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**Trading Places and Travelling:**

**Musical Legacies of the Hanseatic League**

Dr Geoffrey Webber

I'd like to begin with some maps. When I first began studying German music of the 17th century I remember starting with a map of Germany and locating where everyone that I knew about actually worked. Back in 1980 that was of course the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic, West and East Germany. Before long I discovered that even putting these two countries together was far from adequate, with several important German composers turning up as far East as what is now Russia.

To understand the extent of that great confederation or association of towns and cities known as the Hanseatic League one's geographical view of northern Europe needs to be dominated by the principal trading sea routes. It was essentially the movement of goods by sea that brought these towns and cities together during the middle ages, and thus the most effective maps of the trading area are those in which the sea is at the centre:

*MAP 1: The extent of the hansa in about 1400*

This map shows the extent of the Hansa in about 1400 centred on the North Sea and the Baltic Sea. The area stretches from London in the west to Novgorod in the east with Bergen in Norway the most northerly outpost.

*MAP 2: The Baltic Lands and the Hanseatic League*

This map shows a slightly wider area and crucially has lots of lines showing the actual trading routes linking all the ports together and then continuing onwards inland to nearby cities and towns that were also part of the League.

*Slide 3: Lynn & ship*

The East Anglian town of Lynn was like London an important port in the middle ages, and a few years ago the town held a special Festival celebrating its links with the HL [Hanseatic League], rather like the current City of London Festival, during which a replica of a German trading boat, the Lisa von Lübeck, sailed to the port as shown in the picture on the right.

*Slide 4: Hanse warehouse*

The town still has a warehouse, shown here, that survives from the heyday of the league built in the characteristic red-brick that dominates the churches, town halls and town gates of the region.

Another lecture would deal with the architectural legacy of the HL, but I just happened to be in Worksop College, a Woodard School in Nottinghamshire, earlier this year and was completely taken aback by the presence of red-brick Hanseatic architecture in the main school building on a scale very similar to the buildings of the late middle ages.

*Slide 5: Lübeck*

In this modern painting of the port of Lübeck as it may have appeared in the mid-14th century you can clearly see the characteristic Hanseatic stepped gables in an overall circumflex shape on the top of the buildings in red brick.

*Slide 6: Lübeck today*

Here's the view as it is today, with a ring round the stepped gables.

*Slide 7: WORKSOP*

And here's the Hall of Worksop College in Nottinghamshire which has the stepped gables both at the long and short sides of the Hall. But back to the maps, and this next one is very special:

*MAP 3 1539*

This dates from 1539. Produced by the Swede Olaus Magnus this "Carta Marina" is headed "a Description of the Northern Lands and of their Marvels", and was designed to impress the people of southern Europe who had never been this far north. Magnus' s map naturally places Sweden firmly in the middle, and he's keen to include as much northerly land as possible.

Magnus includes many different aspects of life, producing an entertaining and informative map that more than makes up for its comparative lack of accuracy in terms of modern geography. It shows much wildlife and a notably large number of ships emphasising the vital trading routes of the time, together with types of fish, sea currents, ship-building yards etc.

*MAP Iceland*

In this portion you can see the volcanos of Iceland shown in the circle.

*Map Iceland and battles*

And just below I've ringed a battle between 2 ships on the left - you can see the canon balls flying and men jumping overboard; it's noted as a Hamburg ship attacking a Scottish vessel - and on the right an encounter with whales by a Lübeck ship which looses much of its precious cargo.

Does music make an appearance on the map? Yes it does, if only at the outermost reaches of the map where Magnus may have been struggling for things to portray.

*MAP Iceland Viol player*

Here we have Iceland's premier gamba player entertaining the local wildlife.

*MAP dancing*

And further east we have a man perhaps playing cymbals whilst people of assorted ages dance in the most northerly part of Sweden:

But before we leave this splendid map we must have a look at the two cities on which I will mostly focus in this lecture, Hamburg and Lübeck, both ringed here:

*MAP H & L*

Lübeck was for many years the chief city of the HL, even more important than Hamburg, and although their relative importance in today's world is drastically different, they were both great centres of commerce, architecture and of course music in the early modern period. There are two things I'd like you to spot just south of Hamburg & Lübeck, both ringed here:

*Map H & L Bux & salt*

The first is the town which you will see has the same name as one of the greatest mid-baroque composers, Dieterich Buxtehude, just to the south of Hamburg. You can find the word Buxtehude in a modern German dictionary since there is a derogatory expression used by those living in Hamburg - "oh he comes from Buxtehude" which could be translated as "he comes from the back of beyond", or "from the sticks". But this is indeed the town, which was a Hanseatic town in its own right during the early modern period, that Buxtehude's family originally came from. And secondly at the bottom of the slide you can see the mention in Latin of what was crucial to the wealth of this region: salt. Just near Lüneburg, where J. S. Bach was a chorister, we can see "Hic fit candidissimus sal": here is made the whitest salt. This commodity was one of the most important products on which the wealth of Lübeck was based, as so much of the salt from Lüneburg was distributed via the port of Lübeck.

So what can be said of the musical legacy of this great trading area? In essence we are looking at travel and money. The main trading routes allowed ease of travel around the region, and the wealth of the main towns and cities enabled the finer things of life, including of course music, to flourish. In fact, much of the cultural life of the time took place within the realm of the nobility in the prestigious Courts of the region, but much also prospered in the towns, especially those at the heart of the HL.

Unfortunately we know comparatively little about the music of the earlier and greatest period of the League during high middle ages, but of the music in the final years of the League and around the time of its demise in 1669 we know a great deal. Musicians obviously had to travel in search of both education and employment and in the 17th century there were 2 clear routes, either east-west along the trading lines of the HL, or north-south to Italy. The latter route is not of relevance to today's lecture, but was perhaps the most important at the time from the perspective of musical style, but a crucial early example of the east-west axis in the 17th century can be found in the form of the so-called North German Organ School. This was led not by a German, but a Dutchman, the organist Sweelinck who worked in Amsterdam, and his German pupils travelled from Hamburg and northern Germany either overland or by sea to study with him:

*MAP Amsterdam / Hamburg*

Sweelinck's most important German pupils were Jacob Praetorius, Heinrich Scheidemann and Samuel Scheidt. Scheidt and Sweelinck both featured in the concert given earlier in the current City of London Festival by the BBC Singers and Iain Farrington in St Giles' Cripplegate.

Looking towards the eastern side of the region, the career of the composer Johann Meder provides perhaps the best example of the way top musicians travelled around the towns and cities of the HL. Meder came from central Germany and after studying in Leipzig his career took him here:

*Meder map 1*

Bremen (another of the most important HL cities, shown at the bottom left of the slide). Then to Hamburg - 2 - Copenhagen - 3 - Lübeck - 4 - all the way over to Reval, now Tallinn in Estonia (at the top right) - 5 - Riga - 6 - Danzig, now Gdańsk in Poland- 7 - Königsberg, now Kaliningrad, the Russian naval port - 8 - and finally back to Riga where he died - 9.

One of his surviving motets "Wie murren denn die Leut'" was composed to mark the liberation of the city of Riga from a Muscovite siege. You can see this Russian threat even in the 1539 map:

*MAP Riga - canons*

On the left you can see the city of Riga circled in red, and on the right circled in black a row of cannons facing the threat from the east. Here's the title-page of the motet:

*PICTURE: title page*

And here's a close-up of the crucial detail:

*Close-up of title*

Which reads Riga, 3rd October 1684: "For a thanksgiving feast, celebrating the liberation of the city from the Muscovite siege", ending with the interesting tag "also applicable to Germany", and then added afterwards "and Sweden".

Early in the seventeenth century even English musicians occasionally found their way around the Hanseatic ports and cities, especially if they were viol players, since English viol playing was highly regarded at the time. William Brade is the prime example, who worked in a multitude of courts and towns within the area circled on this map:

*MAP Career of Brade*

Brade worked in Hamburg in the first decade of the 17th century, serving as an official town musician, and some of his music was published by his fellow instrumentalists in 1607. After a brief period of court employment he returned as the principal string player of the city in 1613, with a good salary and the opportunity to play for the sumptuous festivities of the prominent city patrons. Brade had in fact tried to raise his salary at the court by threatening to return to Hamburg, and the Count instructed his lawyers to inform the city that he was a "mischievous, wanton fellow" clearly trying to keep such a fine musician in his own employment.

The impression we have today of the geographical spread of German culture in the early modern period is naturally coloured but the political and military events of the 19th and 20th centuries, but when assessing German music of the 17th century, the full east-west axis of the Hanseatic league needs to be taken into account since so many German-speaking citizens were found throughout the region. One of the interesting aspects of our knowledge of German baroque music in general is that it has been inevitably coloured by the work of post-war German scholars who understandably tended to favour those composers who worked in the western part of the region, such as Buxtehude, Tunder and Bernhard. Many other German composers who worked in the area covered by the former DDR or further east in what is now Poland, the Baltic states and Russia have received much less attention perhaps due to the various political sensitivities involved in relation to the German Reich. The situation is gradually changing, but still excellent composers like Meder, mentioned already, and others such as Kaspar Förster and Balthasar Erben, both of whom worked in Danzig/Gdańsk, are still waiting to be fully rediscovered.

Whilst the musical legacy of the HL clearly rested considerably on the ease of movement between towns and cities, the principal boon to music and musicians was the League's prosperity and wealth. Let us return briefly to the North German Organ School, not today to the organ music, but to the instruments themselves, since they were amongst the most complex machines of any sort being made at this time, being marvels of engineering, acoustic design, metallurgy, craftsmanship in wood and more besides. The larger organs of the region were musical resources that went far beyond the strict necessities of the regular liturgy of the church. The churches were often certainly big spaces that needed to be filled with plenty of sound, but what is striking about many of the organs is the duplication of stops of a similar nature that weren't designed to be used together but were simply luxury alternatives. The organs frequently possessed impressive and ornate facades, with highly decorated pipework, and often had what are generally called toy stops. Here's one of the few original facades which escaped Allied bombing in the War, at St Jacob's church in Lübeck.

*Organ Lübeck*

And here's a close-up of the case in which you can see the painted pipes and other decorative features:

*Organ close-up*

This next organ was built by perhaps the most famous builder of the period, Arp Schnitger, and originally stood in one of the Hamburg churches.

*Cappel organ*

At the top of the case is an example of one of the toy stops, the so-called cymbelstern:

*Close-up cymbelstern*

Positioned at the top of the main case on many organs it provided visual as well as aural entertainment as the device whirled round and round to create a bell-like effect. Other toy-stops included the drum, two large pipes that were carefully positioned so that their mouths faced each other creating a rapid beating sound due to the resulting air turbulence, and the bird-song stop, often a small pipe placed in water. My first encounter with one of these was back in the days of the DDR, when I visited Stralsund especially to play this magnificent mid-17th-century instrument:

*Stralsund organ*

Unfortunately I was there in January and it was so cold that the water in the *Vogelgesang* had frozen so I couldn't play it. The galant local organist offered to go and boil a kettle, but I was too concerned about possible damage to the pipe.

In the larger cities, churches would try to out-do each other with bigger and more extravagant organs, sometimes with four keyboards and pedal pipes up to 32 feet in length, and delicate negotiations were often needed between the different trade guilds since organ builders needed a multitude of different materials from which to create their instruments. This rivalry imitated the one-upmanship which also existed amongst the local nobility. The German historian Gisela Jaacks has written that "On the whole, the rivalry between the parish churches for the biggest and best organ - not only in Hamburg but also in Lübeck or Lüneburg - is strongly redolent of the way the local princes vied with each other in displaying their prestige." Gisela Jaacks also provides a nice parallel with the world of gardening. The influential poet and pastor Johann Rist, shown here:

*Rist*

whose hymns were set by Bach, wrote as follows:

"Some say: I have been at the court of a great potentate, and there I saw an uncommonly beautiful royal garden. But, how's that? If it do please you to admire a garden as has royal beauty, then come to Hamburg, where they will show you not one, not 5, not 10, nay 30, 40, 50, which are almost, nay wholly equal to the fine princely gardens, and where, when they lead you through the gates, not eyes alone, but mouth and nose will gape, to swallow all the beauties, follies, walks, fountains, pools, figures, strange and foreign plants, and a thousand pleasant rarities contained therein."

This gives a clear impression of the self-importance and pride of the major towns and cities of the HL. The relationship between the major cities and the local nobility was often fraught, but was at times governed by the fact that some cities enjoyed the status of being "free" cities, free, that is, from the local nobility, but yet in name at least subject to the Holy Roman Emperor. Their special status made them great centres for trade and travelling partly because of a tradition of tolerance towards people from different parts of Europe and of different religious faiths and demoninations. Although the city hierarchy was staunchly Lutheran, Roman Catholics and Jews could live and prosper there without difficulty for most of the period of the League.

Most of the main towns and cities of the HL maintained professional musicians; in the high middle ages there tended to be separate groups of players for civic or secular occasions and those who performed in the main churches, but often the two groups overlapped. As an example we'll look at Danzig/Gdańsk. Here's an engraving from 1687 of the splendid St Mary's church:

*Marienkirche Danzig*

(Incidentally one of the reasons that the music of Danzig is so little known is that the seminal study of music in the city was written by Hermann Rauschning who was a controversial political figure in 1930s Germany whose motivation for writing the history of the town's music was probably at least partly inspired by his political belief that the town should be considered part of Germany and not Poland.) Danzig/Gdańsk's earliest records of city musicians date from the late 14th century, with the trumpeters who played from the church towers forming their own separate guild; but in the late 16th century the musicians were united into one town band based at the principal church, St Mary's. Around the middle of the 17th century the group consisted of a Kapellmeister, Organist, 10 professional singers of which 2 were adult falsettists, and 11 instrumentalists comprising 2 viol players, one violinist, 2 cornet players and 6 trombonists. Most of the main town churches sought to employ temporary travelling foreign musicians, again partly to keep up with the musical life of the courts where Italians in particular were highly prized. In Danzig we have records of the Italian violinist Carlo Farina playing in St Mary's in 1637, including a letter written by him to the town council asking that "when I am heard playing alone in the church, please ensure that I am not hindered by the Kapellmeister".

It is fitting that perhaps the single most important musical legacy of the HL during the 17th century occurred in what was for many centuries the most important city of the league, Lübeck, often called the Queen of the HL. This legacy was the establishment of a regular series of concerts associated with the main town church, St Mary's. At Hamburg we know of a private meeting of musicians under the title of 'Collegium Musicum' where the latest music was performed amongst enlightened circles, but in Lübeck the non-liturgical concerts were funded by the wealth of the city and individual patrons and were public events. Few other examples of public concerts exist anywhere before this time, and the Lübeck series has a decent claim to be the first modern public concert series in the sense that we understand today in the form of, say, the City of London Festival.

The story of the Abendmusik (evening-music) concerts in Lübeck, as they were known, is a fascinating one, made tantalizing by the fact that many of the compositions sadly survive only in the form of a printed libretto. The concerts began under the auspices of Franz Tunder, organist at St Mary's, and apparently arose due to the close proximity between the church and the stock exchange which met outdoors before 1673.

*Lübeck + square*

Here's the view of central Lübeck today showing the grand St Mary's church, one of the highest Gothic church naves in Europe, and the market place to the right.

*Old view*

This next view although a century later than the period we're concerned with shows something of the hussle and bussle of daily life centred on the square. With this view in mind, here's an account of the origins of the concert series from the mid-18th century Lübeck Kantor Caspar Rütz, translated by Kerala Snyder:

"To wit: in former times the citizenry, before going to the stock market, had the praiseworthy custom of assembling in St Mary's church, and the organist [Tunder] sometimes played something on the organ for their pleasure, to pass the time and make himself popular with the citizenry. This was well received and several rich people, who were also lovers of music, gave him gifts. He was thus encouraged first to add a few violins and then singers as well, until it had become a large performance."

The 1697 official Lübeck guidebook talks of the concert series under Tunder's successor Buxtehude, with great pride, stating "This happens nowhere else".

*Church views*

Here's one of the few old photos of the organ before its destruction in WW II, shown on the left, plus on the right a view of the reconstructed church facing East showing the magnificent high vaulting.

One of the main sponsors of Tunder's concerts was the prominent Lübeck entrepeneur, Matthäus Rodde. I promised to return to whales in the North Atlantic, and here's our link, since Rodde made his money both in importing wine from Portugal and whaling around Greenland. He was also apparently responsible for travelling with some scores of Tunder's music on a trade delegation to Stockholm, scores that survive to this day at Uppsala University just north of the capital. Rodde became a godfather to Tunder's son, and also authorized the purchase of instruments for Buxtehude (who had married Tunder's daughter as was customary when taking up the post after Tunder's death). The record states "Two trumpets for the embellishment of the Abendmusik, made in a special way, the likes of which have not been heard in the orchestra of any prince." Note the rivalry again. Rodde's links with Stockholm may also lie behind the great friendship that developed between Buxtehude and the Kapellmeister in Stockholm, Gustav Düben. Without Düben's collection of works by Buxtehude we would only have a handful of vocal pieces by him, since so few other scores survive. (Kantor Rütz also wrote about how most of the old music in his church had been burnt or used for other purposes, using the memorable and faintly chilling phrase "for nothing is more useless than old music".) One of Buxtehude's most often performed vocal works, the Passiontide cycle "Membra Jesu nostri" survives in Sweden with a personal dedication from Buxtehude to Düben, shown here:

*PIC Düben*

The description of Düben as "1o Viro" (shown in the box), top man, or foremost man, is particularly notable.

Some of Buxtehude's surviving compositions have texts that celebrate the city of Lübeck both in relation to its trade and its status as an Imperial city. Here's the text of verse 7 of "Schwinget euch himmelan" as translated by Kerala Snyder:

"Pile rich blessing on business;

Let commerce and trade increase;

Let the ships move profitably,

Strengthen the workers with life and peace.

Pray and moan, moan and languish;

Father, from your blessing-filled bosom

Make Lübeck happy and great."

Whilst some of the Abendmusik concerts were varied in content, others contained a single extended work, an oratorio or "sacred opera" as they preferred to call them. And there was no doubt who was footing the bill. A letter from Buxtehude to the Town Council in 1682 begins: "Most honourable, greatly respected and noble, especially honoured gentleman and esteemed patrons: To the same I say once again most dutiful thanks for the considerable assistance extended to me last year in compensation for the costs related to the Abendmusik at that time."

Two of Buxtehude's last works, for which only the libretti survive, were performed to mark the succession of the Holy Roman Emperor from Leopold I to Joseph I in 1705, the first entitled "Castrum doloris" or Castle of Sorrow and the second, performed the next day, "Templum honoris" or Temple of Honour. These two works show just how important the free Imperial status was for the prosperity of Lübeck; and on the musical side we can note that they were performed in the presence of the young J. S. Bach who had travelled to Lübeck especially to learn from the great man.

Here's the title-page of the printed libretto of Castrum doloris:

*PIC Castrum*

But even more interesting is the description on the next page of the carefully prepared organ and church interior:

*PIC Castrum 2:*

This reads roughly as follows:

*Slide 1:*

"In an illumination on the just restored and completely gilded large organ - *Slide 2* - now covered, and decorated with many lamps and lights is presented the body of the Emperor in a coffin and lying in state; - *Slide 3* - at his head the imperial coat of arms, on both sides the Hungarian, Bohemian and other royal coats of arms; above this is a beautifully decorated heaven over 4 palm trees with the imperial and other royal signs *- Slide 4* - kept watch over by many angels with lights. The two musical groups are by the organ dressed in black, the trombones and trumpets are muted, as are all other instruments."

I'm not too sure what's being described here, but perhaps a large painting on material draped over the front of the organ, obviously well-lit. Although we have no music from this work, some of Buxtehude's earlier works do give a sense of the music heard on great civic occasions or at the Abendmusik concerts. His "Benedicam Dominum" is composed in 24 parts involving at least as many performers set out in 6 groups, reflecting the presence of 6 balconies surrounding the West End organ in St Mary's. Here's the opening of one of the trumpet parts from the Düben collection:

*Trumpet part BD.*

Performances of this piece are rare indeed given the expense and difficulty of finding all the relevant instruments, but Ton Koopman's Opera Omnia collected edition obviously had no choice but to find the money, and here's the opening of his splendid recording.

For the final part of my talk I'd like to return to Hamburg. The 19th-century City Hall in Hamburg is now of course a famous landmark, but the previous building was also very grand, shown here in an engraving from Selle's time:

*Hamburg Rathaus*

Buxtehude's works in praise of Lübeck have been known and performed for some time, but I have specially prepared for you today probably the first performance in modern times of a Hamburg equivalent, a piece by the principal Kantor of the early 17th century, Thomas Selle.

*Selle portrait*

A large collection of Selle's manuscripts survives today in the Hamburg City library, though very few works have been edited and performed in modern times. Many of these are written in old German tablature notation rather than familiar staff notation, including 2 pieces composed for civic occasions in 1654.

One is entitled 'Salve Caesar', referring to the Keiser, the Holy Roman Emperor, and its text combines the political concerns of the city with the aspirations of its musicians in a particularly clear manner. The Latin can be translated roughly as follows:

"Hail most invincible Emperor, glory of the whole Roman world and of musicians. Hail most invincible Queen of Sweden [that's Queen Christina shortly before her abdication], patron of equity and wisdom, hail Protector of the land and sea of England [it's during the Inter-regnum in the 1650s so no monarch of course], hail most illustrious noble Lord of Belgium, hail fathers of the most magnificent fatherland of our most gracious Lord [in the religious sense], hail the most prudent crown of our whole senate, hail the patrons, hail those who favour and promote our Lord; lend us kindly your ears. Whether voices or musical instruments the same spirit is in each and everyone of us in praying for you, and serving you rightly, and performing our best for you."

That's the first part, and the second part has similar sentiments, including another reference to the work of musicians and the crucial relationship between musicians and those who paid their salaries: "May the citizens and most honourable countrymen of our Emperor live; may all live who desire well for the people of Hamburg; may all live who support and advance music, and who love those who promote it; may they live, prosper, thrive and increase." Note here the prayer not just for those that give the money but for those who love and support those that have the money, i.e. those that create the political atmosphere in which money can be spent on music.

The second piece is entitled "Vivat Hamburgum". Here's the opening of the piece in tablature so you can get an idea of the nature of the old German notation:

*PIC Selle 0161, then subsequent slides.*

The title is in the red square. A much shorter work than 'Salve Caesar', its text runs as follows:

"May Hamburg, that most prosperous Emporium [place of trade] live. May the consuls live, may the syndics live, may the senators live, may the secretaries live. May the whole republic, church and crown of citizens thrive, prosper and increase. May each and everyone pray this with one mouth, with a pure heart and true love. May you o God give authority to our prayer."

I'm very grateful to a few student singers from Cambridge and London, Catherine, Verity, Hannah, Ben, Nathan and Julian, for singing this piece for us this evening to conclude my talk.

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