



## Bach and the North German Tradition Vol. 1

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### Gramophone (Malcolm Riley - 2011.02.01)

Although Bach gets top billing (being alphabetically top of the class), the most pleasurable highlights are the three delightful pieces by Georg Böhm (1661-1733), who Bach got to know between 1700 and 1702 when he attended school in Lüneberg. As a musician of wide musical tastes – informed, no doubt, by a spell working in Hamburg's opera house – Böhm is remembered best for establishing the chorale partita as a fully fledged musical form. Two examples are recorded here, mostly on the manuals alone, with sparing use of the pedals. Böhm's encouragement of Bach manifested itself in a love of elegant dance forms (Lüneberg being celebrated for its love of all things in the French taste), flowing bass-lines and a willingness to experiment. Although it is usually played on the harpsichord, Böhm's Capriccio in D sounds quite at ease on the organ. Bach's early Prelude and Fugue in D is rattled off in a similarly strong, no-nonsense manner. Where Bach excelled, of course, was in the trio sonata. Martin Neu produces a perfectly poised chorale trio on Herr Jesus Christ. Buxtehude's contributions emphasise how indebted Bach was in matters fugal. In Buxtehude's Passacaglia the Ahrend organ's tuning strains somewhat under full load as Neu climbs the steep summit to the crowning final tierce de Picardie. Although this new Bavarian organ has a modest specification on paper, such is the variety of its timbral beauty that the ear never tires. The documentation, recorded sound and playing are all of the first order.