

BUXTEHUDE BY ARRANGEMENT

THE COMPLETE PIANO TRANSCRIPTIONS
BY AUGUST STRADAL

Meilin Ai

BUXTEHUDE BY ARRANGEMENT The Stradal Transcriptions

Prelude and Fugue in A minor, BuxWV153

1	Prelude	8:58
	Fugue	1:55
2	Fugue 1	7:03
3	Fugue 2	3:42
4	Toccatà	2:00
		1:21

5 Chaconne in E minor, BuxWV160

6:55

Prelude and Fugue in E minor, BuxWV143

6:20

6	Prelude	1:56
	Fugue	4:24
7	Fugue 1	3:00
8	Fugue 2 – <i>Adagio</i>	1:24

Prelude and Fugue in E minor, BuxWV142

9:48

9	Prelude	1:12
	Fugue	8:36
10	Fugue 1	1:51
11	Fugue 2	3:14
12	Fugue 3	3:31

13 Passacaglia in D minor, BuxWV161

9:01

Prelude and Fugue in D minor, BuxWV140

7:36

14	Prelude	1:41
	Fugue	5:55
15	Fugue 1	2:40
16	Fugue 2	3:15

Prelude and Fugue in G minor, BuxWV150

17	Prelude	8:59
	Fugue	1:13
18	Fugue 1	7:46
19	Fugue 2	3:39
20	Fugue 3	1:21
		2:46

21 Chaconne in C minor, BuxWV159

8:01

Prelude and Fugue in F major, BuxWV145

7:41

22	Prelude	2:42
23	Fugue	4:59

Prelude and Fugue in F sharp minor, BuxWV146

10:11

24	Prelude	2:50
	Fugue	7:21
25	Fugue	4:27
26	Toccatà	2:54

Meilin Ai, piano

TT 83:31

FIRST RECORDINGS

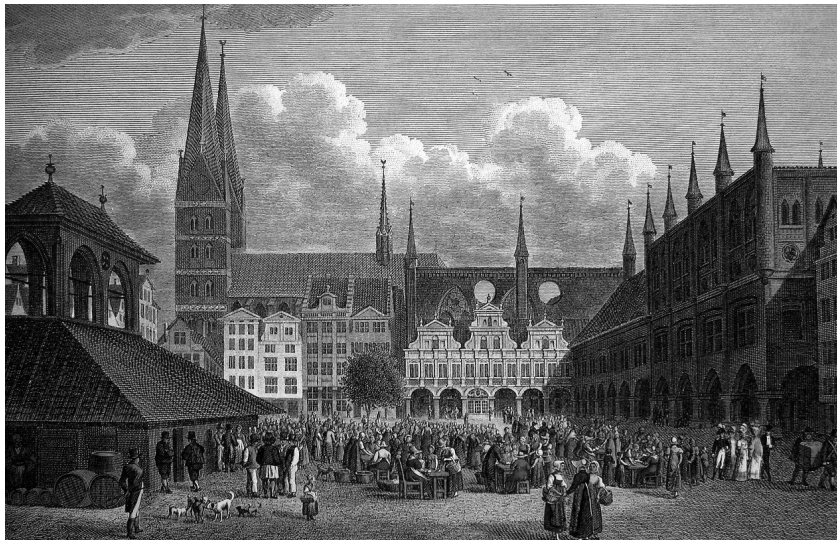
BUXTEHUDE/STRADAL: ORGAN TRANSCRIPTIONS

by William Melton

The early life of Dieterich Buxtehude is punctuated with uncertainties of detail.¹ He was born about 1637 in either Helsingborg in southern Sweden or Oldesloe in the Danish Duchy of Holstein (presently Bad Oldesloe in the German federal state of Schleswig-Holstein). Dieterich's mother was probably Helle Jespers Daater, but his father was certainly Johannes (or Hans Jensen) Buxtehude, an organist of German roots who would have been his son's first teacher. Around 1641 the family, which included the sisters Cathrine and Anna, lived in Helsingborg. Shortly afterwards there was a move to Helsingør (Elsinore), a few miles across the Øresund Strait in Denmark. Here Dieterich most probably attended Latin school, and a brother, Peiter, was born. As Dieterich neared the age of twenty, he was engaged as organist in Helsingborg, and later returned to Helsingør in the same capacity.

In April 1668 Buxtehude was selected as successor to the organist Franz Tunder in the Marienkirche (possessed of a large organ as well as a smaller organ in the chapel, both of which had been renovated by the fine craftsman Friedrich Stellwagen) in Lübeck, the free Hanseatic city wedged between Danish Holstein and German Mecklenburg. There Buxtehude married his predecessor's daughter, Anna Margaretha, on 3 August of the same year. He reinstated Tunder's Abendmusik concerts (celebrated programmes given in the church on five fixed Sundays each year), took on

¹ The family name entered the historical record a little over 1,000 years ago, when the town of Buxtehude, later a Hanseatic League city, was first recorded just south-east of Hamburg. The given name 'Dieterich' was established by the eminent Buxtehude scholar Kerala J. Snyder and is so spelled in her entry in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (ed. Stanley Sadie, Vol. 4, Macmillan, London, 2001, p. 695). She explained, 'As my acquaintance with Dieterich Buxtehude grew closer, particularly through the study of his letters and the few remaining autograph manuscripts, I became convinced that his name ought to be spelled as he himself most often spelled it' (Kerala J. Snyder, *Dieterich Buxtehude, Organist in Lübeck*, Schirmer, New York, 1987, p. xvi). Thus the many variations – Dietrich, Diderich, Diderik, Didericus, Dietericus, etc. – can be set aside.



The Marienkirche in Lübeck

the additional clerical duties of ‘Werckmeister’, and over the next four decades composed a substantial amount of organ, instrumental and vocal music, including cantatas. In his own lifetime he established a stellar reputation as an organist, composer and also as a poet (he wrote six epic poems and possibly cantata texts). On 17 August 1703 George Frideric Handel and Johann Mattheson visited him, and the latter made inquiries about the post that Buxtehude was about to relinquish. Johann Sebastian Bach apparently made such a pilgrimage in late 1705, probably attended Abendmusik concerts, and was certainly

influenced by Buxtehude the composer and organist, although there is no record of the two men actually meeting. Dieterich Buxtehude died in Lübeck on 9 May 1707. His newest and most exhaustive biographer, Kerala J. Snyder, writes:

Buxtehude was honored, both in his own century and in the one that followed, in a manner that was ultimately of far greater significance than any number of verbal accolades might have been: by the copying of his music [...]. Much as we would like to know further details concerning Buxtehude's life, they would be worth little if we did not have his music. And we do have his music, not all of it by any means, but more, and in a greater variety of genres, than survives from any of his North German contemporaries.²

An impressive number of biographical treatments of Buxtehude were written as the twentieth century progressed, despite the paucity of biographical detail – and yet even less is generally known about the musician who transcribed ten of Buxtehude's organ works for piano in 1910. August Stradal was born on 17 May 1860 in Teplitz-Schönau (Teplice) in northern Bohemia. He was the sixth child of the lawyer and town councillor Franz Josef Ignaz Stradal (an acquaintance of the eminent Viennese critic Eduard Hanslick) and Marie Anna Johanna *née* Daublebsky von Sterneck, whose patrician family boasted a tradition of service in the Austrian government and the military that went back to the late sixteenth century. The boy's schooling was accomplished at the Gymnasium 23 miles to the south-east, in Litoměřice. More advanced learning required a move to Vienna, where August studied at the Theresianum; for the years 1878–82 he was enrolled at the University (taking law, history and philosophy) and subsequently passed the state exam in law. Concurrently, he took private lessons with the musical pedagogues Anton Bruckner, Anton Door, Theodor Leschetizky and Gustav Nottebohm. The connection with the first of these would evolve into a sixteen-year friendship, with Stradal writing:

When I became Bruckner's private pupil, a fight was raging fiercely around Wagner and no one was exempt from taking sides. I was studying law in Vienna at the time, but since

² *Ibid.*, p. 135.

I intended to become a musician, from 1880 to 1882 I attended Bruckner's University of Vienna lectures on harmony and counterpoint. [...]

I also spent evenings with Bruckner, when we typically went to Gause's Restaurant in the Johannesgasse with its superb Pilsner beer, which Bruckner preferred over Bavarian brews. There was something patriarchal in the behaviour of students to the master at the time. It was much like an association of friends who did everything possible for the master, spent evenings at the inn with him, and walked him home afterwards. His soul was always laid out like an open book: hiding nothing in himself, he spoke with a child's directness.³

Stradal left for Weimar in the autumn of 1884 to improve his pianism under Franz Liszt. An initial audition was scuttled by nerves, but Stradal was granted a second chance, when 'the ice was broken and I was accepted by the Master, who sensed that I was a promising artist who adored him and truly appreciated the greatness of his works.'⁴ In the words of Hildegard Stradal, over the next two years her future husband

accompanied the Master thenceforth on all his excursions and journeys, during this time profiting from his teaching and his friendship. He became acquainted with nearly all of the leading artists and personalities who associated with Liszt or whom Liszt would visit, which had a tremendously powerful influence on Stradal's receptive young spirit.⁵

Liszt depended on his pupil-secretary to see manuscripts through to publication, and rewarded him with the dedication of the nocturne *En rêve* (G207). At Liszt's death on 31 July 1886, Stradal (whose father had drowned in a sailing accident just a few years before) wept at the casket in Bayreuth 'as if he had lost his father once again.'⁶

Liszt's death triggered a long illness, and Stradal moved back to his birthplace and taught music for the next few years. His marriage on 30 April 1888 to the Vienna-born daughter of the music pedagogue Josef Moritz Zweigelt improved his outlook. Hildegard Zweigelt, a mezzo-soprano who had studied singing with Caroline Pruckner in Vienna

³ August Stradal, 'Erinnerungen aus Bruckners letzter Zeit', *Zeitschrift für Musik*, Vol. 99, No. 10, October 1932, pp. 855–56.

⁴ August Stradal, *Erinnerungen an Franz Liszt*, Haupt, Bern and Leipzig, 1929, p. 29.

⁵ Hildegard Stradal, *August Stradals Lebensbild*, Haupt, Bern and Leipzig, 1934, p. 12.

⁶ *Ibid.*

and concertised across Europe, knew of the sacrifice she was making: 'There is no doubt that the artist suffers, in a certain sense, from a loss of freedom through marriage, particularly the wife.'⁷ Her career, which featured many *Liederabende* in Vienna, slowly turned to the literary: poetry, stage plays and translations (particularly of Victor Hugo).

The Horak Piano School in Vienna engaged Stradal in the period 1893–95, and he began concertising again. From May to October every year he and Hildegard took lodgings on the Chiemsee in Bavaria, where they both worked productively. Over the next two decades Stradal edited Liszt's organ works and Wagner transcriptions, and produced solo-piano arrangements of much more Liszt: an album of the songs, the *Missa solemnis*, the *Coronation Mass*, the *Faust* and *Dante Symphonies* and the symphonic poems. 'Everywhere acknowledged as one of the great interpreters of Liszt's compositions,'⁸ he also presented Liszt to the world as an enthusiastic performer ('At the piano sat August Stradal, the well-known full-blooded Lisztian who would actually like to outdo Liszt'⁹). His concerts included many piano four-hand performances of the symphonic poems – on one programme in Linz, given in August 1887, Stradal and August Göllerich alternated on the first and second parts in no fewer than six of the works.¹⁰ Such immersion in Liszt's music produced transcriptions of the highest quality:

Such labour demands a very special talent and aptitude that August Stradal seems to possess in high degree. What is essential must be distinguished from what is unimportant [...] and yet the resultant whole must be pianistic and effective. [...] Suffice it to say that Stradal has attended closely to Liszt's manner and is totally at home in his style.¹¹

The First World War brought August and Hildegard Stradal's most productive years to an end. By 1919 the annual Bavarian summers and their town house in Vienna were no longer affordable, and they moved to a residence that Hildegard had inherited in

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁸ Anon., 'Obituary: August Stradal', *The Musical Times*, Vol. 71, No. 1047, 1 May 1930, p. 463.

⁹ Johann Georg von Woerz, 'Concerte', *Wiener Sonn- und Montags-Zeitung*, Vol. 34, No. 45, 9 November 1896, p. 3.

¹⁰ The two performed *Die Ideale*, *Hummenschlacht*, *Orpheus*, *Mazepa*, *Tasso: Lamento e Trionfo and Festklänge* (Anon., 'Aufführungen: Linz', *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, Vol. 54, No. 83, 24 August 1887, p. 389).

¹¹ Vernon Spencer, 'Die Klavierbearbeitungen Liszt'scher Lieder von August Stradal', *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, Vol. 99, Nos. 29/30, 22 July 1903, pp. 413 and 417.

Schönlinde (Krásná Lípa), about 45 miles north-east of Stradal's birthplace. Here he led a modest teaching existence, though he made a last concert appearance in Prague in 1927 and was presented with the Czechoslovak State Music Award the year after. He was also made an honorary member of the German Academy of Music and Performing Arts in Prague, the Edinburgh Bach Society and the International Bruckner Society. He died in Krásná Lípa on 13 March 1930.¹²



The older August Stradal

¹² Hildegard Stradal lived through the Second World War, fleeing west with the wave of ethnic Germans at war's end. She died in Halle on 7 August 1948.

Stradal was also a composer of piano pieces and Lieder (over 50, often setting texts by his wife), but it was as an arranger of much of the music of his teachers Bruckner (transcriptions of six symphonies and the String Quintet) and Liszt that he was best known. Of Bach's organ works, Liszt transcribed the six Preludes and Fugues, BWV 543–48, and the 'Great' Fantasia and Fugue in G minor, BWV 542, and Bruckner 'was enthusiastic about Bach, in whom he saw the beginning, the middle and the end of all art; he was intimately familiar with the organ compositions'.¹³ Stradal's output of arrangements encompassed Gluck, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Berlioz, Brahms, Paganini, Wagner, Josef Strauss, Mahler, Richard Strauss, Reger, Friedrich Klose and Julius Reubke (one of Liszt's favourite pupils). Baroque works alone yielded transcriptions from Purcell to W. F. Bach, Johann Ludwig Krebs, Frescobaldi, Vivaldi, Handel and particularly J. S. Bach.

The reissue of Philipp Spitta's pioneering Buxtehude editions¹⁴ with revisions by his student Max Seiffert in 1903–4¹⁵ would have been the best source for Stradal to consult for his arrangements of ten of Buxtehude's organ works, which appeared in 1910, published by Schuberth of Leipzig. Stradal's transcriptions required that he reduce to two staves scores that featured multiple manuals and pedals (it has been said that Buxtehude's 'subjects are all suitable for the pedals, and the addition of the pedal part permits the extension and thickening of the contrapuntal texture, often making the works unplayable on manuals alone'¹⁶). This challenge Stradal met in the Prelude in F major (and elsewhere) by deftly integrating portions of the organ left hand into the right hand to free the pianist's left hand to play the pedal bass. Stradal also added markings of tempos, dynamics and fingerings to what a modern pianist would find a relatively empty score, as well as delineating each formal section. Reinhold Sietz observed of Stradal's resuscitations of old masters: 'Although he strove for piety with regard to the original, [...] in the organ and vocal works the virtuoso element often obscures

¹³ August Stradal, 'Bruckners Verhältnis zu seinen Vorgängern und Zeitgenossen', *Neue Musik-Zeitung*, Vol. 45, No. 12, 1924, p. 298.

¹⁴ *Dietrich Buxtehudes Orgelcompositionen*, 2 vols., ed. Philipp Spitta, Breitkopf & Härtel, Leipzig, 1875–76.

¹⁵ *Dietrich Buxtehudes Werke für Orgel*, 2 vols., ed. Philipp Spitta and Max Seiffert, Breitkopf & Härtel, Leipzig, 1903–4.

¹⁶ Snyder, 'Buxtehude, Dietrich', *The New Grove Dictionary*, loc. cit., p. 530.

Im Repertoire vieler Pianisten:

August Stradal

ca. 140 Bearbeitungen 2 hdg. über Werke von Bach, Beethoven, Berlioz, Buxtehude, Gluck, Händel, Liszt, Mozart, Paganini, Purcell, Schubert, Rich. Wagner etc., ferner ca. 50 Original-Kompositionen.

Stradal-Verzeichn. sowie Verzeichnis der Edition Schuberth kostenfrei vom Verlage

J. Schuberth & Co., Leipzig.

*Advertisement for Stradal's c. 140 transcriptions
in the Neue Zeitschrift für Musik (1918)*

detail.¹⁷ Yet Stradal certainly understood the greatness of Buxtehude's free and ostinato organ creations, and his deviations in detail were true to their more virtuosic manner. Stradal's contemporaries could appreciate these works not only in organ recitals but also in the concert hall, and they featured in the piano programmes of Alfred Cortot, Ignaz Friedman, Emil Sauer (who dedicated his *Concert Études* Nos. 11 and 12 to Stradal), and the Liszt pupil and later director of the Leipzig Conservatoire Alfred Reisenauer.

The pianist Emil Krause, trained at the Leipzig Conservatoire and professor at the Hamburg Conservatoire, reviewed several of Stradal's transcriptions in 1910:

The untiring industry of the arranger, who has been active in the area of reproducing classical works, has recently achieved a most agreeable result. First there are the Prelude and Fugue F sharp minor, Ciaconna C minor and Passacaglia D minor by the old master

¹⁷ Reinhold Sietz, 'Stradal, August', *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Vol. 12, Friedrich Blume (ed.), Bärenreiter, Kassel, 1989, p. 1418.

Dietrich Buxtehude (1637–74), who inspires the high level of interest in their present garb. These piano pieces represent new creations from the originals, and their practical playability proves to be excellent. The pious approach that limits the introduction of new ingredients that was appreciated in Stradal's earlier arrangements of Handel and Bach works is also here to be seen. [...] These are splendid compositions that point to the great Sebastian in more than one aspect. Their architectural construction and their contrapuntal variety in Stradal's pianistic arrangements make them ideal for public performance.¹⁸

Of Buxtehude's pieces for organ roughly half are settings of chorales, and the rest are 'free' organ works (those not built upon chorales) that include the seven Preludes and three ostinato pieces on this recording. Though scholars in the early twentieth century were waking to the idea of Buxtehude's importance, his extremely personal *Praeludia* were largely misunderstood. 'Until recently', wrote one scholar in 1955, 'most writers have made rather uncomplimentary remarks about the organ works, like Harvey Grace's references to the "wretched scraps"¹⁹ used for fugue subjects, and the "rambling diffuseness"²⁰ of the pedal solos.²¹ In contrast, Friedrich Blume admired the *Praeludia* for their

far-reaching fantasy, the sovereign randomness with which themes are varied, counterpoints are changed, cantus firmi are coloured. The course of a piece always remains unpredictable and the composition seems to have sprung completely from free inspiration.²²

Kerala Snyder provided a detailed guide:

the usual designation 'prelude and fugue' is found in none of the original sources and would apply correctly to only five works, those with only one fugue. [Buxtehude's] more typical procedure is to alternate toccata-like free sections with two or three fugues, the subjects of which are related in the manner of the variation canzonas of Frescobaldi and

¹⁸ Emil Krause, 'Stradal, August. Neue Bearbeitungen von D. Buxtehude und J. S. Bach', *Musikalisches Wochenblatt*, Vol. 41, No. 5, 6 May 1910, p. 58.

¹⁹ Harvey Grace, *The Organ Works of Bach*, Novello, London, 1922, p. 17.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Fairley K. Hutchins, *Dietrich Buxtehude. The Man, the Music, his Era*, Music Textbook Co., Paterson, New Jersey, 1955, p. 44.

²² Friedrich Blume (ed.), 'Buxtehude, Dietrich', *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Vol. 2, Bärenreiter, Kassel, 1989, p. 568.

Froberger. The free sections are improvisatory in character, concentrating on virtuoso passage-work both hands and feet, dramatic gestures with bold harmonic progressions, and an occasional fugato to contrast with a prevailing texture that is basically choral, albeit highly decorated. The opening section is usually the most developed, while the remaining free sections often take on a transitional or cadential character.

The fugues show a firm handling of contrapuntal technique, including the frequent appearance of double counterpoint and stretto. The subjects are decidedly instrumental in character: repeated notes, wide leaps and rests occur frequently. Each fugue consists of a series of expositions, usually confined to entrances in the tonic and dominant, with tonal answers predominating. There is very little episodic material or real modulation, these functions being fulfilled by the free sections between the fugues. The majority of these works call for obbligato pedal; this is most obvious in the virtuoso passages of the toccata sections but is equally important to the fugues. Buxtehude's fugues can indeed be considered the first body of such works to be really idiomatically conceived for the organ [...].²³

Two contemporary influences on Buxtehude's style must be acknowledged. His attendance at a Latin school had exposed him to instruction in rhetoric, which was assumed in his time to have a direct connection to the composition of music. The classical *dispositio* organised speech and music alike into different stages of argument, the main elements of which included *Exordium*, *Narratio*, *Propositio*, *Confirmatio*, *Confutatio* and *Peroratio*.²⁴

The most striking figures are placed in those parts of the works where convention requires an appeal to the emotions of the listener (*Exordium* and *Peroratio*). The fugal portions of the works embody the objective and technical qualities essential for the argumentation and amplification integral to a *Confirmatio* and a distinction is made structurally between the first and second fugues that parallels the distinction between *Narratio* and *Confirmatio*

²³ Snyder, 'Buxtehude, Dietrich', *The New Grove Dictionary*, loc. cit., p. 530.

²⁴ The six aspects of *dispositio* are given by Johann Matthesson (*Der vollkommene Capellmeister*, Herold, Hamburg, 1739, p. 235), but reflected rules of rhetoric that had changed little since Cicero.

in the classical *dispositio*. The tight motivic integration of both fugal and free material as well as careful control of pacing and climax, skilful hierarchical employment of cadences, and artistic use of repetition for emphasis and amplification point to an essentially rhetorical thought process at work.²⁵

This strictly organised technique coexisted with a new, much freer style. Ton Koopman explained:

The *stylus phantasticus* is a magic style that wants to surprise. It should bring the audience into a feeling of utter astonishment about an extremely fast pedal-solo, unexpected silences, waiting until the echo of the church is gone, keyboard changes, sudden changes of registration (done by yourself), everything too ... is fine: too fast, too slow, too much, too soft, too much articulation, too legato, etc.²⁶

Friedhelm Krummacher added: "The reciprocal relationship between strict and free composition is what is critical: while the fugal phases tend to dissipate the contrapuntal process, the toccata sections integrate themselves into the context ever more closely".²⁷ To oversimplify, 'stylus-phantasticus passages supposedly unify the works, while inserted fugues essentially provide variety'.²⁸

The incorporation of such disparate influences underscores the fact that Buxtehude was not a product of any particular organ school, and that his genius bloomed in relative isolation. In Lena Jacobson's summary,

Almost single-handedly he proceeds to develop North German organ composition and playing into a grand synthesis of Italian, Southern, and Middle German characteristics, of a scope unattained by any of his predecessors, contemporaries, or followers. Buxtehude's bold and imaginative concepts of composition with its complex mixture of Frescobaldian

²⁵ Sharon L. Gorman, *Rhetoric and Affect in the Organ Præluia of Dieterich Buxtehude (1637-1707)*, dissertation, Stanford University, Stanford, 1990, p. iv.

²⁶ Ton Koopman, 'Dietrich Buxtehude's organworks: a practical help', *The Musical Times*, Vol. 132, No. 1777, March 1991, p. 150.

²⁷ Friedhelm Krummacher, 'Stylus phantasticus und phantastische Musik: Kompositorische Verfahren in Toccaten von Frescobaldi und Buxtehude', *Schütz-Jahrbuch*, Vol. 2, 1980, p. 48.

²⁸ Leon W. Couch III, *Musical Logic and Rhetorical Persuasion in the North-German Toccata*, Dissertation, Texas A&M University, College Station, 2006, p. 56.

powerful, yet simple, rhetoric and of Middle German chorale treatment combined with an extremely sophisticated version of North German 'speaking style' writing embodied and implied a new style of performance which exploited, to a higher degree than did that of his predecessors, Italian *cantabile* expressiveness [...].²⁹

The Prelude and Fugue in A minor, buxwv153³⁰ (in four parts: Prelude [1], Fugue 1 [2], Fugue 2 [3], Toccata [4]) begins with a duet in canon and may be the composer's most sophisticated essay in the category. The first section is complex in its many interchanging motifs, there is unity in both the free and fugal sections in the development of thematic ideas, and a colossally brilliant finale concludes the work.

The dramatic Prelude and Fugue in E minor, buxwv143 (in four parts: Prelude [6], Fugue 1 [7], Fugue 2 [8], *Adagio*), opens its short prelude with weighty pedal points and the tactical use of rests. Afterwards two very chromatic fugues are presented.

For the long and detailed Prelude and Fugue in E minor, buxwv142 (in four parts: Prelude [9], Fugue 1 [10], Fugue 2 [11], Fugue 3 [12]), Kerala J. Snyder makes a secure guide:

The subjects are somewhat related thematically, each featuring a prominent octave leap combined with conjunct motion. Viewed historically, this piece is a descendant of the variation canzona cultivated by Frescobaldi. But beyond that, each of these well-developed fugues presents a contrast in 'affection': the first playful, the second pathetic, the last almost bravura-like in its extroverted octave leaps, cast in gigue rhythm. The second fugue, in $\frac{3}{2}$ time with a descending chromatic line, evokes as much pathos as any 17th century opera aria. This is all the more remarkable when its contrapuntal intricacies are taken into account: it has two counter-subjects, the first of which is nearly a retrograde of the subject, and many entrances of the subject in contrary motion as well as stretto. The dissonance treatment, however, is in the modern theatrical style. The third of the fugues provides further contrast by abjuring contrapuntal texture in favour of an essentially homophonic accompaniment of the subject and a concertato passage in the middle. This work is a masterpiece, and it must

²⁹ Lena Jacobson, 'Musical Rhetoric in Buxtehude's Free Organ Works,' *The Organ Yearbook: A Journal for the Players & Historians of Keyboard Instruments*, Vol. 8, Laaber-Verlag, Laaber, 1982, p. 60.

³⁰ Buxwv, or Buxtehude Werk-Verzeichnis ('Work Catalogue') is the work-numbering system used in Georg Karstädt's *Thematisch-Systematisches Verzeichnis der musikalischen Werke Dietrich Buxtehude*, Breitkopf & Härtel, Wiesbaden, 1985

have been recognized as such at a very early date, for it is the only piece to appear in all four of the major manuscripts which transmit Buxtehude's *praeludia*.³¹

The Prelude and Fugue in D minor, buxwv140, is divisible into five parts: a Prelude and two Fugues, with each of the latter followed by a free section. The Prelude [14] 'presents 6ths and 3rds above an organ point, and a falling motif with and without tonal repetition in sections of imitation implemented in Fauxbourdon technique'.³² The subjects of Fugues 1 [15] and 2 [16] are noteworthy for their audacious octave jumps, and Fugue 1 demonstrates the compositional intricacies of adding two counter-subjects. Christoph Albrecht especially admired Buxtehude's subtle use of the less incisive second-inversion chords, mentioning that their use at the end of the piece 'is so well prepared that we can hardly imagine it done any better',³³ and Hans-Jakob Pauly concluded, 'It can be accepted as a surety that J. S. Bach studied this piece in great detail'.³⁴

A duet in canon starts the austere Prelude and Fugue in G minor, buxwv150 (in four parts: Prelude [17], Fugue 1 [18], Fugue 2 [19], Fugue 3 [20]). Fugues 1 and 2 are strictly composed but Fugue 3 combines disparate subjects over a thoroughbass.

The fugue subject of the Prelude [22] and Fugue [23] in F major, buxwv145 (in only two parts), recalls Handel, but its breadth of scope evokes Bach. That only one fugue appears in the work is doubtless a reflection of the prolonged length of the theme. The pedal part demands a virtuoso technique.

In the Prelude and Fugue in F sharp minor, buxwv146, in three parts, a solemn central Fugue [25] is balanced by the surrounding lively Prelude [24] and Toccata [26]. The Prelude begins in semiquaver figures

that are followed by a series of truly Buxtehudian chord sequences. Then with the *Grave* the double fugue appears, in thematic invention one of the most beautiful of the master

³¹ Kerala J. Snyder, 'Buxtehude's Organ Music: Drama without Words', *The Musical Times*, Vol. 120, No. 1636, June 1979, pp. 517-19.

³² Josef Hedar, *Dieterich Buxtehude's Orgelwerke. Zu Geschichte des norddeutschen Orgelstils*, Nordiska Musikförlaget, Stockholm, 1951, p. 183. Fauxbourdon was an old harmonic technique that used first-inversion chords in parallel motion.

³³ Christoph Albrecht (ed.), 'Vorwort', *Dieterich Buxtehude (1637-1707): Neue Ausgabe sämtlicher Freien Orgelwerke*, Vol. 1, Bärenreiter, Kassel, 1994, pp. vi-vii.

³⁴ Hans-Jakob Pauly, *Die Fuge in den Orgelwerken Dieterich Buxtehudes*, Bosse, Regensburg, 1964, p. 117.

and in its deep expression pointing directly to Bach. After this splendid section, the contrary theme in *Vivace* first announces itself in this guise, permeating all four voices, drawing the main theme to itself. It then modulates into the parallel major, not permitted in the melancholy Grave: three semiquavers begin to develop in more powerful motivic germination, and a fresh spirit-awakening rushes over the piece. At this stage the composer liberates his imagination. A free organ recitative is heard, and when it turns to the dominant of the home key there begins [...] the most charming playing and weaving, inexhaustible and insatiable and with ever greater brilliance and tonal range. The complete uniformity of ideas, the deliberate change and progress in moods, the high contrapuntal art, the radiant technique unleashing all the means of the organ; all make this composition a true masterpiece of German organ music.³⁵

The three ostinato works share similarities, as all are in triple metre, employ thematic patterns of four bars in the minor and use pedal extensively. The chaconnes abound in touches of *stylus phantasticus*. The Chaconne in E minor, buxwv160 [5], presents an extremely simple theme that undergoes frequent modulation and unexpected chromaticism. Conversely, in the Chaconne in C minor, buxwv159 [21], the theme always reappears in C minor (though its form varies), and only the interludes between the theme depart from the home key. The Passacaglia in D minor, buxwv161 [13], begins with a simple but evocative four-bar theme. The whole is divided into four nearly equal sections in the respective keys of D minor, F major, A minor and D minor. The theme appears seven times in each of these sections, always moving from slower to faster note-values as the section progresses with mesmerising mathematical regularity.

Buxtehude's spellbinding Passacaglia has made a mark in the more than three centuries since its composition. Scholars agree that the piece must have been known to Bach, whose style owes much to it. The music historian Philipp Spitta,³⁶ responsible

³⁵ Philipp Spitta, *Johann Sebastian Bach*, Vol. 1, Breitkopf & Härtel, Leipzig, 1921, pp. 271–72.

³⁶ Spitta (1841–94) began his studies at the University of Göttingen in theology, as did his father and brother, but eventually earned a doctorate in classical philology. He balanced a series of teaching posts with an increasingly expert musical life that brought him into informed musical circles (including the choral circle around Julius Otto). He also wrote on musical subjects, notably on Bach (*Johann Sebastian Bach*, Breitkopf & Härtel, Leipzig, Vol. 1, 1873, and Vol. 2, 1880), and was appointed Professor of Music History at the University of Berlin in 1875.

for the first publication of Buxtehude's organ works, had long been occupied with scholarly editions of Baroque masters that were viewed with interest by an informed circle of acquaintances. On 29 December 1873 Spitta was still sifting through the extant copyist's transcriptions of Buxtehude (none of the composer's own manuscripts having survived). He wrote to one interested acquaintance: 'I am having Buxtehude's Ciaconas and Passacaglio [*sic*], as well as an unpublished Bach Cantata, copied out for you right now'.³⁷ Having received the copies, the recipient of the letter responded:

Honoured Sir,

Please allow me to make a hasty inquiry. When I come across such beautiful things as the Ciacona in D minor of Buxtehude, I find it difficult to resist telling a publisher about them, simply to spread the joy further. [...]

In haste, with best regards,

Your very devoted

J. Brahms³⁸

In Hermann Hesse's novel *Demian* (1919), the narrator Emil Sinclair, guided by his enigmatic schoolmate Max Demian, sought out a succession of mentors to address life's profound questions. The priest-organist Pistorius helped him to a knowledge of himself, with the help of Buxtehude:

When I was depressed, I would ask Pistorius to play the Passacaglia by old Buxtehude. In the dusky dark church, I would sit lost in this strangely intimate, self-absorbed and self-aware music, which always comforted me and helped me recognise my own inner voices.³⁹

William Melton did his graduate studies in music history at the University of California at Los Angeles and spent his career as a horn-player in the Sinfonie Orchester Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle). He is the author of The Wagner Tuba: A History (edition ebenos, Aachen, 2008) and Humperdinck: A Life

³⁷ Letter from Spitta to Johannes Brahms, 29 December 1873, in Carl Krebs (ed.), *Johannes Brahms im Briefwechsel mit Philipp Spitta, Briefwechsel*, Vol. 16, Deutsche Brahms-Gesellschaft, Berlin, 1920, p. 52.

³⁸ Letter from Brahms to Spitta, 19 January 1874, in *ibid.*, pp. 53–54. Brahms used the expression 'Ciacona' but was referring to Buxtehude's Passacaglia.

³⁹ Hermann Hesse, *Demian. Die Geschichte von Emil Sinclairs Jugend*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt, 1974, p. 109.

of the Composer of *Hänsel und Gretel* (Toccata Press, London, in preparation). In addition, he is a contributor to The Cambridge Wagner Encyclopedia (2013) and he has researched and edited the scores of the 'Forgotten Romantics' series for the publisher edition *ebenos*.

The Chinese concert pianist **Meilin Ai** has performed extensively in Europe, North America and Asia. She has been heard at the Gijon Music Festival in Spain, Amalfi Festival in Italy, International Holland Music Sessions in the Netherlands and the Metronomen Hall in Denmark, as well as within Canada and the United States, including Vancouver, San Francisco, Chicago and various cities in Texas and Maine. In China she organised and performed a benefit-recital for the non-profit 2008 Wen Chuan Earthquake Reconstruction, and received high critical praise. She was described as 'one of the best young pianists of the decade' by *Yin Xiang* magazine, and the internationally renowned pianist and educator Zhou Guang Ren called her 'a talented rising star'.

Meilin Ai started playing the piano at the age of five, and made her debut at seven, playing Mozart's F major Piano Sonata, K332. Since then, she has won numerous awards in national and international competitions, including the Second Chinese National Arts Competition (in Piano Performance), the Second Macau International Competition, the 2014 Pacific Musical Society Competition and the 2018–19 American Prize (in Piano Performance solo division and concerto division). She has also published a dissertation entitled *An Introduction to Contemporary Characteristics in Twentieth-Century Piano Music for the Late-Intermediate Student: A Pedagogical Analysis of the Bagatelles, Opus 5, by Alexander Tcherepnin*, available via Proquest.

She studied with Zheng Da Xin and Tang Bo in the preparatory school of the Sichuan Conservatory of Music and graduated with the prestigious President's Award in 2010. She then went to the United States to continue studying piano performance at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, where she worked with Sharon Mann and graduated with a Bachelor



of Music degree in 2014. She gained her Master of Music degree in piano performance in Northwestern University in 2016, where she studied with James Giles, and finally was granted her Doctor of Musical Arts degree in piano performance with Joseph Banowetz at the University of North Texas. She is currently a full-time faculty member of the College of Music of the Sichuan Normal University in China.



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Producer, engineer and editor: Ronald Meyer
Mastering: Adaq Khan

Booklet essay: William Melton
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in a detail from a painting by Johannes Voorhout, 1674
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