



*The Organ Masters:
Peter Sykes plays Bach and Buxtehude*



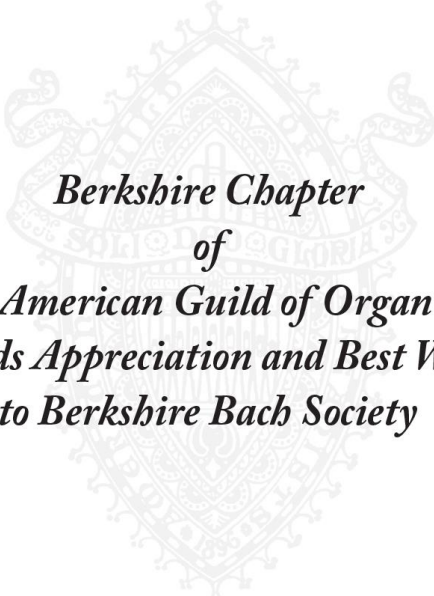
Saturday | February 9, 2019 | 4 pm

**Unitarian Universalist Meeting House
1089 Main Street | Housatonic, MA**

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*Berkshire Chapter
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The American Guild of Organists
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The Berkshire Bach Society is pleased to present

PETER SYKES | ORGAN

The Program

D. BUXTEHUDE Prelude in g minor, BuxWV 148
(1637-1707)

J.S. BACH Partita on *O Gott, du frommer Gott*, BWV 767
(1685-1750)
Toccatà in C Major, BWV 566a

D. BUXTEHUDE Ciacona in e minor, BuxVW 160
(1637-1707)
Chorale Prelude, *Nun komm, der Heiden
Heiland*, BuxVW 211

J.S. BACH Chorale Prelude, *Nun komm, der Heiden
Heiland*, BWV 659
(1685-1750)

Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor, BWV 582

The Program is performed without intermission.

*Audio recording services provided by
www.marlanbarryaudio.com*

Peter Sykes, Organ



Peter Sykes is one of the most distinguished, versatile, and decorated keyboard artists performing today. He has appeared in recitals for organizations ranging from the American Guild of Organists to the International Society of Organbuilders, and in venues including the Library of Congress, Boston Early Music Festival, Aston Magna Festival, and others throughout the world. He has performed numerous dedication recitals for important new and rebuilt organs, including the 2004 inaugural performance on the restored 1800 Tannenberg two-manual organ in Old Salem, NC, that was featured on the CBS television show *Sunday Morning*. In addition to the organ, he performs frequently on the clavichord, and in 2011 performed recitals for the British and Dutch Clavichord Societies in London and Amsterdam. In 2014 he returned to Europe for recitals at Domäne Dahlem in Berlin and the Saint-Remi Basilica in Reims.

Sykes holds degrees from the New England Conservatory of Music and Montreal's Concordia University and is the winner of multiple competitions, including the Chadwick Medal and the annual concerto competition from the New England Conservatory, the Boston Chapter American Guild of Organists Young Artists Competition, and the Second International Harpsichord Competition sponsored by the Southeastern Historical Keyboard Society. He is a past laureate of the Erwin Bodky Award for excellence in early music performance and winner of the Outstanding Alumni award from the New England Conservatory for career achievement since graduation. In 2011 he was honored by the St. Botolph Club Foundation with its Distinguished Artist Award, joining prior winners, painter Edward Hopper, poets Elizabeth Bishop and Stanley Kunitz, sculptor Alexander Calder, and writers George V.

Higgins, Annie Dillard, and Sissela Bok. The award characterized him as “one of the major musical intellects and imaginations of our time.”

Since 1985 he has served as Director of Music at First Church in Cambridge, Congregational, and adjudicator for leading competitions sponsored by organizations such as the American Guild of Organists and others. He is a member of the board of the Cambridge Society for Early Music and a founding member and current president of the Boston Clavichord Society. He is Associate Professor of Music and Chair of the Historical Performance Department at Boston University and, since 2014, on the faculty of The Juilliard School in New York City as its principal instructor of harpsichord. He has an extensive and critically-acclaimed discography, with performances on important organs and clavichords both in the United States and abroad. Most recently he released *J.S. Bach's Preludes, Fantasies & Fugues* on the Raven label, performing on a Schiedmayer clavichord from 1789, and will soon release Book I of Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* and the complete Bach sonatas for violin and harpsichord obbligato with Daniel Steptner for Centaur Records. In February 2018, he gave the inaugural organ concert in St. Paul's Chapel, Trinity Church Wall Street, in New York City. The organ was built originally in 1989 by the Noack Organ Company for a church in Massachusetts, and was moved, refurbished, enlarged, and installed in the historic 1802 organ case in St. Paul's.

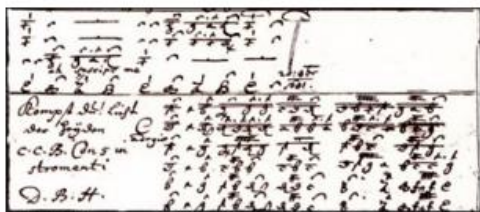
The Meeting House Organ

The Johnson organ in the Unitarian Universalist Meeting House in Housatonic dates from 1893 and has a “tracker” or mechanical action of the kind that Bach and his contemporaries knew. It has two manuals, 13 stops, 13 ranks, and 723 pipes, with an electric blower that replaced the original hand-pumped bellows. For comparison, the organ in the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City has four manuals, 100 stops, 84 ranks, and 5,614 pipes.

Organ music can be a bewildering experience for the listener. Being confronted by a powerful wall of sound without much to differentiate voices or notes, the audience can have difficulty understanding and interpreting what it hears. The Meeting House organ stands in rebuttal to all of that. Its voice is gentle but firm. The polyphony of Bach's music stands out clearly, and the

progress of the counterpoint is easy to follow because all the voices can be heard distinctly. At the same time, the organ's color stops—string, flute and reed—are pretty and lyrical, and they support the musical lines without force or shrillness. The Pedal division, with only one independent stop, gently yet firmly supports both a single stop and full organ in equal measure.* This is an organ that is a musical instrument, not a synthesizer or sound machine, and eloquently conveys a musical message. Though limited in diversity, it is arguably more appropriate as a vehicle for Baroque music than a large modern organ with electric or digital sound production.

Special Instrument, Special Notation: Organ Tablature



Buxtehude Tablature: O dulcis, Jesu, BuxWV 83

Baroque organ music of the North German School was written in a shorthand musical notation called *tablature* that used script letter names and other symbols to indicate pitch, duration, and register. The staves, note heads, and key signatures familiar to modern musicians were omitted, making tablature an efficient way to notate complex and lengthy organ music in an era when manuscript paper was an expensive commodity. J.S. Bach learned tablature notation early in his studies, and was proficient by the time he was 12 or 13, eventually developing his own signature characteristics and traits. The earliest manuscripts believed to be in his hand date from 1698-1699 and include a copy of Buxtehude's great Chorale Fantasia *Nun freuet euch, lieben Christen g'mein*, BuxWV 210, preserved in Weimar's Duchess Anna Amalia Library. The Bach manuscript is a fragment that is believed to have been much larger

* In comparison, Buxtehude's choir organ at the Marienkirche in Lübeck had 52 stops, 15 for the pedal division alone.

originally, and may have included a copy of the Prelude in g minor, BuxWV 148, among other Buxtehude works. The Library was heavily damaged in a fire in 2004 that destroyed much of the collection, including material that was not yet catalogued and likely some Bach manuscripts.

Organ tablature as a common form of notation died out at the end of the Baroque era, and was replaced by staff notation familiar to modern musicians.



Bach Tablature: Fantasie in c minor, BWV 1121 (c.1706)

The Music



JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685-1750) was born in Eisenach to a large and respected family of musicians. He was well-educated in performance and composition, first by his father and, after his father's death, by his elder brother, Johann Christoph, who was a student of Pachelbel. As part of his brother's tutelage, Bach spent time copying the scores of other

composers, exposing him to a wide range of styles and developing his encyclopedic interest in all types of music. Manuscripts of organ works by Dieterich Buxtehude were likely passed to him from his brother, who had them from Pachelbel who was a friend of the Danish composer. In October 1705, having studied Buxtehude's music for several years, the 20-year old Bach took a sabbatical from his post in Arnstadt to travel 250 miles—largely on foot—to hear Buxtehude in Lübeck. He over-stayed his leave by three months, much to the irritation of his employers, but likely participated in performances of Buxtehude's music and generally absorbed what he could of his idol's performance practice. Since Buxtehude's music was only available in manuscript, Bach spent part of his time in Lübeck copying repertoire and he carried the copies back to Arnstadt with him. It is through these manuscripts that some of Buxtehude's most important works have been preserved.

As a professional organist, Bach was keenly interested in the construction and maintenance of organs, and was often hired to assess the condition of instruments in various churches within Germany. The investment required for a church organ was (and still is) substantial, and inspections were an important activity that required the examiner to recommend improvements or to confirm that an instrument satisfied the construction contract terms for cost, specifications, and quality. Several of the inspection reports that Bach submitted survive in the historical record, and it is clear that he derived a portion of his income from these examinations, often performing inaugural concerts on the organs he certified. Bach knew several organ builders personally, and because of his reputation as an organ master, builders coveted his endorsement as proof of the quality of their work.

Over his life, Bach served as organist at Arnstadt (1703-1707) and Mühlhausen (1707-1708), court organist and Concertmaster in Weimar (1708-1717), Music Director in Köthen (1717-1723), Cantor of the Thomas-Schule, and Music Director in Leipzig (1723-1750). During his lifetime he was recognized as an organ virtuoso and master of complex counterpoint, but he never traveled outside Germany and consequently was not especially widely known in an age dominated by international music celebrities. His music fell out of favor after his death but was studied and promoted in the 19th century by Felix Mendelssohn and others, leading to a permanent revival. Scholars conventionally use the death of Bach to mark the end of the Baroque era, and consider him one of the greatest composers of all time.

The *Partita on O Gott, du frommer Gott (O God, thou just God)*, BWV 767 dates from Bach's time in Lüneburg (1700-1703) where he studied with Georg Böhm (d. 1733) who is credited with developing the *chorale partita* as a significant keyboard composition. The *partita* at that time used variations to create a large work with contrasting sections, and it continued to be associated with variations until the appearance of Bach's *Clavier-Übung I* (1731), in which he presents his six *partitas* as freely-composed suites. BWV 767 is based on a Lutheran chorale and contains eight variations, following the eight chorale verses of the text by Johann Heerman from 1630. The work is stylistically similar to Buxtehude's Prelude in g minor, BuxWV 148, by being multi-sectional and alternating fugal and virtuosic sections, but shows even more variety than Buxtehude's work.

Bach wrote the *Toccatto in E Major, BWV 566* probably during his visit to Lübeck in the winter of 1705-06 or shortly thereafter. The *toccatto* in the North German school derived from Italian models, typically with a five-part structure. Buxtehude developed the form as a rhapsodic composition that alternated free and contrapuntal or fugal sections. Bach's *Toccatto* follows the same sectional pattern, using full chords and running passages, and exhibiting the prominent use of pedal that is a Buxtehude hallmark. Peter Sykes has chosen to perform Bach's alternate version in C Major (BWV 566a), that was preserved in manuscripts by the organists J.T. Krebs (d. 1762) and J.P. Kellner (d. 1772). This version is suited to organs with modern temperament, such as the UU Meeting House instrument.

Bach's *Chorale Prelude Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland (Come now, Savior of all nations)*, BWV 659, was written c. 1711 and is likely a direct homage to Buxtehude and his prelude on the same hymn. Both works are based on a chorale with a plainchant melody and a text by Martin Luther dating from 1524 that traditionally was sung on the first Sunday of Advent. The *chorale prelude* at the time was a polyphonic work for organ based on the hymns of the German Protestant Church, and in the hands of Böhm, Bach, and Buxtehude was developed into substantive compositions that are required repertoire for organists today. BWV 659 is an example of the ornamental style of chorale prelude favored by Buxtehude in which the melody is treated in one voice with elaborate embellishment. Bach's setting is more highly developed along these lines than Buxtehude's, but follows a similar style, ending with the same octave jump in the melodic line and major tonic sonority at the cadence in a clear reference to the older composer's work.

The *Passacaglia and Fugue in c minor, BWV 582*, is one of Bach's greatest organ works. It was written possibly as late as 1713, but more likely shortly after his return from Lübeck in the winter of 1705-06 when the impact of Buxtehude's performances of similar works was still fresh. As a musical form, the *passacaglia* comprises continuous variations in $\frac{3}{4}$ time on an ostinato bass or *ground* (a short melodic phrase repeated over and over with more varied music written above). For his Passacaglia Bach chose an eight-bar ostinato and created 20 variations. The double Fugue follows without a break, similar to the way Buxtehude used a fluid sectional structure in his works that alternates fugues and virtuosic passages. Following Buxtehude's practice in the Prelude in g minor, BuxWV 148, Bach re-uses part of the ostinato from the Passacaglia in the fugue subjects, thereby relating the two parts of his work in an integral way that creates stylistic and expressive cohesion.



DIETERICH BUXTEHUDE (1637[?]-1707) was born most likely in Helsingborg, Skåne, Denmark, now part of Sweden. Not much is known definitively about his early life (including his actual birth year) but it is likely that he was taught by his father, who was organist at St. Olaf's church in Helsingør (Elsinore). Through much of his life he identified himself as a Danish composer and musician, only later Germanizing his birthname of Diderich. He began his professional career at age 20 as an organist in Helsingborg, moving three years later to St. Mary's Church in Helsingør where he served for nearly a decade. In 1668 he settled in Lübeck as organist at the Marienkirche, one of the largest churches in Germany—and one with two organs—where he remained for the rest of his life. In Lübeck he succeeded Franz Tunder (d. 1667), and as was customary, married his predecessor's daughter. He eventually had seven children with her—all girls—six of whom lived to adulthood. In 1703, 18-year old G.F. Händel and 22-year old Johann Mattheson travelled together to Lübeck to audition for a possible job. Nearing retirement and impressed with both young men, Buxtehude reportedly offered his own position to each, with the stipulation that his successor marry his eldest daughter as he had done in his turn. Both declined the offer and reportedly left the city the next day. It is possible that J.S. Bach received the same offer when he visited Buxtehude in the winter of 1705 and stayed for three months, but his priority was more to study the master's music and performance practice than to set himself up in life. In the event, Johann Schiefferdecker (d. 1732)

succeeded Buxtehude at the Marienkirche in 1707, and Anna Margareta Buxtehude married him in due course.

In Lübeck Buxtehude was expected to write large works for public festivals and to commemorate the life events of the important families in the city. In 1673 he reorganized and expanded Tunder's *Abendmusik*, into an important series of concerts held at the Marienkirche on the five Sundays before Christmas. In a departure from tradition, the concerts were independent of church services and included vocal and instrumental music (often with large forces) that attracted diverse performers and a wide audience. J.S. Bach likely participated in some of these performances during his visit in the winter of 1705, and took the concept home with him to Arnstadt. The Marienkirche continued the *Abendmusik* concerts until 1810, when the Napoleonic Occupation put pressure on city coffers, and eventually revived the series in 1926 under the organist Walter Kraft (d. 1977). Evening concerts at the church based on the Buxtehude model continue to this day. The Marienkirche and Lübeck itself were heavily damaged in World War II, and Buxtehude's choir organ was destroyed. It was known to have had three manuals and 52 stops, 15 of which were for the pedal division alone. Not coincidentally, Buxtehude's organ music is conspicuous for its use of pedal.

As a composer, Buxtehude is considered a key figure of the middle Baroque period, a direct and vital link between Heinrich Schütz—the most important German composer before J.S. Bach—and Bach himself. His music was widely known during his lifetime from manuscript copies, but since very little was published, much of his output has been lost and the surviving compositions are nearly impossible to date with any accuracy. Over 100 vocal works, 40 chorale settings for organ, several preludes, toccatas, fugues, and chamber music do survive, however, revealing variety, interesting harmonic turns, colorations, and bursts of virtuosity alternating with periods of quiet introspection. Tantalizingly, the libretti of several of his oratorios survive but the scores do not, depriving us of the ability to trace the development of musical form during the period directly preceding Bach. Stylistically his keyboard works have an improvisational feel that particularly seems to have appealed to Bach in his own work. Following his return from visiting Buxtehude he was reprimanded by his employers for “wayward playing” in Church and improvising “curious variations and irrelevant ornaments” that obscured the chorale melodies and bewildered the Congregation. Reportedly, this was an issue for Buxtehude as well, and Church officials in Lübeck took to posting the numbers of the hymns

prominently so the Congregation could identify them, despite the complexity of Buxtehude's improvisations, and attempt to sing their parts correctly.

The *Prelude in g minor, BuxWV 148*, was written before 1675 and is typical of Buxtehude's overall compositional style. It opens with a dramatic swell of sound and alternates short passages of contrasting texture, surprising harmonic progressions, and brilliant virtuosity. The highly dramatic work falls into the category of the so-called *stylus phantasticus* that 17th century writers used to describe music that was driven by the imagination (fantasy) rather than the formal dance structures of the typical Baroque suite or trio sonata. The style originated in Venice with the highly individual music of Claudio Merulo (d. 1604), organist at St. Mark's basilica, and was continued by G. Frescobaldi (d. 1643), whose student, J.J. Froberger (d. 1667), introduced it to Germany. Buxtehude brought the style forward to Bach's time and in his realizations must have electrified the young composer when he heard it performed first hand.

The *Ciaccona in e minor, BuxVW 160*, is a free organ work whose modest length belies the weight of the musical and emotional territory traversed. From a gentle and quiet beginning, the piece grows in stature and intensity to conclude with a sense of movement and arrival at a triumphant spiritual destination. The *ciaccona*—*chaconne* in French—was a popular Baroque musical form that comprised continuous variations on a harmonic structure rather than a theme. Buxtehude wrote two chaconnes and a passacaglia (a related type) that are considered important contributions to the North German development of the form and clearly influenced Bach.

In the *Chorale Prelude Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland (Come now, Savior of all nations), BuxVW 211*, Buxtehude presents an example of the ornamental chorale prelude style that was his preferred treatment for the genre and that later inspired Bach in his work on the same hymn (BWV 659). During his lifetime Buxtehude was known as the leading proponent of the ornamental style of chorale prelude in which the melody stays in one voice throughout the piece and is embellished continuously. This work, in which the ornamentation is comparatively modest, is typical of Buxtehude's general compositional style that was so appealing to the teenage Bach, and equally confusing (or delightful) to the Lübeck Congregation at the Marienkirche.

—T.A. McDade

Special Thanks

Karen Clark and the Unitarian Universalist Meeting, Terrill McDade, Perry Boles Brooks, John Lynn Jones, Nancy King, Mal Wasserman, Paul Johansen, our dedicated ushers, the Berkshire Chapter of the American Guild of Organists, and our season sponsors.

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New contributions that are made by June 30, 2019 up to \$10,000 are matched 100% by a friend of the Society doubling your impact.



Join us for the rest of our 2018-2019 season

- ***Bach's Birthday Bash***—On Saturday, March 30, 2019, we celebrate Bach's birthday and his dedication to developing young musicians, at The White Hart Inn in Salisbury, CT. Enjoy period food in 21st century style, musical sports and games, and a stirring recital by elite young musicians.
- ***Eugene Drucker: The Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin by J.S. Bach***—On Saturday, April 27, 2019, Eugene Drucker performs Bach's great works for solo violin that are classics of the modern violin repertoire. Join us at the First Congregational Church in Great Barrington for an unforgettable exploration of Bach's genius by one of the great violinists of our time.
- ***Simone Dinnerstein in Recital***—On Saturday, May 5, 2019 we present Simone Dinnerstein in a solo piano recital of varied works by François Couperin, Robert Schumann, Erik Satie, and Phillip Glass. Join us for this special fundraiser that concludes our 2018-2019 season.

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as of January 31, 2019*

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*2018-2019 Members of the Berkshire Bach Society
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Duet & Solo (continued)

Alice and Emanuel Nadelman
Christopher Nye
Tony Paratore
John Pollard
Mary Poole
Peter and Mary Rentz
Myra and David S. Ross
Alice and Donald Roth
Leslie and Richard Roth
David Sanborn
Sandy Semel
Lester and Marilyn Shulklapper
Karen and David Spidal
Deborah Syer
Alba and Robert Tutnauer
Jan and Bill Tynan
Ruth and Robert Veit
Marc Violette

Duet & Solo (continued)

Andrew Weinberger and
Meredith Sue Willis
Joan Weitzner
Thad and Francesca Wheeler
Steve and Andrea White
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