

Thesis Abstract of DLA Dissertation

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The 'Passion' of Dietrich Buxtehude

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## I. The antecedents of the research

In secondary school already the life-work of Buxtehude grabbed me and especially the *Membra Jesu Nostri* cycle. Later at the Music Academy I had the opportunity to study his pieces in the volumes of the complete edition. Since these pieces can be heard in Hungary relatively rarely I decided to form a group with the aim to perform the 17<sup>th</sup> c. German music. This took place indeed in 2001 and the Buxtehude Chamber Ensemble had numerous concerts mainly from the pieces of the one whose name it bore, but also Praetorius, Schütz and Purcell became part of the repertoire. Along with studying the pieces from the practical side, it was also emphasized to get to know the age of these pieces. I started to be interested in the *Membra Jesu Nostri* after performing it a few times, why it had such an effect on the performers as well as the audience.

In the last 100 years a number of books were published on the life and life-work of Dietrich Buxtehude. André Pirro opened the lines of bibliographies<sup>1</sup> and then 24 years later Wilhelm Stahl wrote another one in which he talks about Buxtehude's course of life, his organ pieces, his chamber music and his main vocal works.<sup>2</sup> Hans Joachim Moser published his work of the artist in 1957 and in it he followed the structure of the previous books but with new research he made it more modern.<sup>3</sup> The real breakthrough came with Martin Geck's outstanding book because he studied the composer in light of pietism, one of the most influential spiritual tendencies of the age.<sup>4</sup> This publication is considered as a basic literature even today and the result of the research is still valid. Just like Kerala J. Snyder's book which discusses the composer's environment and pieces in a very detailed way as well as offers a very good drawing of the given age.<sup>5</sup> In his appendix he gives practical advice to those who play the composer's music, for example where the Lutheran folk songs can be found in the life-work of Buxtehude. Another wonderful publishing is the work of Geoffrey Webber because he introduces the schools and the Lutheran liturgy among other things.

None of these books mentioned above are available in Hungarian. Those interested can find references alone of the works and one can read about the composer just in the taciturn musical dictionaries. Since the life-work of Buxtehude is summarized in the above mentioned books, until today there has not been a detailed description of his – or maybe the 17<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> André Pirro: *Dietrich Buxtehude*. (Paris: Fischbacher, 1913).

<sup>2</sup> Wilhelm Stahl: *Dietrich Buxtehude*. (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1937).

<sup>3</sup> Hans Joachim Moser: *Dietrich Buxtehude. Der Mann und sein Werk*. (Berlin: Merseburger, 1957).

<sup>4</sup> Martin Geck: *Die Vokalmusik Dietrich Buxtehudes und der frühe Pietismus*. (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1965).

<sup>5</sup> Kerala J. Snyder: *Dietrich Buxtehude. Organist in Lübeck*. (New York: Schirmer books, 1987).

century's – main cycle, the *Membra Jesu Nostri* cantata series. In my dissertation I aim to fill this gap.

## II. Sources

For my analysis I used primarily the *Membra Jesu Nostri* score by Bruno Grusnick.<sup>6</sup> Along with this on the website of the Library of University of Uppsala the whole autography of Düben is available in scanned form and I had great use of that too as I analyzed the piece.<sup>7</sup> During my discourse the books of Geck, Snyder and Webber served as point of reference and my supposition was mostly based on the result of these three researchers, even if I sometimes was rather critical about their outcome. About the town of Lübeck the historical and the music of history data was provided by the study volume structured by Arnfried Edler and Heinrich W. Schwab and without its precise information the chapter of Buxtehude and his age could not have been possible.<sup>8</sup> The newness of Helga Thoene's analysis<sup>9</sup> and Carol Jarman's modern<sup>10</sup> approach led me to undiscovered areas. Thanks to both of them I ended up at place where I had not planned to go. The results of this discovery I share in details. Apart from the above mentioned literature the Grove Musical Dictionary and the *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* volumes were very useful.

## III. Method

In my method from the bird's eye view I get to the center of my discourse which is the cycle of the *Membra Jesu Nostri*. As a result of this the first chapter is about the composer's age and its more important musical and historical events, the second chapter discusses the background of the vocal pieces of Buxtehude and the third part is about the detailed analysis of the cantata

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<sup>6</sup> Dietrich Buxtehude: *Membra Jesu Nostri*. Közr.: Bruno Grusnick. (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1963).

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.musik.uu.se/duben/Duben.php>

<sup>8</sup> Arnfried Edler, Heinrich W. Schwab (eds.): *Studien zur Musikgeschichte der Hansestadt Lübeck. Kieler Schriften zur Musikwissenschaft – Band XXXI* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1989).

<sup>9</sup> Thoene, Helga: *Der verschlüsselte Lobgesang. Die Violin-Sonate G-moll*. In: Cöthener Bach- Hefte/7. (Köthen, 1998).

<sup>10</sup> Jarman, Carol: *Buxtehude's Ciacona in C minor and the Nicene Creed*. In: *The Musical Times* (2005/Summer)

series. This structure is very similar indeed to the work method of Snyder however my discourse serves with a number of methodical newness. The first chapter introduces Buxtehude's life and his occurrences along with the questions of that age. Because of the childhood of the composer we can read about Latin schools, about his work as an organist, about the relationship between him as the organist and the cantor, how they played their part in the liturgical events and we can read about the Abendmusik series.

#### IV. Results

My dissertation has three bigger parts. Since none of these topics are available in Hungarian, all of them are long-needed.

The first part of my dissertation places Dietrich Buxtehude at the center. By looking at his studies I introduce the Latin school system, and its curriculum. In 1668 he wins the position of organist in the Marienkirche, Lübeck. I followed how from the reformation in Lübeck the tasks and acknowledgement of a cantor and organist changes so that I could give a very clear list of competences of a cantor and an organist at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

The second part of my work deals with the vocal pieces of Buxtehude. I showed the collections of the Swedish royal court compiled by Gustav Düben since about 80 % of the composer's vocal works remained in it for the ages to come. I also wrote about the fact why Buxtehude chose the Latin mystical hymn of *Rhythmica oratio* as the backbone of *Membra Jesu Nostri*. As a result of the Latin poem I researched Buxtehude and his contemporaries' choices of language. The mystical text of the middle age was spread mostly by the pietism of the protestant churches. The meaning of mystic has not been defined during the centuries and some pastors were trying to help to deepen the direct relationship to God with the help of the cabbala, the alchemy and other sciences of the age. We can read about these in the second chapter.

In the third chapter I analyze the cantatas of the *Membra Jesu Nostri*. The cantatas of the cycle are based on *Rhythmica oratio*, a Latin hymn by *Arnulf of Leuven*. This hymn from the middle age is addressed by the author to the different body parts of Christ as he hung on the cross and the specific order is the following: from the feet of Jesus to his knees, then his hands, sides, chest and through his heart the way of meditation gets to his face. Buxtehude

used the same structure and for each topic of the hymn chose biblical mottos for the beginning of each cantata which directly or symbolically are connected to the part of Christ. In this chapter I show the possible relationship between the melody of *Jesu, meine Freude* and the sonata of the Membra Jesu Nostri's opening cycle. The work of seven cantatas has a unique key. The first piece's C minor shows an ascending direction and all the way to the sixth cantata (*c – E flat – g – d – a – e*) where the cross of E minor symbolizes the cross of Jesus and then at the end returns to the opening key.

## V. The list of concerts I conducted and are related to the dissertation

November 20, 2001 Budapest, Church of Saint Teresa of Avila, Chamber Ensemble of the Liszt Academy. *Buxtehude*: Nun laßt uns Gott, Nichts soll uns scheiden, *Schütz*: Der zwölfjährige Jesus

March 16, 2003 Budapest, Saint Anne Church, Batthyány square and May 22, 2003 Church of Rókus, Buxtehude Chamber Ensemble (later: BCE). *Buxtehude*: Membra Jesu Nostri

October 2, 2003 Budapest, Church of Rókus, BCE. *Purcell*: Rejoice, Thy word, O Sing Unto

June 17, 2004 Munich, Hochschule für Musik und Theater. Ensemble Foro Regis.

*J. S. Bach*: Himmelfahrt-Oratorium

December 5, 2004 Budapest, Lutheran Church of Bécsi kapu square, BCE. *Praetorius*: Herr Gott dich loben wir, Hosanna in der Höhe, Ein Kindelein so löblich, Puer natus, In dulci jubilo

December 11, 2005 Budapest, Church of Saint Teresa of Avila, BCE. *Eccard*: Missa a 5 vocibus

May 2, 2006 Budapest, Church of Saint Anna BCE. *Schütz*: Historia der Auferstehung Jesu Christi

November 24, 2007 Budapest, Church of Saint Michael, Gemma Chamber Choir (artistic leader: Márton Tóth). *Buxtehude*: O Gott, wir danken; Führwahr, er trug unsere Krankheit; Jesu, meine Freude; *J. S. Bach*: Jesu, meine Freude; *Buxtehude*: All solch dein Güt'