the manuals, almost like a toccata.

Another particularly noteworthy example is the impressive Te Deum that concludes this collection. Immaculately constructed, with measured lyricism and a certain gravity of tone, the piece was probably written during Buxtehude's later years, its rich musical material giving an overall impression of noble grandeur. The work is made up of five parts: a Praeludium (in three sections) followed by four different verses. Each of these verses is based on a fragment of the liturgical hymn, and all reveal various styles.

The first, 'Te Deum laudamus', begins with a 'bicipitium' – an early form in which the cantus firmus and its counterpoint alternate in the two voices. The cantus firmus then reappears in the lower tessitura of the pedals, and is followed by a powerful conclusive section rich in 4–5 voice imitations. The second verse which follows, 'Pleni sunt coeli et terra', opens with an ample recitative, thereafter presenting echo effects that alternate with the embellished chorale and concluding with a free section in a quieter tone. Whereas the third, 'Te Martyrum candidatus laudat exercitus', is an ornamented chorale in the tenor register of the pedals, accompanied by an embellished counterpoint on the manuals, the vigorously polyphonic fourth verse 'Tu devicto mortis aculeo' is cast in two parts – the first based on imitations among the various voices, where the rhythm is constantly underlined by repeated notes. Its last 14 bars constitute a majestic finale of dramatic, almost theatrical impact in which the deliberate dissonance recalls the 'durezza et ligature' so dear to Italian composers of the time.

Although Buxtehude did not often use the variations on the chorale as a form, his 'Auf meinen lieben Gott' BuxWV179 constitutes a remarkable version in the guise of a suite of a sacred song, taken from Johann Hermann Schein's *Cantional* (Leipzig, 1627). This, in turn, derives from the earlier melody of the German song 'Venus, du und dein Kin' by Jakob Regnart (1576).

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