

Introduction

At the mature age of almost sixty, Dietrich Buxtehude (whose date and place of birth are not known) published two collections of instrumental chamber music that – with the exception of the odd occasional composition such as the *Klag-Lied* (“Lament”) on the death of his father – contain the only (surviving) music to appear in print during his lifetime. Opus 1, printed by Nicolaus Spiering in Hamburg at Buxtehude’s own expense, does not specify a date of publication, but is listed in a catalogue from 1694. Buxtehude dedicated the seven sonatas for violin, viola da gamba, and harpsichord, as the continuo instrument, to his superiors, “the burgomasters and council members of the Imperial Free and the Holy Roman Empire’s City of Lübeck.” The title page of Opus 2 verifies that the sonatas found favor and were apparently also a financial success, since the printing costs this time, in 1696, were assumed by the publisher Nicolaus Spiering. The dedicatee was Burgomaster Johann Ritter, Buxtehude’s special patron.

The reason for the composition and publication of the two sonata collections is not necessarily to be found in the duties of Buxtehude’s office. As organist and *Werkmeister* (bookkeeper) of Lübeck’s Marienkirche, which was the *Ratskirche* (i.e., church of the town council), and therefore the city’s main church, Buxtehude enjoyed over a period of forty years, until his death in 1707, a situation and salary that by far exceeded those of the positions he previously held as organist in Hälsingborg and Helsingør, and that established his reputation far beyond the borders of Lübeck. The city’s rich musical life, which was nearly on a par with that of Copenhagen, and also had no reason to fear a comparison with that of the nearby flourishing musical metropolis of Hamburg, was primarily provided by the *Ratsmusik* (i.e., town band). Lübeck’s seven town musicians (during Buxtehude’s tenure), who were highly qualified and, like Buxtehude, under contract to the burgomasters and town council, not only had to serve the council and the citizens of the town at public and private festivities, but were also required to participate in the church music when necessary. A sizable amount of Buxtehude’s surviving music – both cantatas as well as the large, free organ works – was composed independent of his obligations as organist. The continuation of the Lübeck *Abendmusik* (“evening music”) performances, which had been initiated by his predecessor Franz Tunder, also lay outside the actual obligations of his office. Although Buxtehude clearly transcended the boundaries of his prescribed duties with his composition of instrumental ensemble music, he was by no means the only organist of his time to create works – as an expression of learnedness, artistic pride and class consciousness – for which from the very start there was no predetermined function. For example, a collection of sonatas and suites for two violins, viola da gamba, and basso continuo, entitled *Hortus musicus*, by Johann Adam Reincken, Buxtehude’s old friend and colleague in Hamburg, appeared even before Buxtehude’s Opus 1. The purpose that such instrumental music may have served is explained in Buxtehude’s statement of 1684 in which he announced the publication of a collection of sonatas for two or three violins, viola da gamba, and basso continuo that however presumably never appeared: “appropriate as church and table music.” It is thus conceivable that the sonatas of Opera 1 and 2 were to be heard on religious holidays and during Communion in Lübeck’s Marienkirche, and that the sonatas from the quill of the famous Lübeck organist were also anxiously awaited by the (professional) virtuoso string players of Lübeck and Hamburg as well as by amateur musicians.

A comparison of Buxtehude’s Opera 1 and 2 with contemporary sonata collections shows a decisive difference: Whereas Adam Reincken’s *Hortus musicus* (1687) and Philipp Heinrich Erlebach’s volume of sonatas for violin, viola da gamba, and basso continuo (1694)¹ follow the usual grouping of six sonatas each, and Johann Rosenmüller offers twelve (two times six) sonatas (1682), in Buxtehude, both in Opera 1 and 2, as well as in the cantatas of *Membra Jesu nostri* (BuxWV 75) and the lost keyboard suites on the nature and character of the seven planets, a compilation of seven sonatas (or cantatas) is always to be found. The number seven in Buxtehude’s sonata collections is, among other things, a reflection of the tonalities of the seven-tone scale in the musical microcosm:

Keys: Opus 1 – F G A B-flat C d e Opus 2 – B-flat D g c A E F

In this manner, the two sets of seven sonatas encompass, starting from F Major, all the major and minor keys of the diatonic seven-tone scale (with the exception of F Minor and B-flat Minor). That Buxtehude considered his Opera 1 and 2 to be a unified whole is shown by the dedicatory text to Opus 1 in which he referred to the collection as the first part of his sonatas. The number seven simultaneously symbolizes time (the seven days of the week), the seven wonders of the world, the seven liberal arts, and the seven planets known at that time, which Buxtehude had in view every day on the astronomical clock in Lübeck’s Marienkirche. According to numerology, seven is the number of repentance (the seven penitential Psalms) and the number of completion (in seven days God created heaven and earth). The German expression “Pack Deine Siebensachen” (lit.: “pack up your seven belongings”) also derives from this. Yet, the extent to which Buxtehude was aware of this symbolism, and unconsciously followed it, is not known for sure. “Music is an inner exercise of the soul that does not know that it counts” (Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz).

With the preference for the viola da gamba, Buxtehude’s choice of instruments follows the German instrumental tradition. To be sure, his combination of just a single violin, viola da gamba, and basso continuo is not without precedent (a volume of sonatas from 1674 by Hamburg’s municipal Kapellmeister Dietrich Becker contains, among other things, a

¹ Philipp Heinrich Erlebach, *Sonatas I-VI*, ed. L. and G. von Zadow (Heidelberg: Güntersberg, 2004), G051-G056.

sonata for the same instrumentation),¹ but nevertheless deviates from the common practice. The substitution of a (second) violin for the viola da gamba, as Erlebach suggested for his collection, which likewise appeared in 1694, is unthinkable in Buxtehude's sonatas. The compass required of the bass instrument, ranging over three octaves up into the tenor and alto registers, precludes a substitution. The variety of clefs employed in the viola da gamba part (alto, tenor, and bass clefs), as well as the appearance of alto and tenor clefs in the harpsichord part, is a visible expression of the level of activity in the part writing. Whereas in Reincken's *Hortus musicus* the viola da gamba mostly remains in the bass register and frequently doubles the continuo part, Buxtehude offers the instrument more diverse duties: occasionally it doubles the continuo part, or rather embellishes it, and forms a two-part texture with the violin; then, on the other hand, the viol plays completely independent of the continuo part in the alto register, so that a three-part texture is created together with the violin and harpsichord.

Nowhere else in Buxtehude's *oeuvre* does one find such an abundance of tempo indications. Fast movements or sections are marked *Vivace*, *Allegro*, *Presto*, and *Prestissimo*, slower movements with *Adagio*, *Lento*, *Grave*, and *Largo*. With the exception of *Vivace*, these are exactly the indications that Reincken gives in his textbook *Arithmetica harmonicae Compendium / Erste Unterrichtung zur Composition* (1670; "First instruction in composition"). Reincken and Buxtehude also share the same understanding of the exchangeability and sameness of meaning of the individual tempo indications for identical solo passages in the violin and the viola da gamba: *Largo* and *Adagio*, *Presto* and *Allegro* in Reincken's *Hortus musicus*, *Adagio* and *Lento*, *Lento* and *Largo*, *Vivace* and *Allegro*, *Poco Presto* and *Poco Allegro* in Buxtehude's *Opera 1* and *2*. In his fourteen sonatas, Buxtehude almost always follows his own personal rule of alternating quick and slow sections; only extremely seldom do two sections of basically similar tempo follow immediately after one another.

Whereas at the time of publication of *Opera 1* and *2* many Italian sonatas were in four movements, the course of Buxtehude's sonatas is entirely unpredictable and incorporates the *Stylo phantastico* that was described, among others, by the polymath Athanasius Kircher (1650) and such writers on music as Sébastien de Brossard (1703), Johann Gottfried Walther (1732), and Johann Mattheson (1739). "Stilo Fantastico, Latin: Stylus Phantasticus, belongs to instruments and is a manner of composing that is entirely free of all constraint" (Walther). In Buxtehude's handwriting, it displays over long stretches the character of a notated improvisation. It is the juxtaposition of the *Stylo phantastico* with strict (contrapuntal, learned) compositional technique that lends Buxtehude's sonatas their captivating unpredictability.

Leipzig, April 2006
Thomas Fritzsich

Our Edition

Our knowledge of Buxtehude's Sonatas op. 1 and op. 2 is based on the print in the **Uppsala University Library**, call number **Utl.instr.tr. 52:1-4**. The title of op. 2 reads: *VII. SUONATE / à deux, / Violino et Violadagamba / con / Cembalo, / dà / Dieterico Buxtehude, / Direttore dell' organo / del glorioso Tempio Santa Maria / in / Lubeca. / Opera secunda. / Stampata in Hamburgo ... M. DC. XCVI*. There are three part books, for *Violino*, *Violadagamba*, and *Cembalo*.

Our edition has been prepared for *practical* use, although deviations from the original are indicated. For further information please consult the original,² the latest scholarly edition,³ and the definitive book on Buxtehude.⁴

We have retained the original clefs, with two relatively seldom exceptions: We have replaced the tenor clef in the viol part, and the alto and tenor clefs in the harpsichord part with clefs appropriate to the situation. These hidden clef changes are indicated in the musical text by symbols: [T ... T] indicates a passage in originally tenor clef, and [A ... A] a passage originally in alto clef. In the original source, Buxtehude followed the usage in which an accidental only affects the note before which it is placed and for immediate repetitions of this tone. In order to come closer to the musical experience of the seventeenth century, we have included *all* original accidentals,⁵ including those that are repeated within the same measure. However, in order to avoid confusion, we have added natural signs in all places where they are necessary according to modern usage. *All* editorial accidentals are in brackets. The beaming largely follows the original. In several places, however, we have harmonized neighboring measures and unison passages, since some of the original beamings seem to be a result of typographical, and not musical issues. Missing bar lines have been added.

Besides a score, our edition also includes the three individual parts. Moreover, for less experienced continuo players there is a "Continuo-Cembalo" part that contains a completely worked-out realization of the figured bass in addition to the three parts.

¹ Dietrich Becker, *Sonata à 2. Violino & Violdagamba*, ed. L. and G. von Zadow (Heidelberg: Güntersberg, 2005), G064 and G502 (facsimile).

² Dietrich Buxtehude, *VII. Suonate à deux, violino et viola da gamba con cembalo, Opera secunda, 1696*, facs. edn., ed. Marie-Françoise Bloch (Courlay: Fuzeau, 2003).

³ Dietrich Buxtehude: *The Collected Works 14*, ed. Eva Linfield (New York: Broude, 1994).

⁴ Kerala J. Snyder, *Dieterich Buxtehude: Organist in Lübeck* (New York: Schirmer, 1987).

⁵ Whereas the cancellation of an accidental in the original is frequently indicated by a sharp or a flat, we always employ a natural sign in accordance with modern usage. (In the bass figures, we have retained the original signs.)

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