

## Music Reviews

**Dieterich Buxtehude: *Laudate pueri Dominum* Chiaccona for 2 sopranos, 6 viols and basso continuo BuxWV 69 Edited by Günter and Leonore von Zadow. Edition Güntersberg G123**

As Annette Otterstedt points out in her entertaining preface, it is unusual for viole da gamba to be called for in a setting of such a joyful text as Psalm 112; viols were generally associated with elegiac or pathetic moods. The presence of the higher members of the family is also rare by this date (1675 is suggested as the date of composition).

The piece, in d minor, is described as a *Chiaccona*, being based on a repeating 8 bar 'walking' bass line which is unrelated to the *ciaccona* bass. The setting is punctuated by a ritornello played by the viols. Buxtehude resists the temptation to use the ritornello as the usual pun at 'sicut erat in principio' in the 'Gloria Patri', although the piece finishes with it, giving the viols the last word, with a marvellously sonorous D major chord.

The two soprano parts, presumably originally taken by boys (the 'pueri' of the psalm), have ranges from middle c to the g or a above the treble clef. There is plenty of figuration in the vocal parts, which mainly work as a pair in dialogue with the viols, although the first soprano has several short solos accompanied by the ensemble.

The edition itself is clear and well laid out, and having the vocal parts printed together with the continuo line is a neat solution. Some of the editorial decisions are slightly puzzling, particularly in the choice of clefs. The original clefs (soprano, alto, alto, tenor, tenor, bass) in the viol parts suggest an ensemble of 4 sizes of viols – treble, two tenors, two basses and great bass are suggested in the preface. The treble part ascends only to e, so would suit an alto instrument in A (whether such an instrument was known to Buxtehude is another matter). In the edition the second and third viols (both of identical range) are given in treble and alto clefs respectively, presumably to allow the second part to be taken by a violin, although a viola would be more appropriate if the viols are to be replaced by violin family instruments, and tenor viol players might not find the clef very helpful. Similarly the two parts originally in tenor clef are presented here in alto clef and bass clef, though they share essentially the same range. The separate continuo part (there is a keyboard realisation in the score) is unfigured; this is as in the original, but a theorbo or lute player would doubtless find some figuring useful, especially as the harmony changes subtly with each statement of the bass.

These are relatively trivial concerns, and should not cause too many problems in performance. If you can get 6 viols and 2 sopranos together this would be a very exciting piece to play and sing, and it is refreshing to have something festive including viols. The viol parts are not difficult, but are still interesting to play, and the whole effect is very sumptuous – well worth having for the larger gathering.

*Andrew Kerr*