

Church of the Advent  
Spartanburg, SC

presents

# **A Recital in Celebration of**

## **Dietrich Buxtehude**

**(1637–1707)**

by

**Dr. Leon W. Couch III, organist**  
Converse College

March 30, 2007

## PROGRAM

Praeludium in C, BuxWV137	Dietrich Buxtehude (1637–1707)
<i>Vater unser im Himmelreich</i> by Buxtehude Chorale prelude, BuxWV 214 Hymn, vs. 1	Buxtehude arr. Samuel Scheidt (1587–1654)
Passacaglia in d, BuxWV 151	Buxtehude
<i>Vater unser im Himmelreich</i> by his predecessors Chorale prelude  Hymn, vs. 2	Heinrich Scheidemann (c. 1595–1663) arr. Hans Leo Hassler (1564–1612)
Praeludium in g, BuxWV 148	Buxtehude
Intermission	
<i>Vater unser im Himmelreich</i> by his imitators Chorale prelude, BWV 762 Hymn, vs. 7	Bach circle arr. J. S. Bach (1685–1750)
Toccatà in F, BWV 540/1 (c. 1708)	J. S. Bach
<i>Vater unser im Himmelreich</i> by his successors Chorale prelude, BWV682, from <i>Clavierübung</i> III Hymn, vs. 9	J. S. Bach arr. Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847)
Hommage à Dietrich Buxtehude (1987)	Petr Eben (b. 1929)

## PROGRAM NOTES

During 2007, organists throughout the world are celebrating the music of Dietrich Buxtehude (1637–1707). During his lifetime, Buxtehude was renowned throughout Germany. His dramatic musical programs, the *Abendmusiken*, and his arresting style of playing attracted audiences from distant lands to the trade city of Lübeck, Germany. In fact, the young J. S. Bach walked over 200 miles to hear this master; and, to the dismay of his congregation, Bach not only overstayed his leave, but adopted Buxtehude's elaborate style of chorale playing.

This program features some of Buxtehude's most dramatic music (the *praeludia*) and settings of the Lord's Prayer by Buxtehude, his predecessors, and his successors. These free works characteristically draw upon the so-called fantastic style (*stylus phantasticus*) of playing. Scholars often describe this style as employing two styles, wild toccata-like textures and solid fugues. Imitating this pattern, this recital program also alternates between freeworks and chorale settings.

### The Free Works

The famous writer from Hamburg, Johann Mattheson (1681–1764), describes the key of C major as “joyful, rude, and impertinent.” Perhaps embodying these affections (emotional attributes), Buxtehude's **Praeludium in C Major**, BuxWV 137, opens with an impressive pedal solo, fast scales, dramatic pauses, and crashing chords. The imitative digression during the opening seems to be full of youthful humor. That is, the work immediately displays a happy *stylus phantasticus* (fantasia style) with its figuration and multiple sections. The fugue likewise confirms the happy affection with a playful theme and straightforward fugal procedure. Being in a thoroughly joyful key, this masterpiece rightly does not adventure far into the dark drama common to many *praeludia*—the internal free section only briefly visits the key of A minor. With the affection and key of C major so firmly established, the second fugue expected by many scholars never occurs. Instead, the *praeludium* concludes with variations above a remarkable ground bass. As in the beginning, a dramatic pause towards the end recalls virtuosic scales and the youthful impertinence of the opening.

The **Passacaglia in D Minor**, BuxWV 151, also embodies its key affection. Most Baroque authors describe the key of D minor as somber or, at least, suitable for devotion. But, unlike the *praeludia*, two major internal sections of this piece are in the foreign keys of F major (“steadfast”) and A minor (“plaintive”). The fourth section returns to the original key. In each of the four sections, the pedals reiterate an invariant tune seven times (a holy number). Buxtehude shows off his ability to accompany the brief tune 28 (7 x 4) ways. Musicians of this period taught and practiced variation technique as preparation for both composition and improvisation. The tune and the accompanying variations probably provided a model for J. S. Bach's even more famous *Passacaglia* in C Minor, BWV 582.

Although it opens with a dramatic toccata, the **Praeludium in G Minor**, BuxWV 148, is dominated by contrapuntal procedures. This compositional choice perhaps suits the affection. The first fugue presents a repeated theme containing a depressing downward interval (“serious” or “moderate plaintiveness”), while the second theme spins forth (“tempered gaiety”). Only a brief digression separates the contrapuntal discourse. The final section visits the key of B-flat major, which Mattheson describes as “magnificent or delicate”. Like the C-major *praeludium*,

an intricate and compelling passacaglia reiterates the theme of the work to provide a conclusion; but, instead of joy, the theme and the variations around it seem to express the weight of the world.

J. S. Bach (1685–1750) is perhaps one of the most well-known composers of classical music. His works combine the best aspects of the Baroque era: long, spun-out melodies; rhythmic vitality; fast harmonic rhythms; and often intricate counterpoint. Indeed, his style was so intimately connected with the Baroque that his own sons found it to be somewhat outdated before his death. While an often repeated legend suggests his music was totally ignored for almost a hundred years, this was never true of his keyboard works, which were studied by Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. (Haydn was born in 1732, 18 years before Bach's death.)

Bach held a number of important posts during his life, and was famous as an organ virtuoso. He was born into a long line of musicians, including his father and several of his brothers. The line continued after his death with three of his sons gaining their own place in music history: Carl Philipp Emmanuel (C.P.E.), Johann Christian (the so-called "London" Bach), and Johann Christoph.

As one of his longest keyboard works, the **Tocatta in F Major**, BWV 540/1, testifies to Bach's supreme compositional skill not only at creating exuberant and complex counterpoint but also at blending national styles. The opening sections (176 measures) display influence from Johannes Pachelbel's pedal-point toccata and Dietrich Buxtehude's virtuosic pedal solos. The majority of work (more than 250 additional measures!) captures the invigorating rhythms and forms of the Italian concerto, but with a heightened sense of harmonic drama contrasted with Bach's famous German counterpoint. The concertino sections, in particular, contain triple invertible counterpoint: three themes play simultaneously, and later their respective vertical positions are interchanged. Unhampered by this complexity, the work ingeniously exhibits brilliant joy.

Professor of Composition at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague, Petr Eben (b. 1929) is one of the leading contemporary composers of the Czech Republic. The German government commission his **Hommage à Dietrich Buxtehude** for Buxtehude's 350<sup>th</sup> birthday. The witty opening of Eben's work presents the pedal solo of BuxWV 137 (Praeludium in C). The subsequent fugue derives its theme from the first fugue of BuxWV 148 (Praeludium in g). (Both these works were played earlier this evening.) In a modern idiom, the Hommage presents these two motives in numerous transformations and impressive gestures.

## **Chorale Settings of *Vater Unser im Himmelreich***

Like all chorale preludes, the "Vater Unser" settings were used to introduce the hymntune prior to congregational singing of the Lord's Prayer. That is, the congregation would sing this hymn in lieu of speaking the prayer. Martin Luther's 1539 hymn not only adapts the Lord's Prayer for congregational singing but also comments upon each line of the prayer. Except for the LW and the EKGB (Lutheran hymnals), no other current denominational hymnals contain the nine-verse hymn, but nearly every mainline Protestant hymnal retains Luther's attractive tune (substituting the original poem with alternate modern texts).

The chorale prelude ***Vater Unser im Himmelreich***, BuxWV 214, employs some of Buxtehude's most common textures and procedures: The monodic (solo vocal) melody presents a lightly ornamented chorale tune above a *basso-continuo*-like accompaniment. Except for the

opening phrase, each successive phrase furthermore presages the tune with imitation (*vorimitation*). In the devout key of D minor, the work employs the stereotypical chromatic line used for laments prior to the third phrase. But, in this case, this *passus duriusculus* ascends, perhaps appropriately for a prayer to God. Towards the end, the figuration becomes more ornate, and the solo line ascends to a more passionate tessitura.

Although *Vater Unser im Himmelreich*, BWV 762, has been attributed to J. S. Bach, faults in voice leading and on-the-beat placement of chorale-tune notes suggest that instead a composer in Bach's circle was imitating the monodic style of earlier north-German composers such as Dietrich Buxtehude. In this style, the solo line resembles an expressive and colorful soprano's solo: There are trills, sighs, and other stereotypical gestures. The hymn tune is hidden within its rhapsodic melody. Each phrase is preceded by prolonged *vorimitation* in the accompanying voices. The ninth measure incidentally contains chromaticism reminiscent of the *passus duriusculus*.

A widely respected organist in Hamburg, Heinrich Scheidemann (c. 1596–1663) studied with Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck (1562–1621), a famous organist in Amsterdam. Scheidemann transmitted Sweelinck's teachings to Germany. As a younger colleague, Buxtehude displays some of Scheidemann's influence. Like the previously heard settings, Scheidemann's *Vater Unser im Himmelreich* uses pervasive *vorimitation* prior to more chordal accompaniment to the coloratura solo. In contrast, Scheidemann uses motives more consistently than his successors, Buxtehude and Bach. Yet, the melodic line in allows for much "vocal" expressivity. The change of register in particular suggests a free sense of rubato, inspired by Richard Hudson's recent study *Stolen Time* of rhythmic freedom. Like Buxtehude's setting, Scheidemann's work concludes with an ascent to the upper register. Being in C minor, the vocal range is more comfortable for modern congregations, but supposedly suits a sad and somewhat sweet character. Mattheson also comments that they key also "induces sleep."

Often called a German "organ mass," J. S. Bach's *Clavierübung III* is a magnificent collection of two hours of virtuosic service music. His collection boasts an extremely complicated compositional plan that demonstrates both Bach's genius and religiosity. It was Bach's first publication of organ music during his lifetime. Embedded in the five-voice texture of the *Vater Unser im Himmelreich*, BWV 682, two slow voices present the *Vater unser* tune. To hear the notes of chorale (in canon), listen for the slow prolonged notes.

The other three voices form an Italianate trio-sonata texture with two flute-like solos and a cello-like pedal part. Each line possesses melodic integrity via musical gesture, contrasting motives, a variety of simultaneous tonguing patterns, and rhythmic independence (even a few syncopated four-against-three rhythms!). Perceiving all five lines melodically and, furthermore, imagining the associated text flowing through the canonic voices is a feat for any listener or performer.

This extended work employs the *passus duriusculus* several times, both in ascending and descending versions. Both versions occur one after another at the end. Bach set this work in the high key of E minor. Associated with the Phrygian mode, this key supposedly evokes sadder emotions ("pensive, profound, sad, and grief").

Scholars have said much about the symbolism of particular gestures and motives within this movement. The musical canon probably refers to the Law, on which Luther concentrated in his commentary on the Lord's Prayer. Appoggiaturas (sighs) and chromatic descents perhaps relate to specific passages or theological concepts in the hymn or the original Lord's Prayer.

Numerology abounds as well. This work, for instance, lasts 91 measures: 13 (sin) x 7

(prayer) = 91. In m. 41 (Bach's number J + S + B + A + C + H = 41), the pedal line temporarily ceases to play a continuo role in order to present rising sighs of a hopeful and prayerful composer. The extreme dissonances above simultaneously convey the heavy pain of sin. In m. 56, a significant cadence occurs at the Golden Mean (1.62:1). As explicated in numerous studies, many more complicated compositional designs and patterns organize the whole *Clavierübung III* and its other equally impressive movements.

## PERFORMER'S BIOGRAPHY

**Leon W. Couch III** earned two doctoral degrees from the University of Cincinnati's College-Conservatory of Music: the D.M.A. in Organ Performance and the Ph.D. in Music Theory. His undergraduate degrees in physics, mathematics, and music are from the University of Florida.

Dr. Couch currently serves as College Organist at Converse College, where he teaches organ and music theory. From 2002–2006, he taught organ and coordinated the music-theory curriculum at Texas A&M University, where he was named the 2005–2006 Montague Teaching Excellence Scholar for the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. Previously Couch taught organ studio, music theory, and undergraduate mathematics at the University of Cincinnati.

As a scholar, Dr. Couch concentrates on pragmatic applications of contemporary and historical music theory to keyboard performance. Dr. Couch has presented at numerous international, national, and regional conferences, and particularly enjoys giving workshops, masterclasses, and lectures to local American Guild of Organists (AGO) chapters, colleges, and the public.

As a performer, Couch presents organ recitals, masterclasses, and lecture-recitals throughout the United States. This winter, the respected label *Pro Organo* will release his solo recording *Hamburger Rhetoric*, which features dramatic music of Bach, Buxtehude, Mendelssohn, and other composers on the famous "Bach organ" at Christ the King Lutheran Church in Houston, Texas.

Dr. Couch has been the recipient of numerous grants for his scholarship, performances, teaching, and public service. He is also active in several musical organizations (AGO, AMS-SW, CMS-SW, ICMC, and TSMT). For many years, Couch has served as a church musician.

# Vater Unser im Himmelreich

Verse 1

Martin Luther

(1483-1546)

arr. Samuel Scheidt

(1587-1654)

from *Görlitzer Tabulaturbuch* (1650)

1. Va - ter un ser im Him - mel reich, der du uns al - le heis - sest gleich  
1. Our Fa - ther, thou in heav'n a - bove, Who bid - dest us to dwell in love,

6  
Brü - der seyn, und dich ruf - fen an, und willst das Bet - en von uns han,  
As bre - thren of one fa - mi - ly, And cry for all we need to thee;

11  
gieb, dass nicht bet al - lein der Mund, hilf, dass es geh aus Her - zens grund.  
Teach us to mean the words we say, And from the in - most heart to pray.

# Vater Unser im Himmelreich

Verse 2

Martin Luther  
(1483-1546)

arr. Hans Leo Hassler  
(1564-1612)

2. Ge - hei - ligt werd der Na - me dein, dein Wort bey uns hilf hal - ten rein,  
2. All ha - lloved be thy name, O Lord! O let us firm - ly keep thy Word,

3  
dass wir auch le - ben hei - lig - lich, nach dei - nem Na - men wür - dig - lich,  
And lead, a - ccord - ing to thy name, A ho - ly life, un - touched by blame;

5  
be - hüt uns, Herr, für fal - scher Lehr, das arm ver - führ - te Volk be - kehr.  
Let no false teach - ings do us hurt, All poor de - lud - ed souls con - vert.

# Vater Unser im Himmelreich

Verse 7

Martin Luther

(1483-1546)

arr. J. S. Bach

(1685-1750)

BWV 416

7. Führ uns, Herr, in Ver - such - ung nicht, wann uns der bö - se Geist an - ficht, zur  
7. In - to temp - ta - tion lead us not; And when the foe doth war and plot A -

5  
lin - ken und zur rech - ten Hand, hilf uns thun star - ken Wie - der - stand, im  
gainst our souls one ver - y hand, Then, armed with faith, O may we stand A -

9  
Glau - ben fest und wohl - ge - rüst und durch des Heil - gen Geis - tes Trost.  
gainst him as a val - iant host, Through com - fort of the Ho - ly Ghost.

# Vater Unser im Himmelreich

Verse 9

Martin Luther

(1483-1546)

arr. Felix Mendelssohn

(1809-1847)

from *Sonata No. 6, Op. 65/6* (1845)

9. A - men, das heist, es wer - de wahr, stärk un - sern Glau - ben  
9. A - men! that is, So let it be! Strength - en our faith and

7  
im - mer - dar, auf dass wir ja nicht zwei - feln dran, was  
trust in thee, That we may doubt not, but be - lieve That

13  
wir hie - mit ge - be - ten han, auf dein Wort  
what we ask we shall re - ceive; Thus in thy

18  
in dem Na - men dein so spre - chen wir das A - men fein.  
name and at thy word We say A - men, now hear us, Lord!