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The Music School, Gascoigne Building,
North Street, Oundle, Peterborough, PE8 4AL
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Wednesday 18th July

Twilight Organ Recital JAMES PARSONS

9.30pm Church of the Most Holy Name of Jesus, Oundle

Buxtehude, Böhm and the young J S Bach

This year marks the tercentenary of the Danish-born organist Diderik Buxtehude (1637-1707), whose dramatic musical mannerisms embody the North German *stilus fantasticus*; his influence upon the youthful J S Bach was immense. Buxtehude's music is rightly appreciated for its great individuality: whilst *stilus fantasticus* is a term that attaches readily to his style, denoting eccentricity and improvisatory mannerism, one should never seek to diminish the architectural acumen of this North German virtuoso, organist of the Marienkirche in Lübeck. Tonight's programme samples Buxtehude's considerable and varied output, whilst also highlighting immature works by Bach, and by Bach's other great mentor Georg Böhm, organist of the Johanniskirche in Lüneburg, where Bach was a choirboy.

Tocatta and Fugue in F, BuxWV 157

Diderik Buxtehude (1637-1707)

This arresting work shows Buxtehude writing in extended paragraphs – a toccata and a fugue – rather than resorting to a pastiche of short-winded outbursts, as in some other works. This extrovert music exploits the capacities of the sophisticated North German organs, the only organs in all Europe where the pedals could be used not only for nimble bass lines but for solos too.

Ach wie nichtig, ach wie flüchtig ('Oh how futile, Oh how fleeting is the life of Man')

Georg Böhm (1661-1733)

Böhm was one of J S Bach's early teachers; his reputedly irascible temperament is presumed to be reflective of his blended admiration and personal frustration on encountering his pupil's prodigious talent. In this partita, the Lutheran chorale declaiming the futility of human endeavour is delivered in the stentorian tones of the 8' reed, before seven engaging variations explore the effect



of varied dance metres, subtle ornamentation and a deliciously colourful palette of baroque organ colours.

Ciacona in E minor, BuxWV 160

Diderik Buxtehude

A ciacona is a dance in three-time evolving as a series of variations over a ground bass. Often the ciacona seems to point to some mystical undertow and, for this contemplative piece, Carol Jarman has proposed that Buxtehude was considering the recitation of the Rosary (reminding us of the continuing influence of Roman Catholic practices in the infant Lutheran Church).

Chorales:

J S Bach (1685-1750)

Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ, BWV 722 ('Praise to you, Jesus Christ')
Lobt Gott ihr Christen allzugleich, BWV 732 ('Christians, praise God with one voice')

In dulci jubilo, BWV 729 (medieval carol)

Flamboyant flourishes link the phrases of these chorales, all chromatically harmonised, in an exuberant and ramshackle fashion – probably the sort of 'aberrations' which drew well-documented censure from the worthy Lutherans of Arnstadt, where Bach served as organist from 1703-1707.

Tocatta and Fugue in D minor, BWV 565

J S Bach

J P Kellner has been accredited with the composition of this astonishingly celebrated piece, despite contemporary manuscripts naming Bach as the author. However, another modern perspective suggests that Bach did actually compose the work, at a precociously tender age (maybe about ten!).

Chorale

Diderik Buxtehude

Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern, BuxWV 223 ('How brightly shines the morning star')

Buxtehude's presentation of the Epiphany chorale as a two-verse setting paints the twinkling star in transparent colours.

Präludium in E minor, BuxWV 142

Diderik Buxtehude

Präludium was the term used for multi-sectional essays in free composition, typically comprising toccata, fugal, and dance sections, connected by recitative episodes in the manner of improvisation. This epic work says it all for *stilus fantasticus*: flourishes, two chromatic fugues, daring interludes and an exuberant gigue!