

Dissecting Jesus

The Spiritual Role of the Senses in Buxtehude's Cantata Cycle *Membra Jesu Nostris* (1680)

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ABSTRACT

The influence of German Pietism, a Protestant spiritual movement emphasizing the corporeal and the sensorial, on baroque composer Dieterich Buxtehude (ca. 1637-1707) has long been discussed among historians and musicologists of the seventeenth century like Martin Geck and Isabella van Elferen. However, current scholarship lacks detailed analyses of the composer's individual works to assess how and to what extent this influence occurred. This paper, therefore, examines the contents of *Membra Jesu Nostris*, a peculiar composition by Buxtehude in which adoration of the limbs of Christ's crucified body happens both textually and musically. This paper expands on the recent attention for the role of the senses in religious contexts and uses concepts from material religion to scrutinize the choices the composer made in his libretto and musical framework, thus tackling the issue of corporeal spirituality in *Membra*. It concludes that this specific compositional cycle does reflect Pietist inspiration, with a particularly striking role of the union of the senses: all co-operate to ensure a total immersion in the veneration of Christ's body.

KEYWORDS

Dieterich Buxtehude, Baroque Music, German Pietism, History of Religion (17th Century), Sensorial Religion, Corporeal Religion.

INTRODUCTION

In 1680, the Northern German composer Dieterich (alternative spellings Dietrich and Diderich) Buxtehude (ca. 1637-1707) dedicated a cycle⁶ of seven Latin cantatas to his Swedish colleague Gustav Düben (1628-1690). The work categorized as BuxWV 75⁷ is fully titled *Membra Jesu nostri patientis sanctissima* (Latin: "The Most Holy Limbs of Our Suffering Lord Jesus"), but better

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⁶ Whether Buxtehude intended BuxWV 75 to be performed as a cycle is discussed by Kerala J. Snyder (2007, 199–200). She concludes that he certainly did, which I will treat as an axiomatic point for my own argument.

⁷ BuxWV is a musicological term: an abbreviation of the German *Buxtehude Werke-Verzeichnis* (Catalogue of Buxtehude Works). The following number indicates the composition's place within the catalogue, in this case 75.

known by its usual and consistent abbreviation *Membra Jesu Nostri* or even just *Membra*. The cycle of cantatas found its textual basis in the medieval poem *Salve mundi salutare* (after its Latin incipit: “Hail, World’s Saviour”) that is nowadays principally attributed to the Cistercian abbot Arnulf of Louvain (ca. 1200-1250).⁸ Each of the seven individual cantatas meditates on a limb of Jesus Christ’s crucified body: his feet, his knees, his hands, his sides, his breast, his heart and his face.

In this paper, I aim to place and understand this specific musical composition against the backdrop of the broader seventeenth-century religious European movement of Pietism, which was hallmarked by an affectionate relationship of the believer towards Christ, thus emphasizing the corporeal. This paper is therefore structured as follows: the first section builds on the recent material turn in religion, in particular the work of David Howes (2011) and his interpretation of “synaesthesia,” in order to conceptually frame this study. Subsequently, I turn to the historical and theological tenets of Pietism in their relation to corporeal spirituality. Thirdly, looking at the composition itself, I investigate Buxtehude’s textual selection of the poem’s stanzas and his addition of Bible verses to each cantata. Lastly, I intend to scrutinize what the interplay of musical and textual elements in *Membra Jesu Nostri* demonstrates about the role of the senses. Besides making use of several biographical works on Buxtehude (mostly Kerala Snyder’s detailed account *Dieterich Buxtehude. Organist in Lübeck* (2007)) and several findings in the history of music and poetry, I am greatly indebted to Martin Geck’s dissertation *Die Vokalmusik Dietrich Buxtehudes und der frühe Pietismus* (1965), which I will frequently cite in this paper. I shall give quotes in German and Latin in their original languages; translations are made available in footnotes.

THE MATERIAL TURN IN RELIGION AND THE CONCEPT OF “SYNAESTHESIA”

The recent surge of interest among religious scholars in matters pertaining to human bodies cannot be understood without a broader context. Since the latest turn of the century, the study of religion has jumped on the academic bandwagon that was already transported to many other areas of the humanities: the so-called material turn. As Sonia Hazard (2013) notes in her comprehensive overview, this turn, particularly propagated by the journal *Material Religion*, saw a shift from a preoccupation with the cognitive dimensions of religious phenomena (miracles, devotion, prayer, worship, et cetera) to their material aspects: the concreteness of objects, images, bodies, and experiences (Hazard 2013).

⁸ Earlier scholarship, for example Stahl (1937, 43), has suggested Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) as the author, when the poem was still better known as *Rhythmica Oratio ad unum quodlibet Membrorum Christi Patientis et a Cruce Pendentis* (Latin: “A Rhythmical Prayer to any one of the Members of Christ, Suffering and Hanging on the Cross”), or *Rhythmica Oratio* for short. This hypothesis has since been rejected; see the authorship discussion by Geck (1965, 27).

The intensified attention to the corporeal implies that the sensational, the body's non-motoric domain, gets an equal share of enlarged interest, which is apparent in the work of David Howes (2011). Adapting seminal studies of Birgit Meyer and Donald Tuzin, Howes designs a heuristic for establishing the place of sensational experience in religious settings, proposing:

[...] a general theory of religious or mystical experience as arising at “the intersection of the senses.” That is, religious experience is not trans-sensory, as is commonly thought, but *inter-sensory*. Consider the way in which peak religious experiences are often expressed in synaesthetic terms. Synaesthesia, the union or crossing of the senses, is a prime example of inter-sensory perception (Howes 2011, 97).

The author's reflections on synaesthesia call for the abandonment of the common idea of religious experiences as transcendental in favor of inter-sensorial interpretations. Howes, citing Constance Classen in agreement, further distinguishes between two ontologically different sets of sensory experiences, namely physical and spiritual. This distinction implies that even if one leads a purely ascetic, physically abstemious life, one could still access the most existential spiritual experiences (Howes 2011, 97). For our current purposes, this twofold distinction between trans-sensory and inter-sensory and physical and spiritual sensory experiences provide a sufficient framework to analyze the *Membra* case. Such an analysis of the specific contents of *Membra Jesu Nostri* will reveal where and how Buxtehude's own sensorial spirituality manifests itself. First, however, I turn to explain how the religious movement of Pietism bore spiritual affections as one of its core features.

THE ROLE OF THE SENSATIONAL IN PIETISM AND ITS TRACES IN BUXTEHUDE

In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, Pietism as a spiritual movement within Lutheran thought began to occur across the European continent. It rapidly spread from the city of Halle in Northern Germany to Switzerland, France, Holland, Denmark, and Russia. The forerunners were founder Philipp Jakob Spener (1635-1705) and his tutee Count von Zinzendorf (1700-1760), as well as Jean de Labadie (1610-1674) in France. The Pietists laid a strong focus on personal devotion and criticized the mere ecclesiastical intellectualism. Faith to them was a matter of the heart, rather than one of the head.⁹

This heart-centeredness of Pietist devotion meant both an individualization and an emotionalization of religious experience. Practices were oriented to constantly improve one's personal behavior and therefore demanded introspection: what and how did one feel when actually practicing belief?

⁹ For two excellent overviews of Pietist thought and its historical origins in seventeenth-century Europe, see Shantz 2013 and Shantz 2015.

Records of those practices have come to us in diaries, sermons, tractates, and letters, but also in hymns and cantatas (Gleixner 2015, 428; Kevorkian 2015, 177).

Lübeck, Buxtehude's life-long residence, seems to have been resistant to the acceptance of Pietism. Two Lübeck-born leading and radical Pietist theologians, Johann Wilhelm Petersen (1649-1727) and August Hermann Francke (1663-1727), either forcibly left the city or faced allegations of heresy (Geck 1965, 40; Snyder 2007, 43). Buxtehude himself therefore probably never took an active part in the Pietist meetings, with evidence being circumstantial at best (Kevorkian 2015, 185). Yet it can reasonably be supposed that he was influenced by their intense spirituality, as I shall argue here. His custom of taking source texts from various mystic poets and once from Lübeck's exile Petersen himself (BuxWV 90) mark his own spiritual preference for what Snyder calls "sensuous" or "mystic-erotic imagery" (Snyder 2007, 142-45).

For Martin Geck, *Membra's* text's affectionate and climactic structure, as well as its commentary on biblical prose (see section 3 below) are primary arguments to indeed regard Buxtehude as a Pietist. Geck states that Buxtehude or his librettist would not have made the selection they did, had they not been exponents of the Pietist tradition:

[B]emerkenswert ist in jedem Falle die Kombination von Bibelwort und Hymnus, welche das Andachtsschema der pietistischen Erbauungsliteratur aufgreift und damit die Ideen mystischer Frömmigkeit nicht allein tradiert, sondern im Sinne des frühen Pietismus fortführt (Geck 1965, 28).¹⁰

Geck goes on to prove throughout his dissertation that the Pietistic accents on individual, de-institutionalized spirituality paved the way for Buxtehude to invent a new musical form that transcends the classic dichotomy between ecclesiastical and secular music. Buxtehude no longer lets genre define a musical category, but style instead (Geck 1965, 180).

Both Snyder (2007) and Van Elferen (2009) reject Geck's thesis *prima facie*, arguing that his evidence is non-conclusive and that Buxtehude remains primarily a generic Lutheran orthodox composer, not predominantly a Pietist, as his prolific corpus has too broad a scope to narrow him down to just a Pietist (Snyder 2007, 147; Van Elferen 2009, 266). Snyder also brings in the controversy surrounding Theophil Großgebauer (1627-1661), who is generally understood as a Pietist (Snyder 2007, 146). He was a cleric from Lübeck's nearby city of Rostock who attacked the Baroque Lutheran musical style of his days as being too festive and too Italian and thus impeding true devotion. In 1661, he wrote a tract on this issue that received an energetic response from the

¹⁰ "Noteworthy in any case is the combination of Bible text and hymn, which takes up the scheme of pietistic devotional literature and therefore not only passed on the ideas of mystical piety, but continues in the sense of early Pietism."

Lutheran side. Since Buxtehude's music was everything Großgebauer despised, he could not have wanted to be associated with the Pietist movement in general. To quote Snyder:

Under no circumstances could Buxtehude have supported Großgebauer's proposals for the reform of church music. It was not necessary to do this, however, in order to participate in the heightened spirituality that the Pietists also cultivate. One could be pious – as Buxtehude undoubtedly was – without being a Pietist (Snyder 2007, 147).

To me, Snyder seems right in evaluating Geck's thesis as she does. However, Geck appears to have foreseen criticisms that move in this direction, for he claims that the seventeenth-century Pietism he discusses largely differs from the later general picture that arose mainly in the eighteenth-century (Geck 1965, 84–85). Then again, Snyder's Großgebauer case builds a strong counter-argument, as it fitted the time frame when Buxtehude's production in Lübeck was in full swing.

BUXTEHUDE'S CHOICES IN CROPPING AND EMBELLISHING HIS SOURCE TEXT

The popularity of medieval poems addressing the figure of Jesus Christ seems to have been tremendously widespread in Europe in the second half of the seventeenth century. *Salve mundi salutare*, being one of the most translated among those¹¹, served as the direct or indirect text supplier for three of Buxtehude's vocal works: BuxWV 6, BuxWV 14 and BuxWV 75. BuxWV 14 and 6 are based on translations to German and back to Latin of the original *Salve* text. BuxWV 75 remains therefore as the only Buxtehude composition making literal use of the traditional edition, and also stands out among all Buxtehude's cantatas for having a non-German libretto (Snyder 2007, 140, 199). Geck assumes that Buxtehude copied the poem from the liturgical prayer books in church (Geck 1965, 28). Whereas the *Salve mundi salutare* poem in full has five or in one case (*Ad cor* – To the Heart) seven stanzas of ten lines, Buxtehude acted selectively in composing *Membra*. The composer chose three stanzas per cantata instead of five, and further diminished those to five lines each.¹²

Even though Geck remains unconvinced that Buxtehude himself arranged the complete libretto and even thinks it likely that the text was commissioned (Geck 1965, 28), a comparison between the entire *Salve* and the parts extracted shows some remarkable facts. Firstly, the collection for *Membra* focuses literally on the *membra*, the limbs, as almost all poetic fragments that refer directly to a body part are left in, while those that do so vaguely or not at all are usually left out. The first part, for example, *Ad pedes* (To the Feet), has declinations of the word "feet" (*pedes*) in two of the three

¹¹ E.g. Paul Gerhardt's (1607-1676) translation of the seventh meditation *O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden*, used later by Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) in his *Matthäus-Passion* (BWV 244).

¹² See Appendix A for the complete text (including English translation) of *Membra Jesu Nostri*. For comparative reasons, I prefer to speak of ten stanzas of five lines each in the original, rather than five stanzas of ten lines each, since *Membra* uses halved *Salve* strophes.

shortened stanzas, whereas the original text features them thrice in ten stanzas. The same goes for the third cantata, *Ad manus* (To the Hands), where the selection counts three in three and the original just six in ten for the word “hands” (*manus*).

Secondly, it appears that Buxtehude (or his supplier) chose to deploy a certain build-up, a gradually progressing hopefulness. The chosen stanzas for the first cantata verbalize an utterly disconsolate and forlorn state, with words like *impressuras* (grievous), *pavens* (fearful) and *indignum* (unworthy). Nothing in the desolation here points to a promising ending. Yet that is exactly what happens throughout the cycle. From the second until the fourth cantata, notions of *spes* (hope), *amor* (love) and *parce* (forgive) enter steadily. In the seventh and last cantata, a joyous *salutifera* (salvation-bringing) ends the source text material. Even though this last point applies to the original as well and the general line may be there, the preceding parts nonetheless show a somewhat different approach. The second and fourth parts, for example, still mention the words *pauperi* (the miserable) to describe the state the believers are essentially in.

Besides selecting his own material, Buxtehude also adds his own unique ornament to the chosen stanzas: a set-to-music Bible verse at the beginning of all seven cantatas and as a reprisal at the closing of the first six cantatas. The last cantata, *Ad faciem* (To the Face), has an “Amen” at the end, rather than an echoed biblical verse. All these verses pertain in at least one way to the limb that the specific cantata meditates on. The seven Bible verses are, in order of the cantatas, Nahum 1 verse 15, Isaiah 66 verse 12, Zechariah 13 verse 6, Song of Solomon 2 verse 13-14, 1 Peter 2 verse 2-3 (notably the only New Testament reference), Song of Solomon 4 verse 9 and Psalm 31 verse 16.

With the addition of biblical texts, Buxtehude frames the commentary on the stanzas that follow, in a way that Snyder views as analogous to a sermon (Snyder 2007, 156). Therefore, analysis of these verses presumably gives us insight into his affectionate personal beliefs. Particularly striking in this regard is the double quotation of the Song of Solomon. These verses for cantatas Four (*Ad latus* – To the Sides) and Six (*Ad Cor* – To the Heart) respectively read:

*Surge, amica mea, speciosa mea et veni,
columba mea in foraminibus petrae,
in caverna maceriae (Chapter 2 verse 13-4)
Vulnerasti cor meum
soror mea, sponsa
vulnerasti cor meum (Chapter 4 verse 9)*¹³

¹³Arise, my love,
my beautiful one, and come,

From these two verses Buxtehude's viewpoint becomes clear: ever since Antiquity, metaphorical readings of the Song of Solomon have suggested a deep, sensual love between Christ and the believer (Snyder 2007, 138-39), marked here through word choices like *speciosa* (beautiful one), *columba* (dove), *cor* (heart) and *sponsa* (spouse). Van Elferen also stresses the prominence of the Song of Solomon with respect to "love" as the Lutheran theological centerpiece:

Since most of the additions come from the Song of Songs, the mystical love that dominates the medieval text is theologically strengthened and pedagogically underlined through this adaptation in accordance with Lutheran passion theology (Van Elferen 2009, 250).

Of course, the integral text is based on this "mystical love," as various passages have displayed, but the piece reaches a textual zenith when arriving at the sixth cantata. The climaxing sequence starts already in the first aria of the fifth cantata, where the poem has the believer say *Jesu dulcis amor meus* (Sweet Jesus, my love) in a penultimate affectionate touch. Penultimate, as the form *amor* here is a noun and not a verbal conjugation. The climax goes one step further still: the only time that the Latin verb *amare* (to love) emerges in first person occurs in cantata six, aria three: *te namque amo* (for I love You). Therefore, the textual structure positions the *Ad Cor* section as the composition's linchpin. This is not only the case textually, but also sonically, as an analysis of musical elements will expose.

POETRY AND MUSIC AT INTERPLAY

The already mentioned Bible verse that opens and closes *Ad Cor* (To the Heart), Song of Solomon 4 verse 9, gives insight into the importance Buxtehude placed on the sixth stanza. However, this is not only achieved through the written addition, but also supported by its melodic setting. As Snyder notes, the *Ad Cor* piece musically constitutes the heart of the cycle:

The sixth cantata, "Ad Cor," contains the most expressive music in the entire cycle and truly functions as its heart. [...] The biblical text is drawn from the Song of Solomon [...] and Buxtehude heightens its emotional impact by using the expressive figure of a descending sixth for the word "vulnerasti" (Snyder 2007, 199).

Whereas the piece on the heart is indeed dramatically central as Snyder elucidates, cantata Three (*Ad Manus* – To the Hands) also portrays a relevant intimacy. Van Elferen (2009, 250) interprets

my dove in the clefts of the rock,
in the hollow places of the wall. (2:13-14)

Thou hast wounded my heart,
my sister, my spouse,
Thou hast wounded my heart. (4:9)

Translations of the Bible verses Buxtehude applied to BuxWV 75 are taken from the English Douay-Rheims translation of the Latin Vulgate.

this feeling as a “heartfelt reciprocal love” toward the blood that drops from Jesus’ nailed hands. Especially the second and third stanzas of cantata three illustrate this:

*Manus sanctae, vos amplector,
et gemendo condelector,
grates ago plagis tantis,
clavis duris guttis sanctis
dans lacrymas cum osculis
In cruore tuo lotum
me commendo tibi totum,
tuae sanctae manus istae
me defendant, Jesu Christe,
extremis in periculis¹⁴*

Van Elferen considers this part illustrative for her claim that the Lutheran Passion tradition asserts a “double ambivalence,” a twinned bittersweetness: the cruelty of the cross is contrasted with Christ’s self-sacrificial love, and the pain felt by the believer upon seeing the cross is juxtaposed with the affection towards Christ’s blood and body. These two characteristics are expressed in this third cantata by musical means, such as sudden dissonant (harmony-interrupting) notes (Van Elferen 2009, 252, 257–58).

Such affectional spirituality not only entailed bewilderment at the depicted passion of Christ, but also a longing to follow in his wake and so imitate his sufferings. The whole concept of imitation in composition, writing, drama and even just actual deeds is especially noteworthy in Buxtehude’s context. For among the mediaeval texts that inspired Buxtehude and his contemporaries was Thomas à Kempis’s (ca. 1380-1471) hugely influential mystic book *De imitatione Christi* (Latin: “On the Imitation of Christ”) (cf. Snyder 2007, 52, who shows that two of Buxtehude’s fellow composers actually set à Kempis’ work to music). Although *De imitatione Christi* stems from a later period than *Salve mundi salutare*, it is still from pre-Renaissance times.¹⁵ Following in Christ’s footsteps in everyday life as a spiritual exercise is a very present theme in both *Salve* and *Membra*,

¹⁴ Holy hands, I embrace you,
and, lamenting, I delight in you,
I give thanks for the terrible wounds,
the hard nails, the holy drops,
shedding tears with kisses

Washed in Your blood
I wholly entrust myself to You;
may these holy hands of Yours
defend me, Jesus Christ,
in the final dangers

¹⁵ A great overview of the *De Imitatione Christi* authorship discussion (in Dutch) is to be found in C.C. de Bruin’s introductory commentary to à Kempis 1954, 23 ff.

with phrases like *Cruci tuae me aptare* (I – Ad pedes), *tibi semper conformatam* (V – Ad pectus) and *ut se possit applicare* (VI – Ad cor), among others.¹⁶

Again, imitation does not only appear in the text, but also in the music. James Anderson Winn notes that imitation is an indispensable aspect of Baroque music structure in general because the repetitive patterns of the Renaissance changed into canons and fugues (Winn 1981, 194–95).¹⁷ A canon repeats the same melodic line in different voices. Many of the vocal openings of Membra’s cantatas are easily distinguishable canons. The question of musical imitation of earlier styles is also raised by Van Elferen, explaining how the earlier Renaissance madrigal led to the Baroque answer of the cantata as a fitting form to express mystical love:

In summary, it may be observed that the musical sacred love discourse developed parallel to and in conjunction with its poetic counterpart. [...] [B]ased on their *imitations* of the madrigal style [a sixteenth-century vocal composition, CvdB], seventeenth-century German composers created a new musical style for the representation of religious love that corresponded with Lutheran theology (Van Elferen 2009, 266–67, my accentuation).

Geck invokes yet another element of interplay in the *Membra* composition when he lyrically describes how the breathing techniques Buxtehude applied in the written rests (musical silence bars) impact the cycle’s harmonious character:

Doch woran liegt es, daß der Zyklus nicht ermüdend, sondern gleichmäßig intensiv wirkt? Es ist der bei aller Ruhe gespannte Atem, der durch das Werk geht, es ist die Souveränität Buxtehudes, diesen Atemzug auch dort noch durchzuhalten, wo kleinere Geister längst atemlos geworden wären. Ruhig atmet er im Auf und Ab der Strophen durch (Geck 1965, 159).¹⁸

Geck’s notes on breathing technique not only express progressive changes from a musicological perspective, but also bear theological weight in view of Buxtehude’s religious background. Philipp Melancthon (1497-1560), one of Martin Luther’s closest collaborators, greatly emphasized the theological discipline of *pneumatology*, the study of doctrines on the soul, angels and especially the Holy Spirit.¹⁹ “Pneuma” (πνεῦμα), the Greek word used in the New Testament for “Spirit,” derives

16 Transl.: “On Your cross I would hang”, “always conforming to You” and “that it [my heart] may commit itself to You.”

17 A fugue holds several stylistic variations (transpositions, inversions, et cetera) on a central recurring theme. The best-known canons and fugues by Johann Sebastian Bach and Johann Pachelbel remain tremendously popular in the classical repertoire to this very day. See also on canons and fugues Hofstadter 1985, 9-11 (I used the Dutch translation of this Pulitzer Prize winning book here).

18 “So what is the cause, that the cycle doesn’t fatigue, but works evenly intensively overall? It is the strained breath in all the rests that permeates the work; it is Buxtehude’s sovereignty to stretch this breath even there where smaller minds would have long been breathless. Quietly he breathes through the on and off of the strophes.”

19 See on Melancthon and pneumatology the comprehensive work of Hinlicky 2009, especially Chapter 5, “General Pneumatology. The Sublimation of the Spirit into Progressive Christian Culture,” 177-222.

actually in a metaphysical sense from its original meaning, “breath” (“Strong’s Greek: 4151. Πνεῦμα (Pneuma)” n.d.). The interrelatedness of Lutheran-based pneumatology and new ideas on breath and voice techniques, as well as organ music,²⁰ constitute a topic worthy of further in-depth research.

CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this inquiry into BuxWV 75 as one specific work of Baroque Lutheran music was to position it in a historical, but also a far more important spiritual perspective. The glance at Buxtehude’s selection of his medieval source text *Salve* showed an emphasis on the expression of a cherished affection towards Christ, amplified by supplementing Bible verses.

The sixth part of *Membra, Ad cor* (To the Heart), forms the compositional apex of the entire work, both textually and musically. Throughout all seven cantatas, a bittersweet feeling is palpable: Jesus’ suffering as simultaneously wretched and joyful. The use of imitation, an archetypical mystical and artistic form, and the unique breathing techniques in Buxtehude’s composition further strengthens these emotional charges.

Therefore, it is likely that the Pietist movement, with its overtly personal, affectionately spiritual nature, has had some influence on the Lutheran Buxtehude, though it remains hard to say how this came about. Recapturing the discussions of the second paragraph, Buxtehude was most probably deeply pious and susceptible to mystical experiences, but nonetheless never joined the Pietist movement himself. *Membra Jesu Nostris* as a singular piece, however, could be understood to be crafted through Pietist inspiration, not only for its unusual libretto that strongly individualizes the veneration of Christ’s body, but also for its inter-sensory atmosphere. All the believer’s senses unite in a joint venture to experience the peculiar sensual love towards Christ. All in all, this leads me to conclude that Howes’ notion of synaesthesia rightly fits the *Membra* case. The plethora of senses used in the oratorio to seek contact with the divine, embodied in the crucified Jesus, ideally typifies an inter-sensory (in contrast to trans-sensory) spiritual experience. The longing of the believer to

²⁰ This paper’s focus on a vocal work like BuxWV 75 might diffuse the fact that Buxtehude was primarily known as an exceptionally skilled organist. According to Buelow, Buxtehude “achieved some of the most original and innovative settings of sacred music among all of the German organ composers of the seventeenth century (Buelow 2004, 236).” The importance of the organ in this pneumatological context is that the instrument uses wind or air (both possible translations of πνεῦμα, see previous citation) to transfer sonic patterns.

touch,²¹ to embrace,²² to weep and kiss,²³ to smell and taste,²⁴ to behold,²⁵ to speak²⁶ and so forth points to an all-inclusive sensational immersion between the faithful and the revered object of this faith. The relatively new concept of inter-sensory perception in spiritual practices and rituals could prompt a whole new line of studies in the history of religious poetry and music, scrutinizing the meaning of artworks that employ conceptions of co-working senses to reach out to the transcendental.

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APPENDIX

Here follows the complete libretto of *Membra Jesu Nostri* (BuxWV 75), including an English translation, taken from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Membra_Jesu_Nostri (retrieved March 8, 2018; translation reviewed and slightly altered by me).

I. AD PEDES

**Ecce super montes
pedes evangelizantis
et annunciantis pacem.**

(Nahum I.15)

**Salve mundi salutare,
salve Jesu care!
Cruci tuae me aptare
vellem vere, tu scis quare.
Da mihi tui copiam.**

(TO THE FEET)

*Behold, upon the mountains
the feet of one bringing good news
and proclaiming peace.*

*Hail, salvation of the world,
Hail, hail, dear Jesus!
On Your cross would I hang
Truly, You know why
Give me Your strength*

21 cum tremore contingendum (to be touched with fear), Membra V – Ad pectus

22 circumplector cum affectu (I embrace with affection), Membra I – Ad pedes
& manus sanctae vos amplector (holy hands, I embrace you), Membra III – Ad manus
& o amator amplectende (o lover to be embraced), Membra VII – Ad faciem

23 dans lacrymas cum osculis (giving tears with kisses), Membra III – Ad manus

[24] mel dulcoris (the honey of sweetness), Membra IV – Ad latus

& si tamen gustatis (if you indeed have tasted), Membra V – Ad pectus

[25] ecce super montes (behold upon the mountains), Membra I – Ad pedes

& scrutari tua vulnera (to behold your wounds), Membra IV – Ad latus

[26] ut ad te loquar animes (that you move me to speak to you) & viva cordis voce clamo (I call with the living voice of my heart), Membra VI – Ad cor.

**Clavos pedum, plagas duras,
et tam graves impressuras
circumplector cum affectu,
tuo pavens in aspectu,
tuorum memor vulnerum.**

*The nails in Your feet, the hard blows
and so grievous marks
I embrace with love,
Fearful at the sight of You
Mindful of Your wounds*

**Dulcis Jesu, pie Deus,
Ad te clamo, licet reus,
praebe mihi te benignum,
ne repellas me indignum
de tuis sanctis pedibus.**

*Sweet Jesus, merciful God
I cry to You, in my guilt
Show me Your grace,
Turn me not unworthy away
From Your sacred feet*

Ecce super montes (da capo)

II. AD GENUA

(TO THE KNEES)

**Ad ubera portabimini,
et super genua blandientur vobis.
(Isaiah LXVI.12)**

*You will be brought to nurse
and dandled on the knees*

**Salve Jesu, rex sanctorum,
spes votiva peccatorum,
crucis ligno tanquam reus,
pendens homo, verus deus,
caducis nutans genibus.**

*Hail Jesus, King of Saints
Hope of sinners' prayers,
like an offender on the wood of the cross,
a man hanging, true God,
Bending on failing knees!*

**Quid sum tibi responsurus,
actu vilis corde durus?
Quid rependam amatori,
qui elegit pro me mori,
ne dupla morte morerer.**

*What answer shall I give You,
Vile as I am in deed, hard in my heart?
How shall I repay Your love,
Who chose to die for me,
Unless I die a second death?*

**Ut te quaeram mente pura,
sit haec mea prima cura,
non est labor nec gravabor,
sed sanabor et mundabor,
cum te complexus fuero.**

*That I may seek You with pure heart,
Be my first care
It is no labour nor shall I be loaded down;
But I shall be cleansed.
When I embrace You*

Ad ubera portabimini (da capo)

III. AD MANUS

(TO THE HANDS)

**Quid sunt plagae istae
in medio manuum tuarum?
(Zechariah XIII.6)**

*What are those wounds
in the midst of your hands?*

**Salve Jesu, pastor bone,
fatigatus in agone,
qui per lignum es distractus
et ad lignum es compactus
expansis sanctis minibus**

*Hail, Jesus, good shepherd,
wearied in agony,
tormented on the cross
nailed to the cross
Your sacred hands stretched out*

**Manus sanctae, vos amplector,
et gemendo condelector,
grates ago plagis tantis,
clavis duris, guttis sanctis
dans lacrymas cum osculis**

**In cruore tuo lotum
me commendo tibi totum,
tuae sanctae manus istae
me defendant, Jesu Christe,
extremis in periculis**

Quid sunt plagae istae (da capo)

IV. AD LATUS

**Surge, amica mea,
speciosa mea, et veni,
columba mea inforaminibus petrae,
in caverna maceriae.**

(Song of Solomon II.13-14)

**Salve latus salvatoris,
in quo latet mel dulcoris,
in quo patet vis amoris,
ex quo scatet fons cruoris,
qui corda lavat sordid.**

**Ecce tibi appropinquo,
parce, Jesu, si delinquo,
verecunda quidem fronte,**

**ad te tamen veni sponte
scrutari tua vulnera.**

**Hora mortis meus flatus
intret, Jesu, tuum latus,
hinc expirans in te vadat,
ne hunc leo trux invadat,
sed apud te permaneat.**

Surge amica mea (da capo)

V. AD PECTUS

**Sicut modo geniti infantes rationabiles,
et sine dolo concupiscite,
ut in eo crescatis in salutem.
Si tamen gustastis,
quoniam dulcis est Dominus.**

(1 Peter II.2-3)

**Salve, salus mea, deus,
Jesu dulcis, amor meus,**

*Holy hands, I embrace you,
and, lamenting, I delight in you,
I give thanks for the terrible wounds,
the hard nails, the holy drops,
giving tears with kisses*

*Washed in Your blood
I wholly entrust myself to You;
may these holy hands of Yours
defend me, Jesus Christ,
in the final dangers*

(TO THE SIDE)

*Arise, my love,
my beautiful one, and come,
my dove in the clefts of the rock,
in the hollow of the cliff*

*Hail, side of the Saviour,
in which the honey of sweetness is hidden,
in which the power of love is exposed,
from which gushes the spring of blood
that cleans the dirty hearts*

*Lo I approach You,
Pardon, Jesus, if I sin,
With reverent countenance*

*freely I come to You
to behold Your wounds*

*In the hour of death, may my soul
Enter, Jesus, Your side
Hence dying may it go into You,
Lest the cruel lion seize it,
But let it dwell with You*

(TO THE BREAST)

*Like newborn infants,
long for the guileless milk of reason,
that by it you may grow into salvation,
if indeed you have tasted that the Lord
is good*

*Hail God, my salvation,
sweet Jesus, my beloved,*

**salve, pectus reverendum,
cum tremore contingendum,
amoris domicilium**

*hail, breast to be revered,
to be touched with trembling,
dwelling of love*

**Pectus mihi confer mundum,
ardens, pium, gemebundum ,
voluntatem abnegatam,
tibi semper conformatam,
juncta virtutum copia**

*Give me a clean breast,
ardent, pious, moaning,
an abnegated will,
always conforming to You,
with an abundance of virtues*

**Ave, verum templum dei,
precor miserere mei,
tu totius arca boni,
fac electis me apponi,
vas dives deus omnium.**

*Hail, true temple of God,
I pray, have mercy on me,
You, the ark of all that is good,
make me be placed with the chosen,
rich vessel, God of all*

Sicut modo geniti (da capo)

VI. AD COR

(TO THE HEART)

**Vulnerasti cor meum,
soror mea, sponsa,
vulnerasti cor meum.**

*You have wounded my heart,
my sister, my bride,
You have wounded my hear*

(Song of Solomon IV.9)

**Summi regis cor, aveto,
te saluto corde laeto,
te complecti me delectat
et hoc meum cor affectat,
ut ad te loquar, animes**

*Heart of the highest king, I greet You,
I salute You with a joyous heart,
it delights me to embrace You
and my heart aspires to this:
that You move me to speak to You*

**Per medullam cordis mei,
peccatoris atque rei,
tuus amor transferatur,
quo cor tuum rapiatur
languens amoris vulnere**

*Through the marrow of my heart,
of a sinner and culprit,
may Your love be conveyed
by whom Your heart was seized,
languishing through the wound of love*

**Viva cordis voce clamo,
dulce cor, te namque amo,
ad cor meum inclinare,
ut se possit applicare
devoto tibi pectore**

*I call with the living voice of the heart,
sweet heart, for I love You,
to incline to my heart,
so that it may commit itself to you
in the breast devoted to Yo*

Vulnerasti cor meum (da capo)

VII. AD FACIEM

(TO THE HEAD)

**Illustra faciem tuam super servum tuum,
salvum me fac in misericordia tua.**

*Let Your face shine upon Your servant,
save me in Your mercy*

(Psalm XXXI.16)

**Salve, caput cruentatum,
totum spinis coronatum,**

*Hail, bloodied head,
all crowned with thorns,*

**conquassatum, vulneratum,
arundine verberatum
facie sputis illita**

**Dum me mori est necesse,
noli mihi tunc deesse,
in tremenda mortis hora
veni, Jesu, absque mora,
tuere me et libera**

**Cum me jubes emigrare,
Jesu care, tunc appare,
o amator amplexende,
temet ipsum tunc ostende
in cruce salutifera**

Amen

*beaten, wounded,
struck with a cane,
the face soiled with spit*

*When I must die,
do not then be away from me,
in the anxious hour of death
come, Jesus, without delay,
protect me and set me free!*

*When You command me to depart,
dear Jesus, then appear,
O lover to be embraced,
then show Yourself
on the cross that brings salvation*

Amen

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