

BEFORE BACH AND AFTER

Johann Sebastian Bach's motets enjoy a special kind of status in the choral repertoire. They contain sophisticated, almost self-consciously brilliant music of high quality and rich invention; they also make virtuoso demands of any vocalists who dare to perform them! At times it can seem as if their very eminence has isolated them, so that as musical works they appear to be floating in a genre of their own making. Yet it is a porous identity, for there are other works or bits of works that claim our attention, and while Bach composed only seven motets and a handful of arrangements, there are over two hundred cantatas. Are those seven really so special? In fact I believe they are, and just as orchestras like to push themselves by presenting a cycle of, say, the nine Beethoven symphonies, so we in our more intimate domain felt inspired to present a cycle of Bach motets. But we also aim in this series of four concerts to place them in a wider historical context and examine just what a 'motet' has been and what it might be today: both before Bach therefore, and after.

The Old Bach Archive

In later life Johann Sebastian started to take an interest in collecting together the works of his Bach forebears and items of music by other composers whose work appealed to him. Many of these pieces were motets, mostly written in the older *stile antico*. Bach had undoubtedly encountered some of this music earlier in his life, especially the work of his immediate ancestors, but as he grew older his interest in family history grew stronger, and there is no question that he regarded this collection, which became known as the Altbachisches Archiv, both as an important part of his inheritance and also as a legacy for his children and grandchildren. The collection did not originate with Johann Sebastian, though how and with whom it actually got started remains a matter of debate. It later passed into the keeping of his second surviving son Carl Philip Emanuel, and later still to Georg Poelchau and Carl Friedrich Zelter, both of whom were associated with the Sing-Akademie in Berlin. Zelter donated the collection to the Royal Library.

In Concert 1 we feature three works from the Archiv: the double-choir motet *Erforsche mich Gott* by Sebastian Knüpfer, a predecessor of Bach as Leipzig Thomascantor; Bach performed this work probably more than once and it survives with his instrumentation and parts (all doubling voice parts) — as does his edition of Palestrina's *Missa Brevis* (*Kyrie* and *Gloria*). We also sing two of Bach's harmonisations of a melody derived from Heinrich Isaac's famous song, *Innsbruck ich muss dich lassen*, in a setting of *Nun ruhen alle Wälder*, a hymn by the C17th poet and pietist Johann Crüger.

The Motet Genre

During the 17th and 18th centuries, motet composition evolved away from Renaissance habits based on imitative polyphony and steady pulse, towards a varied baroque style full of dancing rhythms and sharp changes of temperature and texture. The older "antique" idiom nonetheless continued to be honoured and imitated. The modernising difference lay in the use of basso continuo to bind the voices together, while the use of contrasted sections with different meter and strong changes of mood extended the motet's expressive reach far beyond the Renaissance model of one single movement in one specific character.

Johann Gottfried Walther, Bach's cousin, describes the motet genre of their time as being

“a musical composition written on a Biblical *Spruch* [i.e. the quotation of a short text from the Bible] to be sung without instruments (except basso continuo), richly ornamented with *Fugen* and *Imitationibus*...But the vocal parts can be taken and strengthened by diverse instruments.” (*Musicalisches Lexicon*, Leipzig 1732.) The *Spruch* was usually balanced and contrasted with a chorale, a sacred hymn-like poem generally based on a melody that would be familiar to the congregation.

Johann Adolph Scheibe recommends the use of double choir in motets, as being “most satisfying to the ear”; and adds that “if chorale verses are used, one choir should enter with them at certain times, and meanwhile the second choir must continue to sing the main *Spruch* of the motet unimpeded...an exchange can take place, giving the chorale now to one choir, now to the other. But if the motet is for only one choir, the chorale must be sung by one or two voices, while the others work their way through the principal material steadily and unimpeded.” (*Critisches Musikus*, Leipzig 1745.)

This understanding is also confirmed by Johann Matheson: “The earlier motets consisted of fugues or fugal sections, without instruments, without basso continuo; but in recent times one admits not only basso continuo, but also has the voices doubled by sundry instruments...Yet the players play not a single note more than, different from, or less than the singers, which is an essential condition of motets.” (*Der vollkommene Capellmeister*, Hamburg 1739.)

A third element is sometimes introduced using the term *aria*: in the motet this implies a chorale-type text sung homophonically in four-part harmony, in which the melody has a more *gratioso* feeling than in regular chorales.

Bach’s Motets

The chronology of Bach’s motets is not entirely certain, but the following list gives a sense of where they stand, and reflects the relatively recent consensus that they spread across most of his career. As we might expect, the earlier motets, though already highly sophisticated in technique, are more similar to the work of other composers; whereas the later motets expand the style with more ambitious musical invention and structural development. The individual motets are then discussed in the order they appear in our series.

Ich lasse dich nicht	1712/13 or earlier
Fürchte dich nicht	c.1715
Jauchzet dem Herrn alle Welt	before 1725
Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied	1726/27
Der Geist hilft unsrer Schwachheit auf	1729
Jesu meine Freude	c.1723-c.1735
Komm Jesu komm	before 1731/32
Lobet den Herrn	undatable

Jesu meine Freude (Concert 1)

Bach’s *Jesu meine Freude* is a very singular work. Since most of his motets are scored for two choirs of four voices each, *Jesu meine Freude* is something of an exception in calling for a single five-voice choir. It is also by far the longest of the motets, and although we are

now told that it is a composite work—parts of it were probably composed at different times—nonetheless it has always felt to me that this work, however it came to be, is a consummate masterpiece of choral music. The reasons for this stem firstly from the quality of the music, naturally; but the ‘libretto’ too has much to do with it. It draws on two separate sources. First, there are the six stanzas of the chorale *Jesu meine Freude*, written in 1650 by Johann Franck, and carrying its familiar tune composed three years later by Johann Crüger. (Both Crüger and Franck were natives of Gruben in Brandenburg.) Secondly come five verses selected from chapter eight of Paul’s Epistle to the Romans: five verses in order to fit between the given six stanzas of the chorale. Thus there are eleven movements in all, chorale and epistle alternating throughout.

1 chorale i	Jesu meine Freude	à4
2 epistle verse i	Es ist nun nichts Verdammliches	à5
3 chorale ii	Unter deinen Schirmen	à5
4 epistle verse ii	Denn das Gesetz des Geistes	à3
5 chorale iii	Trotz den alten Drachen	à5
6 epistle verse ix	Ihr aber seid nicht fleischlich	à5 [fugue]
7 chorale iv	Weg mit allen Schätzen	à4
8 epistle verse x	So aber Christus in euch ist	à3
9 chorale v	Gute Nacht o Wesen	à4
10 epistle verse xi	So nun der Geist	à5
11 chorale vi	Weicht irh Trauergeister	à4

Bach begins and ends with the same simple four-part chorale harmonisation (movements 1 & 11)—though with Bach the word ‘simple’ never seems appropriate. In movements 3, 5, 7, and 9, he creates a brilliant set of chorale variations (two à 4 and three à 5.) The tune is always present, though in 5 only its ghost can be detected.

The first and last epistolary settings (movements 2 & 10) likewise share the same musical material, though in 10 it is developed somewhat differently. In the remaining three movements Bach creates wonderful contrasts by reducing to just three voices in 4 (SSA) and 8 (ATB), while in 6, the central movement of the whole piece, he characteristically anchors the work with a fugue.

Jesu meine Freude was most likely composed for a funeral, though recent scholarship calls into question the accuracy of earlier speculations as to which occasion was being served.

Ich lasse dich nicht (Concert 2)

Although there has been a lot of uncertainty about the ascription of this motet to Johann Sebastian, there is now general acceptance that it most probably is by him. Certainly the quality of this music is worthy of a youthful master: the musical intensity being present, but within a relatively conventional structure.

The body of the motet is in two sections and uses only a short *Spruch* from the book of Genesis: Jakob wrestles with a man (an angel, perhaps God) until daybreak; the angel tells him to let go, but Jakob replies, “I shall not let you go unless you bless me”—“Ich lasse dich nicht, du segnest mich den.”

The first section of music is in a moderate triple rhythm, leading directly without a break into the second section. This is in duple time and contrasts a texture of fleeting vocal motifs with a chorale melody in the soprano part, from which, as we can now hear, much of the surrounding material has already been drawn. This in turn is a variant of the chorale tune that follows in conclusion, sung to the words “Dir Jesu Gottes Sohn sei Preis.”

Fürchte dich nicht (Concert 2)

Fürchte dich nicht was probably composed during Bach's time at Weimar, and as it shares certain contrapuntal and structural elements with *Ich lasse dich nicht*, it was most likely composed during the same period of time: a musical connection that further strengthens the ascription of the latter motet. There are again two sections seamlessly connected, with a chorale melody being introduced in the second section. The text is drawn from verses 41 and 43 in the Book of Isaiah, and the chorale text, by Paul Gerhardt (1607-1676), seems to spring from the line “du bist mein” in Isaiah 43. The theme of comfort and reassurance makes this a fitting work for a funeral service.

Jauchzet dem Herrn (Concert 2)

This motet is a composite work in three distinct movements. The first is probably a composition by Georg Philipp Telemann arranged by Bach. The second is an arrangement of a chorale setting, probably by Bach himself, with melody in the soprano part, with fluent anticipation in the lower. The third movement is borrowed and adapted from Telemann's Christmas cantata *Lobt Gott ihr Christen allzugleich*. Bach obviously chose the Telemann material because he admired it, and this may also go some way to explain various small resemblances between the first section and the first part of Bach's own *Singet dem Herrn*. Perhaps the important point to make is that, despite its mixed ancestry, this is a very fine piece.

Komm Jesu komm (Concert 3)

Here Bach uses no Biblical quotations but sets two stanzas from a hymn by Paul Thymich (1656-1694), a student and later a teacher at the Thomasschule in Leipzig. The poem was written for the funeral of Rector Jacob Tomasius in 1684, with music by then Thomascantor Johann Schelle, and it seems very likely that Bach's setting was also composed for a funeral. The music has survived because a pupil of his made a copy of it.

Bach gives the first stanza the full motet-style treatment, with extended development of each line and even half line. He also changes meter twice: the first four lines of the text are presented in 3/2, the fifth line is in 4/4, and the last in 6/8. The second stanza (in 3/4) is presented as an ‘aria’ with a graceful melody in the soprano, accompanied for the most part homophonically by the other three voices, and often moving in hemiolas against their prevailing triple meter.

Lobet den Herrn (Concert 3)

We have very little background information about this work, which is unique among Bach's motets in being scored for a single choir of *four* voices together with a sometimes independent basso continuo line. It is also the shortest of the motets, and its text is the shortest of psalms, 117, with only two verses. Its energy and invention are compelling throughout, breaking into triple rhythm for the final Alleluia. Among the many pleasant

features of this music are the way Bach plays with pairs of voices, uses very long notes to paint the word *Ewigkeit* (eternity), and suggests almost shouts of joy in the Alleluia.

Der Geist hilft unser Schwachheit auf (Concert 4)

This motet was composed for the funeral of the Rector of the Thomasschule in Leipzig, Johann Ernesti, in October 1729. It was possibly composed in a hurry and Bach seems to have used existing material in order to create a suitable composite work for the occasion. The full score of this work survives and gives us detailed instrumentation of the two choirs, voices and instruments. As mentioned above, the use of instruments to double the voices in a motet was standard performance practice, and yet this does not invalidate vocal performance with only a basso continuo. The use of instruments certainly adds colour and a special kind of focus to the sound, but unfortunately CCI lacks the funding to create a baroque orchestra(!) and we therefore choose the continuo option for this series.

Perhaps Bach had a particular liking for Paul's Epistle to the Romans, for again, as in *Jesu meine Freude*, he takes his text from there, even from the same chapter—8: 26.27. He divides the text into four sections. The first is in a swinging 6/8 with lots of interplay between the two choirs. At "sondern der Geist selbst" the music switches without a pause into 4/4 and the second section, a fugue, gets under way. Although all eight voices are used at times independently, the fugal entries themselves are limited to five parts: the two soprano parts remaining separate, while the three lower voices of both choirs join together. We then come to the third section, in *alla breve* time (2/2), this also is a fugue, but now in just four parts with the two choirs joined together. Then comes a fourth section, which may in fact have been written as a separate entity—it is cued but not actually present in the full score. This is the chorale *Komm heiliger Geist*, composed by Martin Luther (based on *Veni Sancte Spiritus*) but only the third stanza, *Du heilige Brunst* (written by Martin Luther), is underlaid in the parts. There is speculation that this chorale may in fact have been sung later at the graveside.

Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied (Concert 4)

One of the most substantial of Bach's motets in almost every way, and perhaps the most virtuosic in style, *Singet dem Herrn* has four texts and three sections. The first text is psalm 149, verses 1-3, *Sing to the Lord a new song*. This is presented in 3/4 with a rhythmic bravura that is related, it has recently been claimed, to the polonaise. A series of fugal entries begins at the words *Die Kinder Zion*, first with one voice part at a time, then with both bass parts, both soprano parts and so on, culminating in a display of quasi-instrumental impressions to illustrate the words *mit Pauken und Harfen*.

The contrast between all this splendour and what follows could hardly be greater. We now hear an aria, *Gott nimm dich ferner an*, sung by choir 1, and a chorale, *Wie sich ein Vater erbarmet*, from choir 2. The chorale was written by Johann Gramann in 1525, but the aria text is anonymous. The subtle contrast in sounds and the juxtaposing of the two different texts create a very inward mood. Part of the chorale may have appealed to Brahms: *God knows that we are only dust, swept away like grass; lie a flower or falling leaf over which the wind blows and then it is no longer there*. Then with a sudden leap we are back amongst the psalms of praise: this time it is psalm 150, verse 2, and then, breaking into triple rhythm, verse 6, *Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord*.

The Medieval Motet

Although the word 'motet' has become closely associated with sacred texts, in the earliest manifestations the words were often (very) secular in content, even though fragments of plainchant might be co-opted as *cantus firmus* material. Around 1300 the French theorist Johannes de Grocheio wrote a treatise called *De Musica* in which he indicated that a motet is "music made for several voices, having multiple texts or a varied arrangement of syllables, harmoniously consonant in all respects." He makes it clear too that, long before the age of public concerts, there was an audience listening: "This music should not be performed in the presence of ordinary people, for they will not pay heed to its subtleties nor be delighted by its sound, but it should be in the presence of the educated and of those who seek out the subtleties of art. Thus it is to be sung at festive gatherings of the latter." So the motet was a place for intellectual games both verbal and musical, together with a certain seriousness of purpose, even if that seriousness did not always deter the use of mischievous and even sexually suggestive references. This view surely paved the way for the later motet, even before it became purely sacred, to be a place for lofty sentiments and conspicuous skill. We can give only a hint of this medieval world (concert 2), but I wanted to include at least that much, in order to draw a tentative parallel with some of the modern compositions in our series.

The three medieval pieces begin with a pastoral scene from the French story of Robin and Marion—a source of text for numerous 13th century motets—this particular example being safe for ears of all ages. Machaut's spirited 'Veni creator' introduces us to the use of isorhythm: repeated sections of the same rhythmic plan, typically in the lower voices. Both this and the previous work feature two different texts simultaneously, which is found but rarely in later times.

Dufay's motet is also isorhythmic, but on a much broader scale, as befits a motet composed for the dedication of Florence Cathedral and the completion of Brunelleschi's Dome. Pope Eugenius was present and is mentioned in the text. The two interlocking tenor parts are heard four times with four different time-values in the proportion 6:4:2:3; thus creating an overall sense of acceleration.

Brahms (Concerts 1 & 4)

As a young man Brahms supported himself by working as a choral conductor. This led him not only to compose new music of his own for his choirs to sing, but also to scan the music of earlier ages for suitable repertoire. Throughout the 19th century the publication of collections of early music was increasing steadily, and Brahms was able to build himself a substantial library of early choral literature. Among his books were Carl von Winterfeld's *Der evangelische Kirchengesang* and his studies of Palestrina and Gabrieli. Then he acquired a copy of the Bach motets edition published in 1853—a copy of which survives with his signature on the title page and annotated to a degree that shows how closely he studied the music: marking repeat signs to indicate large-scale repetitions of material, using square brackets to highlight imitative entries, and often adding verbal observations as well. He also kept a notebook with examples of parallel fifths and octaves and other curiosities, as if taking the temperature of the earlier masters. His careful attention to the

textures and structures of Bach's motets bore fruit in Brahms's own motets, and is especially apparent in the Op. 29 and Op. 74 sets (published in 1864 and 1879) which are full of contrapuntal dexterity and idiomatic echoes of Bach. His interest had not abated when quite late in life he enthusiastically welcomed Philip Spitta's complete edition of Schütz, which was published during the 1880s and '90s, and inspired his own antiphonal writing for double choir in a later set of motets (Op. 110.)

The music of Brahms's Op.29, published in 1864, can be traced back to counterpoint studies that he undertook almost ten years earlier. The two motets were composed during the period 1856-1860, when his interest in Bach was at its most intense, and the resulting mixture of historical and late 19th-century style colour the music in terms of counterpoint, chorale harmonisation, use of cantus firmus, and choice of texts. In writing these two works it is as if Brahms is hailing the German heritage he shares with Bach, and signalling the motet as a very apt vehicle for his historicist interests. He does not merely play with early music as if on a kind of tourist trip, but instead enters into its spirit through a close engagement with its techniques. In so doing Brahms becomes one of the first composers to use early music consciously as a source of modernist renewal, and he was to be followed by Webern, Stravinsky, Hindemith, and eventually many others down to the present day. And this process was matured in the next set of motets.

The Op. 74 motets, published in 1879, echo the earlier set to some degree, and some of the musical ideas in them also date back to the earlier period of Bach study. But the early music is now fully assimilated into Brahms's personal language, so that while we hear the Bachian references, we are in no doubt as to which century the music belongs. *Warum ist das Licht gegeben dem Mühseligen* is regarded as one of Brahms's highest achievements in a capella composition, but the second motet, a set of five chorale variations, is also a tour de force of contrapuntal ingenuity at the service of vivid expression.

Schütz (Concert 4)

Schütz did not use the term 'motet' to describe his sacred music, preferring either the Latin *Cantiones Sacrae* or the German *Geistliche Chormusik*. Although we sing only a few short pieces by Schütz, they do offer a good example of his almost stubborn adherence to the old style of polyphony. His reasons for this preference are best given in a précis of his own words in the preface to *Geistliche Chormusik*, published in Dresden in 1648: "It is well known even today that since the concerted style of composition with basso continuo came our way from Italy" [i.e. the use of one or more vocal lines supported by an independent instrumental accompaniment as for example in opera] "it has become extremely popular. Now I am in no way objecting to this enterprise, but without doubt no one can rightly set out on other types of composition and properly manage them, unless he has already been schooled in the most demanding study of counterpoint in the style *without* basso continuo. Without this background not a single composition can succeed, even if it may sound like celestial harmony to those ears not properly trained in music, nor indeed be valued much more highly than a hollow nut."

Contemporary works

In the selection of modern works for this series, I have felt liberated by the example of certain early medieval motets *not* to associate the word 'motet' automatically with something sacred, but to look instead for works that showed either a seriousness of

purpose, emanating from the choice of text, or a musical ingenuity of style such as that exemplified by a Machaut or an Adam de la Halle. This seems to me a useful way of reinventing the motet: as a genre where texts expressing compassion, humanistic morality, and even non-Western spirituality, can find a suitably elevated identity: a word-music construction that is more than mere aestheticism.

Concert 2

A few years ago we commissioned David Fennessy to compose a new work for Chamber Choir Ireland. This was *Letter to Michael*, and moved by its special qualities, I suggested two further commissions to build a trilogy of pieces that would be related though independent. As we go to press, the third work has not yet been completed nor does it have a title. Those details will be provided later; meanwhile here are the composer's own program notes for the first two works.

Letter to Michael

A few years ago I came across an extraordinary image by a woman named Emma Hauck (1878-1920). It was of a page of text written so densely in pencil that it was almost completely black and more or less illegible. Hauck was a patient in the psychiatric hospital of the University of Heidelberg and in the summer of 1909 wrote many similar pages in the form of letters to her husband Michael, begging him to come and collect her. The text consists simply of the phrase *Herzenschatzi Komm* (sweetheart, come) written over and over again, many hundreds of times or simply *Komm*. It seems the letters were never sent and her pleas were left unheard. (D.F.)

Ne reminiscaris

The English text in this piece suggests a kind of awakening: from a coma perhaps, or a deep dream state. During the composition, I had read about many cases of people who had suffered acute amnesic disorders (loss of memory), and I became particularly interested in the idea of the "permanent present tense". From occupying an unsettling no-man's-land between consciousness and unconsciousness, the music grows towards something far more life affirming; an ecstatic sense of being alive and in the now. A short cadence from the sixth Penitential Psalm setting by Orlando Lassus seems to be caught in a loop. But out of this repetition comes growth too; a commitment to an idea, a search for fluency, the identification of the self. (D.F.)

Concert 3

In this program the music of Bach alternates with three contemporary works, which are all by women and shift the focus of the texts and indeed the musical inspiration significantly beyond and away from the Western tradition.

"One thousand years ago a woman in Japan with no name wrote a book without a title" — thus Ivan Morris begins the introduction to his translation of *As I cross a bridge of dreams*. Thanks to Morris that book has now acquired a very effective title and the authoress a name, Lady Sarashina. The title was borrowed by Morris from an ancient Japanese poem. The book originally became known in Japan as Sarashina Nikki or Sarashina Diary. This title bears little connection to anything in the book except for a passing reference near the

end to a mountain in Sarashina District, and so Morris then borrowed this word to give the anonymous author a new name.

Born in 1946, Anne Boyd wrote her first compositions as a little girl growing up on a remote Outback sheep station in central Queensland. She studied music in Sydney, moved to England in the 1970s where *As I crossed a bridge of dreams* was composed. The work won a prize and received its first performance at the Wigmore Hall in 1975. I was in the audience on that occasion, and soon arranged the first of many performances that I have given since. Boyd moved on to Hong Kong for a decade and then back to Sydney, where she recently retired as Emeritus Professor of Music. Her music has been strongly influenced by the ancient court music of Japan, which seems to her to offer a musical representation of the Outback landscape of her childhood.

The Sarashina book recounts numerous dreams, one of which provides the name that is the only full word heard in Boyd's composition. "I had dreamt that Amida Buddha was standing in the far end of our garden. I could not see him clearly, for a layer of mist seemed to separate us, but when I peered through the mist I saw that he was about six feet tall and that the lotus pedestal on which he stood was about four feet off the ground...He said, 'I shall leave now, but later I shall return to fetch you.' Thereafter it was on this dream alone that I set my hopes for salvation."

Julia Wolfe (b.1958) is one of the triumvirate of composers who are identified with the Bang On A Can ensemble based in New York City. Their Jewish heritage gives them a different perspective on the heavily Christian tradition of so much classical choral music, and while they generally set secular words from many different sources, at certain points all three of them have reflected their culture in the texts or titles chosen for their music. *Guard my tongue* takes its title from the daily Hebrew service, and the short text paraphrases part of psalm 34: *Guard my tongue from evil and my lips from speaking deceit*. Wolfe's compositions are often built around an insistent syncopated rhythmic energy that suggests (to my ear) a hinterland of urban rock music and the sounds of technology, somehow mingled with a freshness drawn from a sense or perhaps just a memory of the natural world, producing a sort of unsentimental version of country and western music. Only some of these traits are discernible in *Guard my tongue*, which was commissioned by the University of Wisconsin River Falls, and first performed there in 2009.

Latvian composer Santa Ratniece (b.1977) has sent me the following description of her magical piece with its strange title.

"The words *horo horo hata hata* are the refrain to an Ainu lullaby. Ainu people find these unusual sounds as holy as the ringing of heavenly bells. It feels as if the vibrating field of sound will put us to sleep, but it actually leads us to the heart of the Ainu worldview, which is ruled by both gods and evil spirits. Their daily tasks are carried out in union with nature, birds and animals. We hear Ainu hunters' prayers: though hunting is part of the Ainu lifestyle, they care deeply about the souls of hunted creatures and worship the gods who appear in the masks of birds and beasts. The prayer to the bird begins with quiet owl whistles, wishing it an easy flight up to the highest heavens. The prayer to the deer ends with deer calls, when the flight of its soul has already reached the mountain peaks."

Concert 4

Swedish composer Sven-David Sandstrøm (b.1942) has written many impressive choral works, several of them linked to Bach's motets, but the piece I have chosen here is *Es ist genug*. This is an earlier work based on Buxtehude's cantata *Eins bitte ich vom Herrn*; Sandstrøm uses the same text and also quotes a brief musical passage for the words *Es ist genug*. In addition Sandstrøm quotes a Swedish folksong, so that the work expresses a spiritual acceptance of death together with sharp nostalgia for the peace of one's home valley. Buxtehude was the older master whom Bach at age twenty walked several hundred kilometres from Arnstadt to Lübeck "to comprehend one thing and another about his art." In 1705 Buxtehude was the greatest composer and organist of the day, and like any intelligent student Bach went to the best.

© Paul Hillier

This note was written exclusively for Chamber Choir Ireland's *Before Bach and After* series. No reproduction of this text is permitted in any format without the authorisation of Paul Hillier.