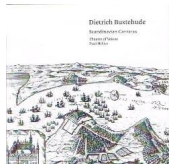


Buxtehude - Scandinavian Cantatas (2010)

Written by bluesever

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01] *Prelude for Organ in E minor, BuxWV 142* 02] *Pange lingua gloriosi, BuxWV 91* 03] *Herren var Gud, BuxWV 40* 04] *Ecce nunc benedicite Domino, BuxWV 23* 05] *Att du Jesu vill mig hora, BuxWV 8* 06] *Accedite gentes, BuxWV 1* 07] *Passacaglia for Organ in D minor, BuxWV 161* 08] *Missa alla brevis, BuxWV 114 - Kyrie* 09] *Missa alla brevis, BuxWV 114 - Gloria* 10] *Domine salvum fac regem, BuxWV 18* The Theatre of Voices (Choir) Bine Bryndorf – organ The Theatre of Voices Band Else Torp – soprano Bente Vist – soprano William Purefoy - countertenor Johan Linderoth – tenor Adam Riis – tenor Jakob Bloch Jespersen - bass Paul Hillier – direction

This album offers an unusual selection of Buxtehude's vocal music, with texts only in Latin and Swedish, and including his only work in *stile antico*, the *Missa alla brevis*. Among these rarely heard works are examples of the three individual genres described above: the vocal concerto, the aria, and the chorale setting.

Domine salvum fac regem et exaudi nos (BuxWV 18; track 10), a sacred concerto scored for five voices (SSATB), five strings, and continuo, sets just the final verse of Psalm 19 of the Latin Vulgate (Psalm 20 in the protestant Bible) followed by the *Gloria patri*. With its emphasis on a king, this text is more suitable for performance in Stockholm than in Lübeck, a free imperial city governed by a council, and it is possible that Buxtehude composed it at the behest of his friend Gustav Düben, chapel master to the King of Sweden from 1663 until his death in 1690. In the traditional style of the large sacred concerto, Buxtehude contrasted *tutti* sections, in which the instruments double the voices, with more lightly scored solo sections. The prominence of the *tutti* sections reinforces the choice of text in suggesting that this work was intended for a ceremonial state occasion. Notice the various ways in which the music reflects the text. The word *regem* (king) always appears in a chordal texture that can be easily understood. The two large sections of the work-Bible verse and *Gloria patri*-are articulated with a repetition of the opening sonata, and the two parts of the *Gloria patri* contrast with one another in both tempo and texture. The concertato interaction between voices and instruments is particularly

noticeable in this final section.

Ecce nunc benedicite (BuxWV 23; track 4), more modestly scored for four low voices (ATTB), two violins, and continuo, is also a concerted psalm setting, this time the complete Psalm 133 (134), consisting of only three verses, with "Alleluia" added at the end rather than the more common (and liturgically correct) Gloria patri. Furthermore, "Alleluia" is integrated into the final verse and does not constitute a separate section. Each of the three verses, as well as the second half of the first verse, begins with one solo voice and builds up gradually to a full tutti at the end of the section. Buxtehude employed imitative counterpoint to a much greater degree here than in *Domine salvum fac regem*; it is particularly noticeable in verses 1b ("qui stans in atriis") and 3 (the added "Alleluia"). The manuscript evidence suggests that he composed *Ecce nunc benedicite* while he was still working in Elsinore, before his move to Lübeck in 1668.

Although *Att du Jesu vill mig höra* (BuxWV 8; track 5) is one of only two preserved works that Buxtehude set to a Swedish text, it is the only work in this album that does not come from the music collection assembled in Stockholm by Gustav Düben. It belonged instead to the collection of Henrich Christoffer Engelhardt, organist at Helsingborg, Karlskrona, and Uppsala in the early eighteenth century. Buxtehude set its strophic poetic text in pure strophic musical form, with all three verses underlaid to the same music. It is among the simplest of his arias, with no text repetition or instrumental interjections and an absolutely regular phrase structure following the meter and rhythm of the poetry. Its artful symphonia and ritornello, however, distinguish it from the otherwise similar sacred songs disseminated in printed collections of the time. The C-minor tonality and designation "Lamento" reinforce the sorrowful affect of the text, in which the sinner implores Jesus to hear him.

Herren vår Gud (BuxWV 40; track 3), Buxtehude's other work to a Swedish text, does come from the Düben Collection, and Düben might have commissioned it for use at the Swedish court or at the German Church in Stockholm, where he served as organist. This is a chorale setting; the text is a poetic paraphrase of Psalm 20, and Buxtehude used its first and last verses together with the melody found with it in *Den Svenska psalmboken Koralbok*, published in 1697. Buxtehude's composition predates the *Koralbok*, however, because Düben dated his copy 1687. Buxtehude used his most characteristic form of chorale setting for *Herren vår Gud*, the concertato chorale harmonization, in which he grafted the instrumental interjections characteristic of the concerto onto the four-part chorale harmonizations found in the hymnals. The ritornello that separates the two verses begins with a tremolo of repeated eighth notes, a device Buxtehude used to express a sorrowful affect, but the separate "Amen" section at the end, with its spritely 6/4 meter, leaves no doubt that the prayer has been heard.

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Pange lingua gloriosi (BuxWV 91; track 2) offers a fine example of the manner in which Buxtehude merged the stylistic characteristics of two genres. Its text is a strophic poem, a hymn composed by St. Thomas Aquinas for the feast of Corpus Christi. This feast was not celebrated in the Lutheran church, but the hymn celebrates the sacrament of holy communion, and the words "de augustissimo sacramento" on the title page of the set of parts for Buxtehude's composition indicate that it could have been performed during the distribution of communion at any time during the church year. The presence of a ritornello following the first four of the six verses of this strophic poem suggests that Buxtehude is treating his setting like an aria, and indeed, verse 3 ("In supremae nocte coenae"), for alto solo, sounds very much like one of Buxtehude's more elaborate aria settings. Also, the regular phrase structure of verse 5 ("Tantum ergo sacramentum") resembles his aria settings for four voices. But the strophic structure of the poetry is not reflected in the music, which is through-composed, and otherwise its style is much more concerto-like.

The Missa alla brevis (BuxWV 114; tracks 8 and 9) is unique in Buxtehude's compositional oeuvre, both as his only strictly liturgical work and as his only essay in the *stile antico*. Its title, with its reference to the longer note values and *tactus* on the *brevis* (equal to two whole notes), points to this stylistic characteristic of the *stile antico*, or traditional sixteenth-century contrapuntal style. But it is also a *missa brevis*, or short mass, consisting only of the Kyrie and Gloria generally used in the Lutheran church. In accordance with sixteenth-century practice, Buxtehude does not use any instruments in this work apart from the basso continuo, which here always doubles the lowest sounding voice. The texture of this mass consists almost entirely of imitative counterpoint, interspersed with several very short sections of homophony in the Gloria. And Buxtehude did not employ the usual dissonances that became common during the seventeenth-century and that we normally associate with his musical style. The one exception that he allowed is the chromatic line that he used as an expressive device to set the words "miserere nostri" (have mercy upon us) in the Gloria. It is quite possible that Buxtehude composed this severe but beautiful work more as an exercise in learned counterpoint than for performance at St. Mary's Church in Lübeck, where the cantor held the responsibility for the liturgical music.

Accedite gentes (BuxWV 1; track 6), scored for five voices (SSATB) and two violins, is transmitted anonymously in both its sources, and Buxtehude probably did not compose it. The misattribution, based on the fact that the work following it in the tablature source is Buxtehude's *Ecce nunc benedicite*, goes back to the nineteenth-century cataloguers of the Düben Collection. Søren Sørensen published *Accedite gentes* as a work of Buxtehude in 1957, but in his book of the following year he cast doubt on its authenticity, followed by Martin Geck in 1961. Nonetheless, Georg Karstädt accepted it into the main part of the *Buxtehude-Werke-Verzeichnis*, first published in 1974. In this work we can observe a marked difference in the relationship of voices and instruments as compared with the other concertos in this album, *Domine salvum fac regem* and *Ecce nunc benedicite*, both of which have an opening sonata and numerous instances of concertato interchange between the voices and the

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instruments. In *Accedite gentes* the instruments tend more toward obligato accompaniment of the voices rather than concertato interchange with them.

In addition to the vocal works discussed above, this album contains two organ works, Buxtehude's *Praeludium* in E minor (BuxWV 142; track 1) and his *Passacaglia* in D minor (BuxWV 161; track 7), both performed by Bine Bryndorf on the organ of St. Mary's Church in Helsingør, where Buxtehude served as organist from 1660 to 1668. Since Buxtehude's position was always that of organist, and he directed his vocal music in Lübeck from the large organ, this inclusion is entirely appropriate and most welcome. Buxtehude composed his *Praeludium* in the unpredictable *stylus phantasticus*, "the most free and unrestrained method of composing" in the words of Athanasius Kircher (1650). It begins with an opening free section followed by three fugues, thematically related but completely different in character: the first playful, the second full of pathos, and the last a macabre dance in gigue rhythm. Buxtehude's *Passacaglia* in D minor, on the other hand, is a masterpiece of formal clarity: four sections, in D minor, F major, A minor, and D minor, each consisting of seven variations over a basso ostinato played in the pedal.---
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