

Introduction

Buxtehude's sole Mass composition is a *Missa brevis* that includes only the first two main sections of the five-part *Ordinarium missae*. Since German hymns were preferred for the Credo, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei in the Protestant rite, there are not a few examples of this "Lutheran short Mass." The original title, however, reads "Missa alla brevis" and therefore refers to the notation of the music. The *brevis*, with the value of two whole notes, serves here as the fundamental unit; the *minima* (half note) functions as the most important value for the conveyance of the syllables; while the *semiminima* and *fusa* (quarter and eighth notes) are generally employed only for melismas and ornaments. This notational practice, which was established already in the sixteenth century, found use into the eighteenth century and was taken up again in the nineteenth century in order to create a connection to a kind of stylistic ethos.

The Romantic idea of a "purity of the art of music" found its ideal in the music of Palestrina, and was complemented by the ideology of a pure vocal sound. This disregarded the actual content of the term "da capella," which, except for the special case of the papal choir, always meant the collaboration of singers and instrumentalists. Since Buxtehude's Mass is not in the concerted style, it thus reckons with the participation of singers and instrumentalists. Its minimal setting therefore demands five singers and a keyboard instrument for which the manuscript does not provide an independent part, but rather a *basso seguente* that always plays the lowest voice of the texture, whereby crossings of voices are seldom taken into account. For this reason, and also because of the incomplete bass figures, the continuo player has no chance, for example, of anticipating the *c* in the tenor at measure 12 of the Gloria, and of avoiding an embarrassing clash with the chord on *G*. The instrumental bass part can therefore hardly stem from the composer, who undoubtedly would have had in mind score playing from a specially prepared tablature.

Another variant scoring entirely usual at that time would have involved *colla-parte* doubling by several instruments, with each of the voice parts then possibly being sung by multiple voices. A viol consort would be appropriate for this, for the sound of this family of instruments, whose members were not coincidentally specified by the voice ranges (from discant to bass viol), was considered closely related to that of the vocal ensemble. It is known that such consorts contributed to the splendor of many a princely court, without a repertoire justifying this role being known. Yet there is evidence for the purely instrumental performance of madrigals, the most progressive vocal music of the time.

A closer look at Buxtehude's Mass ultimately reveals a more instrumental than vocal concept. This speaks in favor of exactly this purely instrumental setting as an advantageous and rewarding alternative to the other usually mentioned possibilities. The tripartite Kyrie can easily be identified as a variation canon. It thus follows the model introduced to Northern Germany by Johann Jakob Froberger, and which Buxtehude also employed in his organ music. To be sure, a similarly surprisingly simple solution cannot be repeated for the verbose Gloria, but here too Buxtehude was able to take recourse to an instrumental model likewise further developed by Froberger: the *ricercare*. It strings together sections of self-sufficient musical ideas that can then be combined with one another, and as a result of these combinations it wins qualities which go beyond mere text presentation. Buxtehude implements such stimuli, for example, with the parallel use of several text fragments and their subjects in measures 54-70, or with the interlacing of two different subjects over the same text in measures 71-79. *Ricercars* were written for keyboard instruments. However, their strict voice leading makes it possible to entrust them to an instrumental ensemble, for example, a viol consort.

Heidelberg, February 2008
Gunther Morche

Our Edition

Our edition of Buxtehude's *Missa alla brevis* is based on the only preserved manuscript copy in the Düben Collection: **S-Uu Vok. mus. i hskr. 6:16**. The manuscript consists of six individual untitled parts in the following clefs: treble clef (Soprano I), soprano clef (Soprano II), alto clef (Alto), tenor clef (Tenor), bass clef (Bass), and a part employing all of the above clefs (Basso continuo). The basso continuo part carries the annotation "Missa a. 4. alla brevis. / di / Dieterico Buxtehude." The number "4" is obviously an error. Earlier doubts concerning Buxtehude's authorship of this work have meanwhile been refuted by Kerala J. Snyder.¹

¹ Kerala J. Snyder, *Dieterich Buxtehude – Organist in Lübeck, Revised Edition* (University of Rochester Press, 2007), 224.

Our edition has been prepared for *practical* use – also by instrumentalists – and follows the source as close as possible. The clefs of the middle voices have been replaced by those in common use today. The original note values have been retained, missing bar lines restored, and accidentals placed according to today's usage. Added ties and slurs are printed as dotted lines, altered notes indicated in footnotes.

The basso continuo part is reproduced as it stands in the manuscript, but with clefs in common use today. The part being doubled by the continuo is indicated by small letters over the first note of the doubled passage (S1 and S2 = Soprano I and II, A=Alto, T=Tenor, B=Bass). Moreover, the clef usually changes, as in the source, when the doubling shifts to a different voice.

We like to thank Gunther Morche for his introduction, and Howard Weiner for the translation of this introduction.

Heidelberg, February 2008
 Leonore von Zadow-Reichling
 Günter von Zadow
 Translation: Howard Weiner



Der Titel steht verkehrt herum am Ende der Bass-Stimme
 The title is written upside down on the end of the Bass part