

# Bach, Buxtehude & Friends

**The Drama of  
The North German  
Organ Toccata**

**David Britton  
organ**

**John Brombaugh Organ  
Central Lutheran Church  
Eugene, Oregon**

Bach ♦ Buxtehude ♦ Bruhns  
Hanff ♦ Krebs ♦ Oley

DE 1020



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**BACH, BUXTEHUDE, AND FRIENDS**  
**The Drama of the North German Organ Toccata**

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**JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685-1750):**

- 1 Toccata and Fugue in D Minor, S. 565 (8:45)

**JOHANN LUDWIG KREBS (1717-1780):**

- 2 Toccata in E Major (8:27)

**JOHANN CHRISTOPH OLEY (1738-1789):**

- 3 Deal with Me, Lord, As Thou Wilt (3:10)

**DIETRICH BUXTEHUDE (1637 [?]-1707):**

- 4 Toccata in F Major, BuxWV 156 (7:32)

**JOHANN NICOLAUS HANFF (1665-1711-12):**

- 5 Ach Gott, von Himmel sieh darein (3:35)

**NICOLAUS BRUHNS (1665-1697):**

- 6 Toccata and Fugue in E Minor (9:21)

**DAVID BRITTON**, playing The Brombaugh Organ, Opus 19

**TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 41:09**

Just how one performs music of any era should be, perhaps, of little or no concern to the average listener. But in an information-rich age, today's interpreter, especially of early music, has a plethora of performance practices to consider, incorporate or reject as suits intent or temperament. For better or worse it is no longer enough just to "play the music" or, more precisely, allow early music to be a vehicle for individual temperamental display in the grand romantic tradition.

While many still question any attempt at "authenticity" as the doomed pursuit of gargoyles and chimeras, consider the following: what a composer bequeaths to us is a very incomplete (particularly in music from the Baroque era) canvas or sketch. The interpreter who must complete this "painting" should be a skilled artistic forger, if you will. If an artist were called upon to complete a Rembrandt (or music of Buxtehude), he would have to absorb all the known techniques of the master — the mixing of colors (appropriate organ sound and registration techniques), drawing and underpainting (careful practice techniques), types and use of brushes, knives, canvas or other surfaces (texturing through appropriate key action, fingering, articulation, timing), highlighting (ornamentation, improvisation), and the like.

A musical interpretation was not originally intended to be frozen in time — a relatively new option for music in the age of recordings — like a painting. However, our interpretations can be, more or less "in the style of" or "in the school of" a particular composer depending on the performance practices used. While it might be amusing, instructive, and even exciting to eschew Rembrandt's techniques and repaint one of his self-portraits in day-glow colors with an air brush, the result would not be Rembrandt's intent, visually or emotionally. Those who argue that Buxtehude or Bach would use all modern resources available were they alive today surely miss the point. Yet I have heard no one advocate repainting all the old masters in 20th century styles to make them more relevant, as is often the case with 20th century performances of early music.

It was with the foregoing philosophy that I approached the preparation of these Baroque toccatas and chorale preludes in the late 1970's. The recording session took place in May 1980 in Eugene, Oregon, the day after Mount St. Helen's now-historic volcanic eruption. Many complications in the recording industry (especially the advent of digital technology in the early '80's superseding for a time interest in analog recordings such as

this one) have delayed release of this now perhaps also somewhat historic recording. In the intervening years the organ builder, John Brombaugh, has modified the winding system to produce a less radically flexible wind than is captured in this recording and has also changed the composition of the Hauptwerk Principal Chorus. And in the intervening decade, this performer's concepts and application of early performance techniques have also been modified. Presented here, therefore, is an example of one American performer's involvement with the early music movement on one of America's ground-breaking "Baroque" organs.

Attracted like most organists to the music of Bach at an early age, I was already reading and experimenting with early fingerings and improvised ornamentation when the German organist/scholar Harald Vogel ignited the imaginations of like-minded players in this country in the mid-'70's. The time was ripe; a generation of postwar Fulbright scholars had already returned from Europe advocating mechanical action organs as a necessary vehicle for the performance of Bach and others. Less and less was the typically eclectic American organ with electric action found acceptable to recreate the colors and brush strokes of the old masters. Eventually, even the modern European tracker organ was found wanting in true period sound and structure. In response to this awareness, American master organ builders such as Charles Fisk, John Brombaugh, Taylor & Boody and others have created a limited series of historically inspired and executed instruments which have allowed a new generation of inquisitive American players to more closely study the styles of early music without becoming expatriots.

The basic touch is a "structured legato" (Harald Vogel) which approximates the basic less-legato touch described by many authors during the Baroque period. I have used a "concert approach" to registration in order to demonstrate the Brombaugh organ's magnificent tonal resources. The registration changes are nevertheless within the bounds of what was stylistically possible and appropriate during a festive, "live" Baroque concert employing two registrants. Fingering techniques from the earlier periods are employed throughout (finger substitution is not employed and the heels are not used in pedaling). Ornaments are also added at appropriate places — often in an improvisatory manner. The intended result is a rhythmic grouping of notes which regulates the musical line in a naturally articulate manner.

The four cornerstones of this recording are large toccata-form works by Buxtehude, Bruhns, Bach and Krebs. The form of the 17th century North German Toccata is easily comprehended as a multi-sectional piece alternating passages of various, often improvisation-generated figurations with sections in a more organized, imitative fugal style. However, the toccata can perhaps be better understood and enjoyed as a musical drama. The large organ works of Buxtehude have been often cited as the first organ pieces to develop an uncompromisingly dramatic style. His toccatas (or "Praeambula") appear to have a parallel in a basic rhetorical framework applied to then contemporary dramatic works. This rhetorical frame, called the *Dispositio* (described by Mattheson in *Der Vollkommenen Capellmeister*, 1739, as the *stylus phantasticus*) can be perceived in early plays, music, and likely on occasion a minister's sermon! The rhetorical framework of the Buxtehudian toccata-type consists of:

1) *Exordium*: the opening "shocking" idea, for the purpose of grabbing the audience. Baroque era organ recitals were far less formal than today (often a noon recital for the farmers on market day). The opening "improvisatory" gestures helped focus the audience and performer alike.

2) *Narratio*: in a drama the introduction of characters; in the toccata, a fugal section, unresolved.

3) *Propositio*: the essential discourse of the drama, and resolution of the confusion introduced at the end of the *Narratio*; in the sectional toccata, a fugue.

4) *Confutatio*: confusion, counter-ideas; often a recitative texture in music; striking dissonances, perhaps the most intriguing part of the work.

5) *Confirmatio*: order is restored; movement towards resolution.

6) *Peroratio*: final, happy gestures; final fugues break into free sections; dramatic, impressive conclusion.

Hamburg, the "Venice of the North," about 50 kilometers from Buxtehude's city of Lübeck, surely provided considerable influence on the development of the dramatic toccata genre. The wealthy burghers of this capital city of the powerful Hanseatic League built not only large churches with showpiece organs as monuments of civic pride and wealth, but also the first public opera house outside of Venice. In addition to the highly developed stagecraft in Baroque opera, the *Commedia dell'Arte* traveling players of that day were

noted for lightning-quick quasi-improvised scenarios. Could it be that those almost kaleidoscopic scenic effects of Baroque drama also have a parallel in the free sections of the Buxtehudian toccata style, where one ubiquitously encounters similarly startling and delightful musical juxtapositions? In the writing of the great Toccata in E Minor by Bruhns (1665-1697), who is known to have studied with Buxtehude, musicologist Willi Apel has observed: "The infinitely varied figures of the free sections...go from one extreme to another and create the impression that the organ...is presenting a musical show or a magic theatre, in which ever new personages are entering, crossing the stage, and disappearing again."

Bach absorbed Buxtehude's style during his famous visit to that master in 1705. Bach's opening flourish in the *Toccata con Fuga* in D Minor is the "audience grabber" of all time. Not only is it a striking *Exordium* (opening flourish); it also functions as a *Narratio* in that the "character" of the fugue subject is introduced in the opening flourish itself. The single fugue begins with an Italian violin figuration. In recent years, scholars (e.g. Peter Williams) have questioned Bach's authorship of this most famous work. It has also been proposed, on rather convincing internal stylistic grounds, that the work is actually a beefed-up transcription of a fantasia for solo violin, perhaps by Bach or perhaps not. Certainly there is much that is violinistic about the writing, accounting more naturally for the famous non-fugal echo textures found therein. Unique to this fugue is Bach's incorporation of a truly archaic, non-fugal echo dialogue which harkens back to the Fantasias of that great "maker of German organists" Jan Sweelinck, of whom Buxtehude and Bach were pedagogical descendants. The startling juxtaposition of such a fugally foreign echo idea can be perhaps viewed as the *Confutatio*. The return to "perfection" associated with a *Confirmatio* is possibly expressed by the three-part-textured section of the fugue. The spectacular *Peroratio* counterbalances the opening toccata/*Exordium* section. A large three-part plan with central single fugue is most apparent, but dramatic references to the rhetorical outline can be observed. The slide-show abruptness of sectional change has been largely eliminated by an ingenious unifying continuity. [The recorded text follows that found in the *Neue Ausgabe Sämtlicher Werke, Series IV, Vol. 6*, published by Bärenreiter. Particularly striking to the listener familiar with other editions will be the "hocket" (missing note) cadence in measure 16 and the tenor/bass inverted counterpoint of measure 17.]

In this performance passages in both the Toccata and the Fugue in echo style are

highlighted by manual changes although there is no directive to do so. The fugue is even registered to recreate a four-keyboard echo scheme, suggestive of the large organs Bach knew in Hamburg. In arpeggiating chords, I worked with the intentionally flexible wind system of the Brombaugh organ, allowing myself to learn from it and be guided by it in reactivating older performance traditions. While chord arpeggiation may be justified by musicological observations in this work, it also is a "wind-cushioning" performance practice which grows out of a rapport with the idiomatic breathing of the organ's wind system. We can only speculate what Bach's own experience with early wind systems might have been in view of his often publicized remarks advocating new organs with "adequate" wind — adequate perhaps for his then-novel ideas on stop combination?

Bach's favorite pupil, Johann Ludwig Krebs has bequeathed some fascinating works which look compositionally backwards as well as forwards. Bach's own development of the Toccata as well as the Prelude and Fugue takes us far beyond the youthful D Minor Toccata. The model for Krebs' Toccata in E Major was in part Bach's great Toccata in F Major (S. 540). Krebs' *Exudium* is a dramatic pedal solo — a device used by Buxtehude and Bach alike — which is clearly based on the opening motive of Bach's Toccata in F Major. The meter is 3/8, a rhythmic pulse often associated with Italian pastoral style and also frequently encountered in the light-textured *galant* pieces of the pre-classical period. The main body of the Toccata is remarkable for its pre-classic lightness, regularity of phrase lengths, concerto-inspired dialogue between two divisions of the organ, and predominant melody with accompaniment and/or chordal textures. At first the fugue seems antique in comparison, but the subject is very lyric, and mid-way through the fugue Krebs inobtrusively introduces a new rhythmic motive (the old Baroque *affekt* rhythm for joy) which increasingly animates the fugue to its conclusion. No extended *Peroratio* here; concluding gestures are made in the final two measures by a few brief cadential chords — the curtain, so to speak, falls abruptly.

Before 1696, Johann Nicolaus Hanff was appointed court organist to the Prince-Bishop of Lübeck at his residence in Eutin. He returned to Hamburg after the Bishop's death in 1705. Of his six surviving chorale preludes, his setting of "Ach Gott, vom Himmel sieh darein" combines the expressive ornamented chorale, identified with Buxtehude, with imitative treatment of the lower parts — a technique associated with the Central German chorale fugue. If not a pupil of Buxtehude, Hanff was certainly working within the sphere of

influence of that master.

There is some speculation that Johann Christoph Oley may have studied with Bach in 1749. Praised by his contemporaries for his skill at the organ and other keyboard instruments, Oley was also criticized for careless harmony. Bach's influence if any was probably insignificant and Oley appears to have been largely self-taught. The two chorale settings heard here reveal a certain rustic charm: the figures surrounding the chorale melodies are rococo in their decorativeness while the pedal line provides an "oom-pah" bass support reminiscent of a country village band. Oley was organist in Bernburg in 1755, and in 1762 took the post at St. Stephan's in neighboring Aschersleben where, in order to supplement his income, he became assistant schoolmaster as well. He once owned one of the four extant copies of Bach's *Schübler Chorales*.

### *David Britton*

An internationally acclaimed recitalist, David Britton has been described by *The American Organist* as being "at home in any period . . . with an unflinching sense of balance and color." Britton was the first American chosen to perform on the new Beckerath Organ in the Narashino Concert Hall, greater Tokyo area, in 1980. In 1986 he toured Europe and the British Isles, performing in Cardiff, Edinburgh, Oxford, Ayr and London. He has played concerts for many Conventions of the American Guild of Organists and has performed with the Eastman Rochester Philharmonic and other American orchestras.

David Britton is widely recognized for his mastery of both historic and modern performance practices which gives him equal command of tracker and electric action organs. His colorful and unique programs consistently delight his audiences and aptly display every facet of each organ's personality. A recent Delos recording, *Gargoyles and Chimeras* (DE 3077), has garnered critical praise for Britton's "considerable élan" (High Fidelity), "clarity and panache" (Los Angeles Times), and "sure-fingered and -footed" technique (Ovation).

Britton has been artist and faculty member at several colleges and universities. He is currently Artist in Residence at Los Angeles' Mount St. Mary's College and has taught music theory and music history at the California Institute of Technology since 1978.

### **...from the Organ Builder**

The instrument our shop has made for Central Lutheran Church is strongly influenced by the historical development of the organ, especially that found in northwestern Europe in the 16th through 18th Centuries. This influence notwithstanding, the present organ was entirely made here in the United States during the year of our Bicentennial celebration, and consequently must be considered to be an American organ of 1976.



The musical resources are disposed over three manuals and pedal which control the slider windchests by the means of suspended tracker action and have mechanical stop action. Electricity is used to power a blower which fills a large wedge-shaped bellows. The Great manual has a plenum, or chorus, of open Principal pipes extending from the low pitch of 12' F seen in the center tower of the maincase to very small pipes of high pitch comprising the Mixture and Scharff registers. Intermeshed with these and the remaining flute and reed stops of the Great are, on the same windchests, the pipes of the Pedal division which play from the pedal board and form the supporting Bass for the entire organ as well as a variety of cantus firmus sounds. Beneath the Great and Pedal divisions, which are in the wide upper maincase and directly above the manual keyboards, are the pipes and windchest comprising the Brustwerk (or Echo) division. In addition to the needed variety supplied for a wide range of solo organ literature, this division has the important task of being the continuo instrument required for the great Lutheran choral music. Projecting from the west gallery railing at the back of the organist is the Ruckpositive. This division functions as a musical foil to the resources in the maincase and consists of a wide variety of plenum and flute registers as well as the Dulcian reed stop. The Oak Gedackt 8' and blockflöte 4' of the Brustwerk are made from finegrained American white oak in a form used by Berendt Huss, a significant North German builder of ca. 1650. The remaining pipes in the organ are of metal cast and hammered in our shop of approximately 98% lead alloyed with tin, antimony, copper, and bismuth following ideas incorporated in 1540 by Hendrik Niehoff in his instrument for Schoonhoven, Holland. The organ contains 2828 pipes in 65 ranks for its 38 stops. Much of the scaling and building principles used for the pipes and shallots of the reeds as well as the architectural design of the case has been inspired by close study of the work of Andreas de Mare and Arp Schnitger, builders from ca. 1560 and 1700 respectively, modified to be in good harmony with the fine architecture Pietro Belluschi provided for the church. The temperament (i.e. tuning of the musical scale) for the organ is a modification of that ascribed to J.S. Bach's student Johann Phillip Kirnberger, which was already in use in northern Europe in the mid 16th Century. Voicing of the pipes has been done on a windpressure that will support a column of water 87 mm high.

*John Brombaugh*

**Disposition of Opus 19 Central Lutheran Church, Eugene, Oregon  
by John Brombaugh and Associates, 1976**

**Great**

Praestant	16	from F in facade
Octave	8	
Rohrflöte	8	
Octave	4	
Spitzflöte	4	
Quinte	3	
Octave	2	
Tierce	1-3/5	
Mixture	II-VI	
Scharff	IV-VIII	
Trumpet	8	
Vox Humana	8	

**Ruckpositive**

Quintadena	16
Praestant	8 (II ranks a'-c''')
Gedackt	8
Octave	4
Rohrflöte	4
Waldflöte	2
Sifflet	1-1/3
Sesquialter	II
Scharff	III-VI
Dulcian	8

## Brustwerk

Oak Gedackt	8
Blockflöte	4
Principal	2
Cornet	IV (from c' or c#,
Cimbel	III selectable)
Rankett	16
Trechterregal	8

## Pedal

Subbass	16
Octave	8
Praestant	4 (upper flats)
Nachthorn	2
Mixture	V
Posaune	16
Trumpet	8 (common w/GT)
Trumpet	4
Cornet	2

Tremulant to whole organ is in Schnitger form

Couplers: GT/PED, RP/PED, RP/GT, BW/GT. (couples to PED through GT)

Compass: 56 notes, pedal 30 notes; Flat, non-radiating pedalboard

Pipes from hammered lead, open pipes are cone tuned, stopped pipes have soldered tops.

Wind pressure 87mm.

Temperament after Kirnberger III, modified

Executive Producer: *Amelia S. Haygood*  
Recording Producer: *Joanna Nickrenz*  
Recording Engineer: *Marc Aubort*  
Registrants: *Guy Baldwin, Paul Olson*  
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P.O. Box 343, Sonoma, California 95476-9998  
(800) 364-0645 • (707) 996-3844  
*contactus@delosmusic.com • www.delosmusic.com*  
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