

organist and "Werchmeister" at the Church of St. Mary's in Lübeck, a position he held until his death on May 9th, 1707.

This recital recreates four of Buxtehude's most attractive pieces on the authentic Baroque organ in Varfrukyrka of Skånninge, Sweden. Hearing this performance in the fullness of stereophonic sound, one can easily realize why the performances at Lübeck were a magnet for music lovers of that time.

The Prelude and Fugue in C Major unfolds organ sound on a broad scale, the expanses being filled with joyous roulades and light-hearted embellishments. The Fugue itself begins with a vivacious 12-note subject. The same subject is heard entering in other voices in close succession, and the ensuing interplay of voices is as jovial as a festive dance. The merriment halts temporarily on a long chord. Then the subject appears again, as vivacious as ever before, but transformed into the rhythm of a gigue that fairly bounces to the close.

The choral fantasia, Nun freut euch lieben Christen g'mein ("Let good Christian people rejoice"), continues the spirit of jubilation. The original chorale is not obvious as the musical source of this piece because the composer's sheer joy in melodic invention carried him far beyond the materials offered in the old German tune. The form is a free fantasia boldly developed in large and contrasting independent sections, each quoting or recalling in some way some bit of the chorale tune. Surpassing earlier composers in this form, Buxtehude with this composition opened vistas of the expressive possibilities of the pipe organ.

Such expressive range is emphasized by the next piece, in the style of the earlier chorale preludes, Durch Adams Fall ist ganz verderbt ("By Adams fall was man condemned"). The solemn chorale melody sings forth, hardly disturbed by the sensitive ornamentation. The chromatic passing tones are a symbol, frequently used by Buxtehude for pain or sorrow, while the prevailing downward line of all the figures corresponds to the topic of the chorale, all skillfully blended into a tonal picture.

The Toccata in D Minor is after the manner of the Italian clavier toccata, but Buxtehude so well assimilated these lessons of style and adapted them to his enlarged instrumental technique that this piece is something of a landmark. As a virtuoso piece it shows off the technical prowess of the performer and the resources of the organ. As a masterpiece of composition it reveals a complexity of imitative voices in noble progression. Through the form is a free fantasia, the luxuriant details are never haphazard, but like the arabesques of Baroque architecture yield a magnificent sense of structure.



# BACH & BUXTEHUDE ORGAN MUSIC

It is generally accepted that Johann Sebastian Bach wrote his six Sonatas for Organ for his eldest son, Wilhelm Friedemann Bach, as the not always reliable W.F. often asserted. There is no strong reason to disbelieve it, for they appeared at about the right time and, moreover, are teaching pieces par excellence. There is a world of difference between the familiar Bach organ works in the mold of the various preludes or toccatas and fugues and the Six Sonatas. Compared to those works, these Sonatas are light, transparent in texture, never concerned with display or Baroque flamboyance. They are Trio-Sonatas, works in three voices, irrespective of how many actual players were needed. The voices in these works are independent: one in either hand, the third on the pedals. Ordinarily, each hand plays on its own manual. Thus, the Sonatas test and cultivate the student's physical and mental ability to coordinate all these separate motions of hands and feet, the interpretive ability to project each voice equally and clearly to the audience, and the musical ability to make them meaningful.

All but the sixth sonata are, at least in part, derived from earlier Bach works. The Fourth Sonata is in the form of a concerto for organ. The first movement is a *Vivace* preceded by a short slow introduction. It is a transcription of a *sinfonia* of the cantata *Die Himmel erzählen die Ehre Gottes*, BWV 76 (1723). This number was already a trio for oboe d'amore, viola, and bass line. It is in a *ritornello* form, with a lively main episode interspersed with contrasting sections. The slow movement seems to have originated as a separate piece. The concluding *poco allegro* section is vigorous and tests coordination by throwing in triplets that cross hands.

There are various arrangements of this organ sonata as actual trio sonatas, with one or two soloists and keyboard.

The "Cathedral" Prelude and Fugue is also listed in various Bach catalogs under the nicknames "Little" or "Petite." At about five minutes, it is among the shorter Preludes and Fugues, and thus its simpler moniker may be more appropriate than the seemingly nondescript "Cathedral," listed in the headnote here. This work was likely written during the first few years that Bach spent in Arnstadt, the city where he served as organist at the *Neue Kirche* from 1703-1707. It probably preceded Bach's study of Buxtehude's works (begun in 1705), which would have a profound influence on his keyboard compositions.

In one respect the Prelude and Fugue in E minor here is unusual: most such works by Bach contain a slow section (usually the prelude) and a larger fast section (usually the fugue). Here, both are moderately paced, with the opening portion, the Prelude, at times stormy and restless, and filled with much intensity and drama. It is also stately in its seriousness, and contains very little contrapuntal writing, thereby setting the stage for the counterpoint-laden Fugue

that follows. If the music in the Fugue comes across as relaxed -- at least by contrast -- it also conveys a busier sense, a feeling the mood is evolving from the serene but earthbound to the inspiring and heavenly. Perhaps the nickname "Cathedral" is not so nondescript after all?

Dietrich Buxtehude (1637-1707) was one of the towering musical figures of Northern Europe when the merchant princes of the then-prospering Hanseatic town of Lübeck provided him with one of the finest pipe-organs of the time. There, in the Church of St. Mary's, he presided over this magnificent instrument, writing the compositions which truly elevated the organ to its position as "King of the Instruments". Even the young Johann Sebastian Bach, who made his famous pilgrimage on foot to Lübeck, was indebted to Buxtehude for his models of poetic vision realized in tonal grandeur.

In the first half of the 17th century organ music in Germany was almost entirely under Italian and Anglo-Dutch influence. At that time there were two masters who put their stamp on German organ music and thus achieved far-reaching significance for its further development. These men were Girolamo Frescobaldi and Jan Pieterszen Sweelinck. Not only as creative artists did Frescobaldi and Sweelinck assert their influence. Both of them attracted a large number of pupils, who, again, each in his own sphere, made the organ art of their teachers widely known. Whereas the South German musicians went to Italy, as before, to perfect themselves in their art under Frescobaldi, the organists of North Germany and of the Baltic countries went to Amsterdam and its famous organ master.

Neither Frescobaldi nor Sweelinck had successors of much importance in their own country. It was on German soil and, in effect, through their German pupils, that their art was to live on and to be further developed on different lines, only to come together again and merge in an organ style that - prepared and continuously developed by different generations of the North German organ school - was to attain its culmination in the art of Dietrich Buxtehude.

Our sources concerning Buxtehude's personality and life are brief and scanty. Probably he was born in 1637 in Halsingbor - in olden times Denmark, at present Sweden - where his father, Hans Jensen Buxtehude, was organist at the Church of St. Mary's. About 1642 his father held a similar position at the Church of St. Olai at Helsingor - across the Sound - in which town his son, Dietrich, had grown up. In 1660 Dietrich Buxtehude was appointed organist at the Church of St. Mary's at Helsingor; before that, he had been an organist for some years in the town of his birth. And in 1668 he became the successor of Franz Tunder as

# BACH & BUXTEHUDE

## ORGAN MUSIC

### JS Bach

1. BWV 528: Trio Sonata No.4 in E Minor - Adagio - vivace 2:38
2. BWV 528: Trio Sonata No.4 in E Minor - Andante 4:51
3. BWV 528: Trio Sonata No.4 in E Minor - Un poco allegros 2:50
4. BWV 533 - Prelude & Fugue in E Minor - Prelude 2:11
5. BWV 533 - Prelude & Fugue in E Minor - Fugue 2:32

### Buxtehude

6. BuxWV 136 - Prelude in C Major 5:28
7. BuxWV 210 - "Nun freut euch lieben Christen g'mein" 12:32
8. BuxWV 183 - "Durch Adams Fall ist ganz verderbt" 4:09
9. BuxWV 155 - Toccata in D Minor 7:45

Total Time: 44:56

Recorded by Westminster 1956 -1958

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