Like many of his sacred vocal works, Buxtehude’s *Membra Jesu Nostri*, a cycle of seven cantatas, has been associated by writers on music with its Pietist qualities for its choice of text. A composite of Latin biblical texts and medieval poems of a subjective religious tone, each of the seven cantatas represents a spiritual contemplation on one of the parts of Christ’s crucified body: feet, knees, hands, side, breast, heart and face. While the poems indeed

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1 The intense personal and subjective language of the poem can be compared to an analogy made by Abraham Calovius (1612-86), the German Lutheran theologian of the 17th century on the relationship between Christ and the Pietist believers: “The espousal (marriage) of Christ with believers is that which He eternally marries Himself to believers through faith, so that they become one spirit, and by His power communicates to them, as to His spiritual bride, intimate and enduring love, all His blessings and all His glory, so as to finally lead them to Him home, and dwell with them in His celestial and eternal kingdom.” Explains a bit about Pietism and music. (Schmid, Heinrich. *Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Church.* Trans. Charles Hay and Henry E, Jacobs, 3rd ed. Revised. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publiching House, 1961), p.121) The mystical union between Christ (symbolized as the bridegroom) and the Pietist believers (symbolized as the bride) typifies many kinds of poetry that received musical setting by Buxtehude.

2 The aria (or trio) texts are successive stanzas of a medieval Passion poem, *Salve mundi salutare*, also known as
suggest a type of personal devotion and sentimental religious attitudes that are so characteristic of the pietist poetry of the period, the music itself would instantly fail to fulfil the requirement of the Pietist musical tradition. This paper will examine how Buxtehude’s musical setting of the text of *Membra Jesu Nostri* results in an “objectification” of the emotions embedded in the poems. Underlying this objectifying process is the theory of musical figures (*Figurenlehre*) and the doctrine of affects. I will first define what is the theory of musical figures (*Figurenlehre*) and the doctrine of affects (*Affektenlehre*), then I will establish the link between these two concepts and the orthodox Lutheran musical practice, and finally I will illustrate with musical examples how these two concepts are applied in the cantatas.

The concept of *Figurenlehre* and *Affektenlehre* originates in the rhetorical theory laid out by ancient Greek and Roman writers, principally Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian. Essentially, it is a theory which consists of a fivefold division of the art of verbal discourse into Inventio (finding the argument), Dispositio (ordering the argument), Decoratio (style), Memoria (memory) and Pronuntiatio (delivery), with an aim of moving (movere), delighting (delectare) and instructing (docere). From these classical works on rhetoric orators learned how to embellish their ideas with rhetorical imagery and to infuse their speech with passionate language. The techniques involved figures of speech, the technical devices used in the decoratio (also called the elocutio), which was the third part of rhetorical theory. The theory of musical figures, therefore, is the systematic transformation of third part of the theory (decoratio) (with its application in the form of figures of speech) into musical equivalents. As

*Rhythmica oratio*, once attributed to St. Bernard of Clairvaux, but actually written by Arnulf of Louvain (d. 1250). This poem, along with another attributed to Bernard of Clairvaux, *Jesu dulcis memoria*, was especially popular in the seventeenth century. These poems were printed in Latin and in various other languages and were widely read in both Catholic and the Protestant societies. The focus of Membra Jesu nostri is redemption through Jesus’ suffering and this agreed with the trends of thought in the Lutheran Pietist movement of the seventeenth century.
early as renaissance, there is ample evidence that composers employed various musical rhetorical means to illustrate or emphasize words and ideas in the text.

The doctrine of affects is the theory of musical aesthetics also originally derived from Greek and Latin doctrines of rhetoric and oratory. According to ancient writers such as Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian, orators employed the rhetorical means to control and direct the emotions of their audiences, so, in the language of classical rhetoric manuals and also Baroque music treatises, must the speaker (i.e. the composer) move the ‘affects’ (i.e. emotions) of the listener. Therefore, the concept of affections is central to the musical-rhetorical figures as it deals with how the emotions can be expressed in music (in this sense through musical figures and other structural devices) so that they arouse corresponding emotions in the listener. During the 17th and 18th centuries composers generally sought to express in their vocal music such affects as were related to the texts, for example sadness, anger, hate, joy, love and jealousy, etc. This meant that most compositions (or, in the case of longer works, individual sections or movements) expressed only a single affect.

To understand how the concepts of musical figures and doctrine of affections came to be used by Lutheran composers, it is necessary to understand Luther’s theological views on music. Rather than seeing music as a primarily human innovation (as viewed from the humanist point of view), Luther considered music as “the excellent gift of God” and said: “I place music next to theology and give it highest praise.” As an informed listener who frequently referred to the Quadrivium (the medieval fourfold division of mathematics into arithmetic, geometry,

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4 Ibid., p.3.
astronomy and music), he sees the function of music in expressing the Word of God. In 1525, he expressed that “both text and notes, accent, melody and manner of rendering ought to grow out of the true mother tongue and its inflection.”

Luther’s theological views on music not only provides a foundation of Lutheran musical tradition and also to certain extents the German baroque musical thinking.

To understand how rhetoric and affects came to be relevant in Lutheran music, it is necessary to understand the system of Lutheran education in the 17th century Germany. Apart from music and singing skills, Latin schools for kantors also taught humanist tradition of grammar, logic, and rhetoric. Cicero and Boethius were still being read, although at times in modified or amended versions in order to suit the “contemporary” taste of the Baroque students. In the awareness of the importance of expressive quality of music, students also study the relationship between music and rhetoric. This gives rise to publication of treatise on musical figures. Johann Burmeister, the first North German author to tackle the subject, was a schoolteacher, working at the principal town school in Rostock. In his *Hypomnematum Musicae* of 1599, Burmeister attempts to provide a study of musical rhetoric by systematically codifying the musical figures using Latin and Greek terms. After Burmeister’s first book on musical figures, several books were published by German writers, presenting their own interpretations of the relationship between music and rhetoric. These include Burmeister’s second treatise *Music Poetica* (Rostock, 1606), Johannes Nucius’ *Musices poeticae* (Neisse, 1613), Christoph Bernhard’s *Tractus compositionis augmentatus* (manuscript treatise), and Athanasius Kircher’s *Musurgia Universalis* (Rome, 1650). Although no set terminology was ever established, and definitions often varied, most writers referred to such devices as *Figuren*.

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5 Ibid., p.4.
All these treatises represent the newly established discipline of *Musica poetica*, which literally means composition in close relationship with the sound, structure and meaning of a text, or, in Bartel’s description, “the uniquely German discipline of Baroque music which seeks to combine medieval music theory with Lutheran theology, inspired by Renaissance humanistic thought and 17th century rationalism.”6

The following section aims to illustrate the use of rhetorical figures and its resulting affects in Buxtehude *Membra Jesu Nostri*. Given the large scale of the work and abundance of rhetorical devices repetitively employed throughout the work, two cantatas are selected as to illustrate some of the most common devices used during the period.

In the first cantata *Ad Pedes* (The Feet), the words “Ecce super montes (Behold upon the mountains) is given a ascending melodic line – *anabasis* (1), to express an elevated thought or exalted image. Furthermore, according to Nucis’ treatise *Musices Poeticae* (1613), such device could musically express other “words of motion and place, such as standing, running, dancing, resting, leaping, lifting, lowering, ascending, descending, heaven, hell, mountains, abyss, heights, and the like.”7 This theme is then repeated at various voice parts at different pitches, in the form of an *anaphora* (2) for an intensifying effect, and over a short span of time these repeated thematic statement achieve a gradual increase or rise in sound and pitch, creating a growth in intensity, a *climax* or *gradatio* (3). At the high point of the choral passage (m. 4), a voice crossing takes place in the form of a *metabasis* or *transgressio* (4). The two upper voices “step over” each other, creating a two fold “transgression”. Such voice crossing was considered a compositional irregularity in counterpoint practice of the period, as

6 Ibid., p. xi.
7 Ibid., p.179.
Christoph Bernhard (1628-92) points out in his *Tractatus compositionis augmentatus* that “upper voices must seldom pass under lower ones, and lower ones seldom over higher ones.”

Such device not only creates a visual crossover of voice part giving visual tension at that point, it also intensify the rising energy and the sense of highness of the idea of the word “mountain” of this particular phrase. When the choir finishes the first complete phrase (Behold upon the mountains his feet that bring good tidings and come to announce peace;) there is a pause, or *aposiopesis* (5), in all voices after the cadence. This device refers to an intentional and expressive use of silence in a composition. The effect in the particular passage is to arouse attention before the reiteration of the opening phrase at a higher pitch level (Ex. 1):

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8 Ibid., p.320.
At the beginning of the third cantata *Ad Manus* (To His Hands), the passing notes in the soprano’s melody result in a prolonged dissonance against the two lower voices. This is called *prolongatio* (6): a passing dissonance or suspension of longer duration than the preceding consonance. According to strict rules of contrapuntal writing, a dissonance which is incurred through a passing note or a suspension is not to be longer duration than the preceding consonance. Thus, the musical-rhetoric device *prolongatio* provides an exception to this rule. When combined with the narrow range between the three voice-parts, this dissonance represents a sense of pain and suffering in the visual imagery of the crucified Christ. The two
phrase following the opening phrase is a typical example of *interrogatio* (7), which is generally defined as a musical question rendered variously through pauses, a rise at the end of the phrase or melody, or through imperfect or Phrygian cadences. It is further enhanced by the use of general pauses in all parts – *aposiopesis* (8), where the ensuing silence allows the listener to contemplate an unanswerable question (Ex. 2):
In terms of overall structure, each cantata uses a series of connected sections. Although there is use of recurring ritornello, da capo structure, motivically independent instrumental lines, etc. Therefore, they tend to achieve motivic unity and, hence, to express a single affect.

The study of musical figures and their resulting affects in Membra Jesu Nostri not only demonstrates how Buxtehude achieves an “objectification” of emotions that move listeners in a collective manner. What’s more important is that it provides us a possible answer to the question why so many pietist poems have been chosen by the composer for his vocal music. (e.g. the poetry of Rist, Homburg, Angelus, Mueller, Fritzsch, and especially Peterson.) It is perhaps the intense personal and emotional language of these poems that provides the composer abundance of opportunities in creating, through an objectifying approach of Figurelehre, music that moves with a high level of expressiveness.
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