

Preface

Dieterich Buxtehude was probably born in Helsingborg, Denmark (today Sweden), around 1637. In 1667 he received the position of organist at Lübeck's Marienkirche, one of the most important churches in Northern Germany, and soon became known for his brilliant organ playing. His compositions for organ are today considered among the most important in this genre before J.S. Bach, who in 1706 visited Buxtehude in Lübeck in order to learn from him. Moreover, Buxtehude's sacred choral music is of exceptional importance, belonging, alongside his organ works, to today's standard church music repertoire. Buxtehude died, highly esteemed, in 1707.

As part of his duties, Buxtehude was required to organize and direct "Abendmusik" concerts several times a year. For these concerts he composed chamber music, including his 14 sonatas for violin, viola da gamba, and continuo. These formed his only major publication (1694? and 1696) during his lifetime, from which we can conclude that Buxtehude attached great artistic importance to these sonatas. In addition, there are several manuscript sonatas for viola da gamba and one or two violins, and a single sonata for viola da gamba solo. The latter is presented here in a modern edition. It is assumed that on the whole these manuscript sonatas were written before the publication of the abovementioned 14 sonatas.

The manuscript of the present sonata is housed in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, under the shelfmark **GB-Ob Ms. Mus. Sch. D. 249, pp. 128-129**. It is a copyist's copy in score form, entitled "Violada-gamba Solo. / Sonata. / di Diederich Buxtehude," with one staff for the viola da gamba and one for the (unfigured) bass.

This sonata is listed in the catalogue of Buxtehude's works¹ under the number **BuxWV 268**. However, the Buxtehude expert Kerala J. Snyder² has called his authorship into doubt on the basis of stylistic differences between this work and the abovementioned printed sonatas.³ It lacks the fixed structure that distinguishes his other sonatas, and there are no other solo sonatas by Buxtehude; it is largely a melody part over a supporting bass line, i.e., it lacks the alternation, characteristic of Buxtehude, between the viol and the continuo that is found, for example, in the opening sonata of the cantata "Jubilate Domino."⁴ However, Folkmar Längin, in the postscript to his modern edition of this sonata (1956), emphasizes in particular the similarities to this very same cantata.⁵ Be that as it may, we are of the opinion that the doubts as to the authorship should not prevent one from playing this beautiful and, in the viola da gamba literature, unique work.

Our edition consists of a facsimile of the complete manuscript and a practical modern edition. The facsimile was kindly placed at our disposal by the "Viola da Gamba Archiv" of Dr. K. H. Pauls, Solingen-Merscheid.

Our modern edition follows the original musical text as far as possible. The original beaming, clef changes, and accidentals have been retained if possible. In several passages we have corrected mistakes and other inconsistencies, identifying these with annotations in the score. To make the sonata accessible to keyboard players not practiced in continuo playing, the score contains a realization of the unfigured bass part.

We are indebted to Johannes Boer for his help in obtaining the facsimile, to Dankwart von Zadow for the continuo realization, and Howard Weiner for the translation of this preface.

Leonore and Günter von Zadow
Heidelberg, April 2005

Translation: Howard Weiner

¹ Georg Karstädt, *Thematisch-systematisches Verzeichnis der musikalischen Werke von Dietrich Buxtehude*, 2nd edition, Wiesbaden, 1985.

² Kerala J. Snyder, *Dieterich Buxtehude: Organist in Lübeck*, New York, 1987.

³ For this reason, this sonata is labeled "authenticity questionable" in the current editions of MGG and *The New Grove*.

⁴ Dieterich Buxtehude, cantata "Jubilate Domino, omnis terra" for alto, viola da gamba, and b.c., BuxWV 64.

⁵ Folkmar Längin, *Dieterich Buxtehude, Sonata D-Dur für Viola da gamba und Cembalo*, Mainz, 1956.