



Gayle h. Martin, organ
Partners in time:
Comparing Notes

ORGAN MUSIC: PART I

Johann Sebastian Bach & Dietrich Buxtehude

Critical Notes

Dietrich Buxtehude (1637–1707), one of the great musical masters of his generation, is best known as a composer of organ music. After a musical upbringing encouraged and fostered by his father, Buxtehude served as organist at a variety of churches until 1667. At that time the organist post at Saint Mary's Church (Marienkirche) in Lübeck became vacant, and the following year Buxtehude was appointed to this prestigious post. He spent the remaining thirty-nine years of his life working in Lübeck and composing some of the most innovative and prolific organ music of his time. The stylistic development of organ literature around the turn of the eighteenth century in northern Germany was steered by Buxtehude's compositions, particularly his preludia (also known as toccatas). Buxtehude challenged the limits of the genre by expanding on the traditional alternation of fugal and free sections, lending unprecedented prominence to the organ pedals, experimenting with gigue styles, and borrowing musical idioms from other nationalities. His organ compositions epitomize the north German style of the mid-Baroque, the legacy of which can be heard in the music of J. S. Bach.

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) was the foremost musician of the Baroque period—a virtuoso organist and composer of most genres of his time except for opera. His works for organ represent a significant portion of his substantial compositional output. Like Buxtehude, Bach was born into a musical family and received his early musical training from his father. In the winter of 1705, Bach journeyed to Lübeck, where he heard Buxtehude perform. Buxtehude's flamboyant approach to composition, characteristic of the north German style, had an immediate effect on Bach. The influence was so immediate that when Bach returned to his post in Arnstadt four months later, his

employers, the church council, were taken aback by the “curious” musical liberties he had apparently adopted from Buxtehude. Heightened chromaticism and an increased use of improvisatory flourishes within chorale tunes were a few of Bach's new tricks that the church council viewed as problematic.

Bach had other church and court jobs during the early to mid-part of his career, although in 1723 he settled in Leipzig and remained there until his death. He was cantor of the St. Thomas School and civic music director, one of the most important musical posts in Germany. It was in Leipzig that he composed his most intellectually mature works.

The current recording highlights larger works that illustrate the stylistic continuities between Buxtehude and Bach. Chorale settings, such as chorale fantasias and chorale preludes, were widely employed by church musicians—in part, as a stimulating way of introducing congregations to the chorale tune. Both Buxtehude and Bach's *Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern* (How Brightly Shines the Morning Star) are chorale fantasias.

In Buxtehude's setting, BuxWV 223, the tune is heard in various voices and textures: at the beginning in long, flute-like tones under sparkling moving notes, and in later sections, hidden in the brightly woven fabric. He incorporates three different fugal sections, each marked by a change in meter (6/4, 6/8, 12/8). This sectionalized approach, with changes to meter, texture, and registration, creates an exciting work full of dramatic contrast. In addition, a free and improvisatory cadential section has flourishes in characteristic Buxtehudian style.

In Bach's setting, BWV 739, the treatment of the chorale melody is consistent with the style of Buxtehude and the north German tradition, although more controlled in that the work remains in the same meter throughout. The structure of the chorale fantasia is clearly inspired by Buxtehude's sectionalized setting but the section changes

are less dramatic. Bach treats the choral melody in three principal ways: 1) changing the pace of the tune—for example, to introduce the melody, he sets the first portion in faster notes in an imitative style and later the whole tune in the top voice in slower notes; 2) treating the tune as a solo with accompaniment; and 3) setting the tune imitatively. Bach's setting concludes with a series of flourishes, straight out of the Buxtehudian style. Both settings use pedal only for long notes close to the end.

Because the two composers spent the majority of their lives playing, directing, and composing church music, organ composition and performance were at the heart of both their careers. The *Praeludia* (also called *toccatas*) of Buxtehude and the preludes and fugues of Bach belong to instrumental genres not based on a tune with text. These works were written with religious intent for inclusion at the beginning or end of church services, but also used as concert material. In contrast to the chorale fantasias, these works are rife with pedal.


Buxtehude's *Tocatta in F*, BuxWV 156, is constructed in typical north German fashion: sections of free, improvisatory material that capture the listeners' attention alternate with more intellectual sections of rhythmically strict, imitative material. As heard right from the beginning, the free, improvisatory material makes use of impressive technical figuration over expansive, prolonged harmonies. The "strict" or controlled material appears in imitative, fugal sections, in which the characteristics of the themes are mainly melodic leaps and gigue-like motives. Generally, the different sections in this *tocatta* are short, especially in comparison with those of the Bach fugue to follow. Interest is maintained through rapid musical change, flux, and surprise; each section of music is appreciated in the context of the surrounding contrasting material.

On first listen, Bach's *Prelude and Fugue in C major*, BWV 547 (his only prelude and fugue for organ in

9/8), is different in structure from the Buxtehude *tocatta*. Rather than a series of short musical sections strung together, Bach's work has only one obvious sectional division, between the prelude and the fugue; each division could be a work in itself. However, the influence of Buxtehude's sectionalized approach on Bach's "new" structure is still discernible. Bach's prelude essentially expands upon Buxtehude's structure by developing the sections in a way that creates musical interest—not through constant musical contrast, but through detailed and complex tonal, thematic, and motivic development. In this majestic and stately prelude, Bach uses three short musical ideas throughout as vehicles for the development; the frequent repetition of such ideas gives the work a sense of unity.

All three ideas can be heard in the beginning of the prelude: (1) an upward scale, (2) a simple rhythmic pattern, and (3) a downward leaping movement in the pedal part. The recurrence of the ideas is reminiscent of *ritornello* style, an Italian musical technique meaning "refrain," showing the Italian influence on Bach's composition as well as Buxtehude's. The north German organ school typically embraced styles from other musical traditions, notably French and Italian. Bach's fugue is impressive in being more thorough in its development than Buxtehude's. Bach begins with a statement of the simple theme, which consists of only eight notes. The theme is then developed extensively, appearing more than fifty times throughout the fugue in different transpositions, variations, and registers.

Bach's *Concerto in A minor*, BWV 593, was originally composed as a concerto for two violins by the Italian Baroque composer Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741). Scholars believe that Bach, fond of Vivaldi's music and intrigued by the Italian style, transcribed Vivaldi's work as an exercise in transcription. This impressive concerto for solo organ exemplifies aspects of the Italian style that



were subtly incorporated in the music of Buxtehude and Bach: rhythmic vitality, contrast in texture and dynamics, the use of ritornello, and virtuosic melodic lines are heard throughout. The first and third movements are full of energy, excitement, and driving movement, exposing the powerful sound and technical facility of the organ. The second movement is calm, contemplative, and guileless. We can imagine the violinistic origins of the melodic lines, and appreciate the ways in which the organ is able to evoke and enhance them.

The smaller pieces on this recording are gems. The two gigue fugues, BuxWV 174 and BWV 577, feature imitative textures based on a single musical subject. Both are light and lively works in compound meter with a dance-like feel, wide melodic leaps, constant motion. And lengthy simple, sequential thematic material. The musical character is joyful—Buxtehude's work sprightly and Bach's jolly. Martin takes the liberty of varying the color of the sound throughout by changing manuals and registration (a combination of "stops"), thus enhancing the sense of motion and providing both musical contrast and drama.

Buxtehude's delightful short Canzonetta in G minor, BuxWV 173 has unpretentious imitative writing in 2–3 voices. As in his Ciacona, BuxWV 160 (sometimes called "Chaconne"), musical peace prevails over musical drama. The Ciacona, an ostinato variation form with repeating bass line, is characterized more by pleasant vertical harmonies than by an imitative horizontal direction. Buxtehude weaves his charming variations around a short repetitive figure in the lowest voice, heard on the pedal in the opening measures. Towards the end, Buxtehude employs the pedals beyond their traditional role of harmonic support in a frenzied and virtuosic sixteenth-note passage. Again, as in the gigue fugues, Martin takes liberties in varying the colour of the sound with changes of manual and registration.

Bach composed six trio sonatas for two violins and basso continuo that he would later transcribe for organ. However the Trio in C minor, BWV 585, is independent from this practice; scholars believe it may be an adaptation of a work by another composer. Nevertheless, it is charming in its innocence. The interplay between the upper voices in the Adagio is pleasing to the ear since it avoids dense complexity and tends to be set in thirds over a slower-moving bass line. The Allegro involves similar interaction between the top two voices and exudes a sunny, cheerful character highlighted by the sparkling registration.

Chorale settings, and in particular the chorale preludes of Buxtehude and Bach featured in this recording, are based on hymn tunes—in these cases hymns composed by Martin Luther. Buxtehude's *In dulci jubilo*, BuxWV 197, and *Nun Komm, der Heiden Heiland*, BuxWV 211, are breathtaking in their simplicity and grace. Bach takes the same tune, *Nun Komm, der Heiden Heiland*, BWV 659, and decorates the melody copiously. He achieves a compelling musical effect by placing this ornamented melodic line against a richly textured harmonic background with a steady bass line like a heart beat. In Bach's trio version of *Nun Komm, der Heiden Heiland*, BWV 660, the text "Now, come, Saviour of the Gentiles" is emphasized by putting the chorale tune on the trumpet stop as the other parts engage in imitative fashion around the tune. In the final work of this set, BWV 661, Bach asks for *organo pleno* registration—a full sound with bright mixtures and sixteen-foot stops. As if to portray the final verse of the text, "Praise be given to God the Father," the mood is one of joyful celebration. Above the gradual, heavy, and powerful melody in the pedal, the upper voices provide full-textured and imitative chordal support.

Gayle h. Martin and Charles Nicholas Godsoe

Gayle h. Martin is Associate Professor of Music at Mount Allison University, Sackville, New Brunswick, where she is University Organist and teaches organ performance, musicianship, choral conducting, introduction to conducting, and music history. She also directs the Elliott Chorale, and coaches the early music group, Opella Nova. Martin's passion for music, animals, and nature began in the countryside of the Green Mountain State of Vermont where she grew up. She holds the degrees BMus (Crane School of Music, SUNY Potsdam), MMus (McGill University), and DMus (University of Alberta). Further studies included a three-year stay in France, where Martin was organist at the American Cathedral in Paris and lived in the cathedral tower. She received a premier prix à unanimité from the Conservatoire de Rueil-Malmaison, studying under the renowned organists Jean Langlais and Susan Landale.

Martin has accompanied the University of Alberta Madrigal Singers, Université de Moncton choir, Chorale Beauséjour, Choeur Louisbourg, Halifax Camerata Singers, and Cantabile Singers of Truro. This is her third solo recording. She has also collaborated with piper Ian Mackinnon on the East Coast Music Award nominated album "Air Races" and has performed as organist/accompanist for several other recording projects in the maritimes. She regularly adjudicates for festivals and competitions and plays basso continuo for the early music ensemble ¡Sacabuche! (Linda Pearce, artistic director), whose recent touring included a collaboration with the Houston Chamber Choir. Other performances with ¡Sacabuche! have taken Martin to Macau, Hong Kong, British Colombia, and Minnesota.

Performer's Note

Joyful and peace—these are the themes I wish to impart to the listener's ears. Consequently, much of the music on this recording is associated with the season of Advent and the German/Lutheran chorale tunes connected with that time of year. My favorite Baroque organ composers, Dietrich Buxtehude (1637–1707) and Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750), were "partners in time" in that they developed similar genres of organ composition, among them chorale settings, the toccata/praeludium, and imitative works such as the canzonetta and fugue. This recording pairs works of similar genres by each composer—Buxtehude, from the middle Baroque period and Bach from the High Baroque. Such a pairing allows the listener to compare and contrast the two composers' stylistic differences. And can we discern the influence that Buxtehude had on his friend and admirer, Bach?



-Gayle h. Martin

Partners in Time: Comparing Notes *Gayle h. Martin, organ*

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|-----|---|------|
| 1. | Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern, BuxWV 223 | 6'32 |
| 2. | Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern, BWV 739 | 4'48 |
| 3. | Toccata in F, BuxWV 156 | 8'07 |
| 4. | Praeludium et Fuga in C, BWV 547 | 5'08 |
| 5. | Fugue in G Major, BWV 577 "Gigue" | 4'28 |
| 6. | Fugue in G major, BuxWV 174 "Gigue" | 3'52 |
| | Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland: | |
| 7. | 1) Ornamented Chorale, BWV 659 | 3'09 |
| 8. | 2) Trio, BWV 660 | 3'48 |
| 9. | 3) Pleno, BWV 661 | 2'49 |
| 10. | 4) Chorale, BuxWV 211 | 2'57 |
| 11. | Canzonetta in G minor, BuxWV 173 | 1'36 |
| 12. | In dulci jubilo, BuxWV 197 | 1'56 |
| | Trio in C minor, BWV 585: | |
| 13. | 1) Adagio | 2'38 |
| 14. | 2) Allegro | 2'32 |
| 15. | Ciaccona, BuxWV 160 | 6'20 |
| | Concerto in A minor, BWV 593: | |
| 16. | 1) Allegro | 4'23 |
| 17. | 2) Adagio | 2'57 |
| 18. | 3) Allegro | 4'46 |



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