

The music

Dietrich Buxtehude	<i>Passacaglia, BuxWV 161</i>
<i>Reading: Setting his course</i>	
Heinrich Isaac	<i>Innsbruck, ich muss dich lassen</i>
JS Bach	<i>Canzona, BWV 588</i>
<i>Reading: Gathering musicians</i>	
Johann Walter	<i>Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin</i>
Heinrich Schütz	<i>So fahr ich hin zu Jesu Christ</i>
<i>Reading: Lower Saxony</i>	
JS Bach	<i>An Wasserflüssen Babylon, BWV 653b</i>
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Silas Wollston	<i>White Gold</i>

INTERVAL	
Georg Böhm	<i>Vater unser in Himmelreich</i>
<i>Reading: Bach in Lüneburg</i>	
Johann Paul von Westhoff	<i>Imitatione della Campana</i>
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<i>Reading: The Legacy</i>	
Johann Ludwig Krebs	<i>Wir glauben all’ an einen Gott</i>
JS Bach	<i>Canon & Quodlibet, BWV 1087 & 988</i>

The readings are taken from Horatio Clare, *Something of his Art: walking to Lubeck with J.S. Bach*, published by Little Toller Books. The book tells the story of Bach’s walk, retraced for *BBC Radio 3*.

The ancient Salt Road between Lüneburg and Lübeck was both a vital trading route for ‘white gold’, upon which the wealth of the region depended, and the path Bach took in 1705 on his 250-mile pilgrimage to hear Buxtehude, a composer he revered. Bach was only 20 and at the start of his career when he made the pilgrimage, but the four months he spent in the master’s company provided a source of inspiration that can be traced throughout his life. Alongside Buxtehude’s music, this programme explores the roots of the Protestant musical tradition as well as music by the composers who taught and influenced the young Bach.

Dietrich Buxtehude (1637–1707) *Passacaglia, BuxWV 161*

Buxtehude’s monumental *Passacaglia* survives uniquely in a manuscript compiled by Johann Christoph Bach (1671–1721), who was organist in Ohrdruf and the oldest brother of Johann Sebastian. On the death of his parents in 1695, the young Bach went to live with his older brother who also became his teacher and laid the foundations of his keyboard technique. According to Bach’s earliest biographer, Johann Nikolaus Forkel, the teenage Bach found the pieces he was given to play too easy, and he begged his brother for access to one of his manuscripts that contained music by the most celebrated keyboard composers of the day (including Pachelbel and Buxtehude); however, he was constantly denied. But since his hands were still small enough to pass through the lattice door of the cupboard in which it was kept, he was able to roll up the manuscript and take it out secretly to copy it by moonlight, for want of a candle. Whether or not the details of the anecdote are true, at its heart is the young Johann Sebastian’s desire to play and understand the music that he heard his older brother performing. Bach’s encounter with Buxtehude’s music may well have started in this way.

Buxtehude’s fascination with numerology is evident in the structure of the *Passacaglia*: the ostinato bass part is composed of 7 notes in 4 bars, and it appears 28 times ($4 \times 7 = 28$); there are 4 sections, each 28 bars long. As well as possibly sparking Bach’s own interest in numerology, this piece is also often cited as an inspiration for his own monumental *Passacaglia* for organ, BWV 582.

Heinrich Isaac (1450–1517) *Innsbruck, ich muss dich lassen* (1485)

The text is a farewell and a lament as the singer leaves Innsbruck to travel to a foreign land. The melody was later used as a Lutheran chorale, to the words ‘O Welt, ich muss dich lassen’.

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) *Canzona, BWV 588*

This is an early work written in a late-Renaissance style that combines elements of the *ricercare* tradition, in which the possibilities of a melody are ‘searched out’, with features of the *canzona* tradition, such as the change to lively triple-time at the mid-point of the piece.

Johann Walter (1496–1570) *Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin* (1524)

The text and melody of *Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin* were composed by Luther; the text is based on the *Nunc dimittis*, the

canticle of Simeon (“Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace”). In Johann Walter’s setting, the melody is found in the tenor part, rather than at the top of the texture.

Heinrich Schütz (1585–1672) *So fahr ich hin zu Jesu Christ* (1648)

A century before Bach made his pilgrimage to Lübeck, Heinrich Schütz had travelled across Europe to Venice, to study with Giovanni Gabrieli between 1609 and 1612, and again in 1628 to meet Monteverdi. Published in Dresden, the text of *So fahr ich hin zu Jesu Christ* reflects on a peaceful death and the journey into eternal life.

JS Bach *An Wasserflüssen Babylon, BWV 653b*

In 1700, at the age of 14, Bach walked over 180 miles from his brother’s house in Ohrdruf to Lüneburg to finish his schooling, having been awarded a singing scholarship at the Michaelis Church. From there, several times he made the 30-mile trip to Hamburg to hear the famous organist Johann Adam Reincken, whose epic 327-bar chorale fantasia on the chorale *An Wasserflüssen Babylon* the young Bach transcribed at this time. Reincken’s influence, and the association of this melody with Reincken, appear to be reflected in Bach’s earliest setting of it, composed in Weimar sometime after 1708. Unusually, and perhaps as a form of homage to Reincken, it is composed in five parts with a double pedal part. Later, in 1720, Bach travelled again to Hamburg, and improvised on the organ at St Catherine’s Church for nearly half an hour on this same melody in the presence of the aged Reincken. After the performance, Reincken commended Bach for this improvisation: “I thought this art was dead, but I see that it survives in you”.

Silas Wollston (b.1971) *White Gold* (2025)

Silas Wollston’s *White Gold*, which was specially commissioned for this programme, portrays the physical and emotional experiences encountered on an imaginary pilgrimage. After an initial fanfare, which represents the bright glow of the ‘white gold’, here interpreted to mean the enlightenment that the pilgrim seeks, the piece falls into three sections: the thoughts of the traveller, the sounds of nature, and finally, the impact of the second on the first, leading to a moment of enlightenment. The structure of the piece derives from the first verse of Paul Gerhardt’s famous hymn ‘*Befiehl du deine Wege*’: ‘Commit your way and your troubles to God. He who gives the wind its path, current and course will also find paths where your foot can travel.’ One of the best-known hymns of the late 17th century, it would have been very familiar to Bach, who was criticised by

the church authorities in Arnstadt for confusing the congregation by introducing ‘curious variations’ and ‘strange notes’ – complex harmonies and surprising modulations – into his hymn accompaniments, features which are referenced in *White Gold*.

INTERVAL

Georg Böhm (1661–1733) *Vater unser in Himmelreich*

While in Lüneburg, Bach appears to have studied with the organist at the Johannis Church, Georg Böhm, and according to Bach’s son, Carl Philipp Emanuel, Johann Sebastian greatly admired Böhm’s music. In Böhm’s setting of *Vater unser in Himmelreich* – Luther’s version of the Lord’s Prayer – each line of the melody is treated as a lively point of imitation before a final statement in slower notes in the bass part.

Johann Paul von Westhoff (1656–1705) *Imitatione della Campana* (1694)

Johann Paul von Westhoff was born in Dresden and, as a teenager, was taught by the very elderly Heinrich Schütz. After spending most of his career in Dresden, Westhoff moved in 1699 to Weimar, where he worked as a court chamber musician and a teacher of French and Italian. He was still working in Weimar in 1703 when Bach was first employed there, and Westhoff’s solo partitas for violin appear to have been an important early influence on Bach. The *Imitatione della Campana* (Imitation of the Bells), which forms part of a sonata published by Westhoff in Dresden, makes use of a shimmering effect, created by the use of both stopped and open strings, known as ‘bariolage’.

Buxtehude *Contrapunctus II, Evolutio, BuxWV 76a* (1671)

Buxtehude used the melody of ‘Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin’ as the basis for the two Contrapunctus works that he composed as funeral music for Menno Hanneken, a friend and colleague who, like Buxtehude, worked at the Marienkirche in Lübeck. *Contrapunctus II* has two sections: in the first, the melody, found in the uppermost part, is accompanied by flowing contrapuntal lines in the lower three parts; in the second section, *Evolutio*, all four lines and the texture itself are inverted (or ‘mirrored’), with the inverted melody in the lowest part. Such exceptional contrapuntal craftsmanship and ingenuity may well have been a source of inspiration for Bach, who explored the possibilities of invertible counterpoint throughout his life.

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Grateful acknowledgements

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Festival Website little-missenden.org

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Programme Notes

BACH’S SALT ROAD

Ensemble In Echo

with Horatio Clare



5.00pm, Sunday October 11th, 2026
Little Missenden Church

66th Little Missenden Festival

JS Bach (1747) *Canonic Variations on 'Von Himmel hoch', BWV 769*

In these variations the melody of this Lutheran chorale appears in a series of canons (a musical technique in which a single melodic line is fitted with itself at the distance of a few beats) over a free walking bass part. In each case the melody fits with an *inverted* form of itself.

Dietrich Buxtehude *Ciacona, BuxWV 160*

Like his *Passacaglia*, Buxtehude's *Ciacona* is built on a repeating bass part, in this case a simple falling four-note pattern, over which the melodic parts become ever faster and more fantastical.

Johann Ludwig Krebs (1713–1780) *Wir glauben all' an einen Gott*

Johann Ludwig Krebs studied with Bach in Leipzig. His setting of *Wir glauben all' an einen Gott*, Luther's paraphrase of the Creed, survives in a number of different versions, one of which makes use of a five-part texture with double pedal part. Parallels with Bach's use of this texture in *An Wasserflüssen Babylon* suggest that Bach encouraged his pupils to explore this challenging and unusual texture.

JS Bach *Canon & Quodlibet, BWV 1087 & 988*

We finish our programme with a *Canon & Quodlibet* by Bach. The *Canon* is the one Bach chose to hold, written on a slip of manuscript paper, in the famous portraits that he had painted in 1746 and 1748 by Elias Gottlob Haussmann. It is one of 14 canons that were discovered in 1974 on the back of Bach's personal printed copy of the '*Goldberg*' *Variations*. This short fragment of music is used as a prelude to the *Quodlibet* from the '*Goldberg*' *Variations*. A *Quodlibet*, or 'whatever you like', is a musical joke. In this case, Bach makes use of a folk song with the words: 'Kraut und Rüben haben mich vertrieben, hätt' meine Mutter Fleisch gekocht, wär' ich länger g'blieben' (Cabbage and turnips have driven me away; if my mother had cooked meat, I would have stayed longer).

Programme notes by Silas Wollston

The artists

ENSEMBLE IN ECHO:

Gawain Glenton *cornetto/direction* **Bojan Cicic** *violin*
Rachel Byrt *viola* **Emily White** *alto and tenor sackbut*
Bill Hunt *violone* **Silas Wollston** *organ*
with **Horatio Clare** *narrator*

Formed and directed by cornetto player **Gawain Glenton, In Echo** is a diverse ensemble that explores the rich repertoires of the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries. Specialising in renaissance and baroque music, the ensemble also commissions and performs new music for old instruments.

"Musical training in the 16th and 17th centuries was very different from the training classical musicians receive today, with the result that musicians then developed a different understanding of music from its most fundamental aspects.

We cannot click our fingers and become musicians of the 16th or 17th centuries, but we can explore the skills we know they developed. The aim is not academic, but to arrive at performances that connect more with modern audiences - just as fully historical productions of Shakespeare plays can be more accessible to people in the 21st century, not less." (*Gawain Glenton*)

inecho.co.uk

Born in London and raised on a hill farm in the Black Mountains, **Horatio Clare** read English, trained to be a tabloid journalist and worked instead as a BBC radio producer. Writing and talking about books has taken him to 50 countries, as well as dozens of festivals, schools and universities.

He presents essays and documentaries for *BBC Radio 3* and *4*, on subjects ranging from German student duelling societies to the Paris river police and white resistance to apartheid, and contributes to numerous international publications and radio programmes, with regular travel essays for the *Financial Times* and *From Our Own Correspondent*, features for the *Daily Telegraph*, articles for *Condé Nast Traveller*, where he is an editor at large, and reviews for *The Spectator*.

Something of his Art is Horatio Clare's recreation of the walk that Bach took in the depths of winter in 1705 – his long walk to Lübeck across northern Germany, and visualising the light, landscape and wildlife the young, and as yet unknown, composer would have seen.

horatioclarewriter.com