

Dieterich Buxtehude Sonata D-Dur für Viola da Gamba, Violone oder 2. Viola da Gamba und Basso continuo BuxWV 267
Edition Güntersberg G127

Dieterich Buxtehude Sonata C-Dur für zwei Violinen Viola da Gamba und Basso Continuo BuxWV 266
Edition Güntersberg G133

As 2007 was the anniversary year of Buxtehude's death, there was a steady stream of new editions of his chamber works being produced and in particular by this publisher, Editions Guentersberg, a company based in Heidelberg, Germany, which specialises in German baroque chamber music that feature the viola da gamba. All of their publications that I've come across so far have been excellent, and if you glance at their catalogue at www.guentersberg.de, you will see Buxtehude's works feature especially highly on their productions list. They have an excellent line up of performer-musicologist-software specialists on their editing team, so one can be assured of quality and informed service from their company. The two works I'm reviewing here are of very different nature from one another, a sonata for solo bass gamba with another obbligato bass instrument, and a 'quartet' of two violins, gamba and continuo. I shall begin with the sonata in D for viola da gamba, violone and continuo.

G127 This sonata comes as a new discovery for me, as the only gamba sonata by Buxtehude I knew of was the solo one in D major (with continuo), which I think used to be available in a heavily edited modern print from Peters Edition, but is now no longer so. Perhaps it may be the novelty of finding a new piece, but from a personal point of view, this particular sonata, also in D major, is I think a far more interesting piece than the other one, partly because of the attractive melodic writing but also because of the added perk of having an obbligato violone part - a somewhat unusual addition. I was reminded of numerous other instances where the string bass continuo actually diverts itself into an independent part (for example in Schenck's second sonata from *L'Echo du Danube*) but none of which actually has such a clear specification. The original of the Buxtehude sonata gives us 'violdigamba', 'violon' and 'Conti'o', on parts kept in the Universitätsbibliothek Uppsala, in Sweden. No original score survives. 'Violon' in this instance clearly means 'violone' (not violin) which very likely refers to a large eight-foot pitch bass string instrument, six string and fretted, commonly used in Germany as a continuo instrument at this time. It is normally tuned in G an octave lower than a tenor viol. In modern context it may not be the easiest instrument to find, but it should not deter you from buying and trying out this sonata because one can actually get away with the 'violone' part played on other instruments that qualify under this term, as suggested in the Preface. Late 17th century players designated 'violone' to basically anything that is large, bowed, and in fashion; Corelli for example, referred to 'violone' on the continuo part of his violin sonatas, but the norm these days is almost

always to use a 'cello'. The range of the violone part in Buxtehude's sonata does not exceed the bottom D of a bass viol, so in fact another bass viol will suffice, though with this combination one loses the tonal distinction between the two independent parts in their solos. A 'cello, bass violin, or a large bass viol, are good alternatives.

G133 The scoring of the 'quartet' is more familiar particularly to those who are acquainted with Buxtehude's set of violin-gamba-continuo trios; in this case however, there are two violin parts as well as the independent gamba. Violin I takes precedence over the other two obbligato instruments, and to it Buxtehude gives extensive solo sections and flashy virtuosic passages, often in the free, *stylus phantasticus* form Buxtehude so championed. As well as enriching the texture, Violin 2 and the obbligato gamba, as Guentersberg points out, highlights the contrasts between solo and tutti sections, as well as marking out fugal entries, answering thematic motifs and emphasizing homophonic movements. Two other sonatas of this same configuration survives, one in F major and the other in G major, both only in manuscript form in the Uppsala University Library (i.e., not printed in Buxtehude's lifetime), but now available from Guentersberg. G134; G135

Musically speaking both of these sonatas portray Buxtehude at his melodic best, and show his knowledge and sympathy for each of the string instruments to great effect. The violone part in the solo gamba sonata is distinct from the basso continuo in that it plays an elaboration of it while at other times strays away to be in thirds or sixths with the viol. This is very much in line the violin-gamba-continuo trio set up mentioned above, and which is also adhered to in the 'quartet' where the viol is now the obbligato bass instrument. But in the gamba sonata the *solis* are more equally divided, and here the violone player has an entire section of athletic leaps and bounds to look forward to, certainly an amusement for both player and spectator in the performance!

As usual with Edition Guentersberg, the product fulfils all the modern expectations of what a practical scholarly edition should be. Both sets come with a score, a part each for the individual solo instruments and basso continuo, and finally a realised continuo part, the realisation of which is exemplary in both cases. Figures are large and bold, and I really applaud their inclusion even in the single continuo part - useful when an extra continuo player is needed. Page turns have been thought out with care, and the one or two awkward ones in the realised continuo part and score are obviously unavoidable instances that present minute problems in an overall impressive setting.