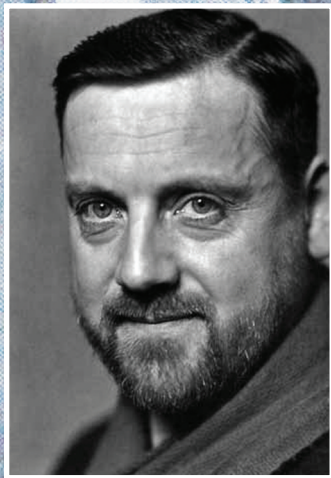


The legendary Danish organist
FINN VIDERØ

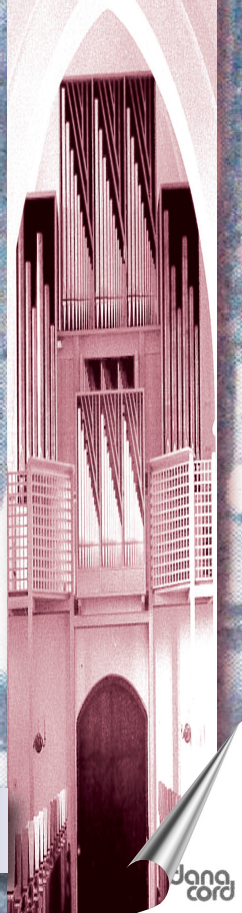


The 1950s recordings

His epoch-making Buxtehude recordings

Volume 3

Finn Viderø



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When **Finn Viderø** passed away on 13 March 1987, some five months before his 81st birthday, only a handful of his former pupils took notice, with the general public ignoring the fact that the greatest Danish organist was no longer among them. It would be fair to say that he had become an anachronism and that organ playing and musicology had changed from the ideals Viderø held high. A freer and less rigid performance practice, combined with less legato playing and a tendency of romanticizing the organ registrations, were contrary to everything Viderø himself upheld.

In his prime though he was impossible to ignore. As composer, musicologist, harpsichordist, pedagogue, and not least as the only Danish organist with a secure international reputation, Viderø was for most of his mature life a trendsetter, especially for the performance of Bach and Buxtehude. With more than a thousand concerts and a sizeable discography, his organ playing demanded respect from all over the world, especially among the Danish organists who envied and feared him.

The only son of lawyer Johan Poulsen, who, with respect to his Faroe Island ancestry, changed his surname to Viderø, Finn was born in 1906 in Fuglebjerg, a good hour's drive from Copenhagen. He obtained his student examination from the nearby city Sorø, a town with a famous organ that would have immense influence on Viderø as an organist. Three of his first teachers were each icons in Denmark and gave young Viderø the basic training. His organ studies with Mogens Wöldike, later a conductor of the Palestrina Choir and mentor of singer Aksel Schiøtz, proved essential as did his studies in musicology with Jens Peter Larsen, renowned Danish baroque specialist, and not least the piano technique he learned from Alexander Stoffregen. When Viderø later taught his many private pupils it was the theories of Stoffregen where the balanced posture of the body at the organ bench combined with the right balance of arms and hand on keys position would create a legato playing of hitherto unheard of seamless clarity.

As an independent student, the twenty year old Viderø received top marks at his examination from the Royal Danish

Music Academy and three years later he received a master of musicology from Copenhagen University. Shortly afterwards he took up employment at the Reformed Church in Copenhagen where Danish composer Weyse had held the position for many years. In 1930 Viderø went to Germany – to study organ with Charles Letestu and the art of sound analysis with Eduard Sievers. At that time Viderø laid the foundation for his later belief in the building of organs based on the German ideals of re-inventing the performance practice and dispositions of the 16th and 17th century Baroque organs. In Denmark these original inspirational ideals were successfully implemented by Sybrand Zachariassen who worked for the highly regarded organ builders Marcussen & Son (founded in 1806) in Åbenrå, South Denmark. With his artistic, technical and historic insight Viderø became the pioneer in the 'organ movement', which resulted in a richer and truer performance of works by Bach and Buxtehude, among others. In essence, Viderø's efforts influenced organ performance in Denmark and his interpretations became normative. Together, Zachariassen and Viderø reached a reputation in organ

building far outside the national borders, with newly built organs being preferred in churches all over Europe. In 1944, three years after Viderø was appointed organist in Jægersborg Church just north of Copenhagen, Marcussen & Son installed one of the finest examples of Viderø's organ ideals. Some twelve years later Viderø would go on to record music by Walther and Böhm on this new organ, together with music by Bach and Buxtehude performed on the Sorø Church organ, which to this day has cemented Viderø's reputation as the greatest Danish organist ever.

Sadly the partnership with the organ builders Marcussen & Son came to an abrupt ending when Viderø was organist at the prestigious Trinitatis Church in the centre of Copenhagen. A new organ had been commissioned based on Viderø's specifications, however the final result did not meet with his approval. Even if changes were made to the organ, the lack of true understanding from the organ committee which was originally assembled to solve the crisis resulted in the stubborn Viderø leaving his position only to walk ten minutes a few blocks away to the much less prestigious employment as

organist at the Sankt Andreas Church. The organ drama became headline news, Zachariassen dying in the middle of the turmoil. Many years later in 2010 the organ was restored to a level which Viderø might have approved.

The towering and sovereign personality of Viderø attracted organists from Denmark and many other countries to come study with him. In Denmark he mainly taught privately, but Copenhagen University and the music academies in Esbjerg and Odense took advantage of his teachings in harmony, organ and harpsichord. As a harpsichordist he made many fine recordings not least in music by Bach with the flutist Poul Birkelund. That his reputation was not only limited to Denmark can be seen with his invitations as guest professor at Yale University (1959-60) and North Texas State University (1967-68). From these American years two legendary live recordings are preserved; the Nielsen *Commotio* (released on Danacord DACOCD 801-830) and the four Ropartz pieces in volume 4 of this Viderø Retrospective. In 1964 the official recognition as honourable guest professor was bestowed on Viderø from the Åbo

Academy in Turku, Finland. Viderø was an expert in several languages and in a short time mastered Finnish sufficiently enough to hold his inaugural speech in the native language. Many countries invited him to give master classes and lectures and his reputation grew, but only outside of Denmark. In a 70th birthday article on Viderø's fading reputation, a leading Danish music critic made a fitting remark that artists of the stature of Viderø sadly in Denmark were treated inversely proportional with their reputation abroad.

Viderø was a much sought-after teacher at the Royal Danish Music Academy between 1968-76, but he was never offered a professorship. That honour was bestowed to his pupil Grethe Krogh who later had an international career as organist with numerous concerts, not least in France. In her memoirs, published only a year before she passed away, she painted a portrait of a stern and sarcastic Viderø who was adamant that the foundation of an organist should be built on an extensive knowledge of the theoretical background of organ playing. In her recording of the Nielsen *Commotio* (released on Danacord DACOCD 447) she

continued to display Viderø's theories. As a teacher she gave support and encouragement to her students and happily followed and shared in their successes. Viderø, on the other hand, became bitter by the ignoring neglect he received from Danish society. He was convinced he would be the official Danish organ consultant when the position was vacant, but he was brutally shown the door at the Cultural Ministry. A few recognitions came his way like the Buxtehude prize in 1964, however the biggest and most prestigious Danish Sonning Prize was given to Marie-Claire Alain, a well-known French organist, who according to a leading Danish music critic was inferior to Viderø. Much later the greatest Danish internationally renowned cellist Erling Blöndal Bengtsson suffered the same inexplicable humiliation when the Sonning Prize went to a young girl playing the recorder.

Viderø made a mark as composer with his often technically demanding works such as his *Passacaglia* for organ and his *Adventspil* from 1964, but not least for his innumerable organ preludes to be played by church organists at Sunday services. Viderø and the composer Oluf Ring

continued the Gregorian ideals of Thomas Laub (1852-1927) who wanted to cleanse and, as Viderø said, "get the muggy feel" out of church music. Laub also influenced and worked with Carl Nielsen on simplifying Danish hymns. Over the years Viderø published extensive pedagogical material for organists plus articles about Gregorian chant and was co-editor of way over a hundred hymn melodies.

As church organist Viderø held firmly to his often spartan beliefs of registration on the organ. Before a wedding, one young couple with little or no knowledge of organ music asked Viderø if he could make the organ sparkle and bubble. Viderø, looking over his glasses, gave the abrupt answer: "Do you think I am a fizzy drink?" Viderø himself never got married and later in life became more of a recluse. He was an excellent cook for those lucky enough to get invited to his house in Frederiksberg, Copenhagen, but people stayed away, portraying him as difficult. Something suggests that Viderø accepted the costs of his uncompromising nature. One of his university pupils described a more positive picture: "We had great sympathy for him and admired

him, and his lectures were some of the best we had. He taught us the history of harpsichord and organ music and played for us during the lectures. We were not used to it at all. He was an excellent musician, an outstanding researcher and incredible author of music. We felt he was not completely accepted in the music establishment. He was very dry, very cynical and with a sardonic wit. But also a bitter man – maybe it was just his nature.”

Be that as it may, posterity has left us with his masterly recordings made in the 1950s and now available on CD. If organ playing today is seen in a different light, Viderø’s discographic legacy is not to be ignored and still demands respect for the sheer mastery of the instrument and the deep foundation of musical style.

Grethe Krogh promised to write the booklet note for this Finn Viderø Retrospective, but sadly passed away only a few months before this release. My notes are based on many conversations with Grethe Krogh. I had several

meetings with Finn Viderø from 1980 regarding the release of the Carl Nielsen *Commotio* and had the pleasure of producing his latest recording from Tikøb church (in volume 4 of this Finn Viderø Retrospective). Viderø’s ill health and near deafness jeopardized our last attempts to capture his organ playing from Slangstrup and Sct. Andreas churches.

My sincere thanks to my co-editor and transfer engineer Claus Byrith, René Torning Andersen, to journalist Jens Cornelius for allowing me to cite from his splendid article on Viderø and to the organists Lars Rosenlund Nørremark, Knud Svendsen and Jens E. Christensen for their help and encouragement. I ask to be forgiven if these notes might seem skimpy in comparison to the overshadowing importance of Finn Viderø, however to this day we are still waiting for a biography on this remarkable man, the greatest Danish organist ever.

Finn Viderø: A Retrospective Volume 3

When Finn Viderø received the Buxtehude Prize in 1964, one of the board members presenting the award said: “Finn Viderø has a profound knowledge of organ history, dispositions and registrations, and life-long and steady study and practice of organ technique, combined of course with marked talent – all these elements contribute to the explanation of Finn Viderø’s unique playing, characterized by his ability to make the instrument sound its best.”

The four LP releases of Buxtehude’s organ music presented in this volume received the coveted Grand Prix de l’Académie du Disque Français in 1959. They still stand as the pinnacle of Buxtehude recordings.

Viderø became the leading authority on Buxtehude. He not only wrote several articles on the organ music, but corrected discrepancies between the published editions by Ph. Spitta (Leipzig 1875-76), Max Seiffert (1903-04) and H. Hedar. The transmission of the organ works presents an unusually variegated and often contradictory picture. The preserved

sources of the works consist exclusively of copies, or copies of copies, of Buxtehude’s original manuscripts. No autographs have survived and since these were undoubtedly notated in tablature, in which the notes were indicated by alphabet letters with separate rhythmical signs in often scarcely legible handwriting, even the cleverest copyist could hardly avoid making mistakes. When Viderø recorded Buxtehude in 1957 and 1958 he made use of several editions, however always with a final original solution in his own performance. Two examples are [4] *Nun bitten wir den heiligen Geist* where Viderø combines both versions and more dramatically in [10] *Vater unser im Himmelreich*.

When Inge Bønnerup recorded the complete organ works by Buxtehude for Danacord in 1991, using among others the Sorø and Jægersborg organs, she mainly used the Seiffert and Hedar editions, however also referred to Viderø’s publication of “Nine Buxtehude organ pieces”.

When Grethe Krogh studied with Viderø she told me that she played nearly all the organ works by Buxtehude and that

Viderø was the only one in Denmark who explained the different editions of the music. He pointed out doubtful passages in the notes and urged her to take the final decision herself as to what to play. "It was utterly exiting also because Viderø constantly worked with the technical side of organ playing, instilling correct posture to maintain the perfect legato."

Copenhagen May, 2018

Jesper Buhl

The Th. Frobenius Organ at Sankt Johannes Church, Vejle, Denmark

The organ was build in 1956 by the Frobenius & Co. organ builders with a striking design by Professor Mogens Koch.

HV:

Gedakt 16'
Principal 8'
Rørfløjte 8'
Oktav 4'
Spidsfløjte 4'
Quint 2 2/3'
Oktav 2'
Mixtur 4
Trompet 8'

RP:

Gedakt 8'
Principal 4'
Rørfløjte 4'
Gemshorn 2'
Scharf 3
Sesquialtera. 2
Dulcian 8'

BV:

Gedakt 8'
Gedaktfløjte 4'
Principal 2'
Nasat 1 1/3'
Oktav 1'
Regal 8'

Pedal:

Subbas 16'
Principal 8'
Gedakt 8'
Nathorn 4'
Kobbelfløjte 2'
Mixtur 3
Fagot 16'
Skalmeje 4'

Koblinger:

HV.+BV
HV.+RP
Ped.+BV
Ped.+RP

The Marcussen & Son Organ at Sorø Church, Denmark

The organ of the Sorø church was built by Marcussen & Son in 1942 and has 37 stops. It is considered one of the most significant and successful 'organ movement' organs in Denmark. The façade is largely from 1942 and made in Gothic style, but contains parts from the beginning of the 1500-t as well as a backlit façade from 1628 by Johan Lorentz the older. About a third of the pipes are from the Gregersen organ of 1864.

HV:

Gedaktpommer 16'
Principal 8'
Spidsfløjte 8'
Gedakt 8'
Oktav 4'
Rørfløjte 4'
Quint 2 2/3'
Oktav 2'
Mixture 5
Trompet 8'

RP:

Rørgedakt 8'
Quintatøn 8'
Principal 4'
Gedaktfløjte 4'
Gemshorn 2'
Sesquialtera 2
Scharf 3

BV:

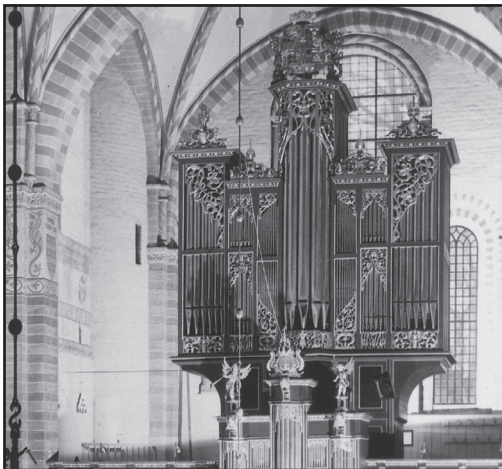
Trægedakt 8'
Nathorn 4'
Spidsgedakt 4'
Gedaktflöte 2'
Nasat 1 1/3'
Cymbel 2
Vox humana 8'
Tremulant

Pedal:

Principal 16'
Subbas 16'
Quint 10 2/3'
Oktav 8'
Gedakt 8'
Oktav 4'
Nathorn 4'
Blokfløjte 2'
Mixture 4
Fagot 16'
Trompet 8'

Accessories

One free combination
One supplementary combination
Tutti



Finn Viderø: A Retrospective

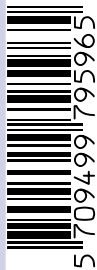
Volume 1 DACOCD 791 - 792 · Volume 2 DACOCD 793 - 794

Volume 3 DACOCD 795 - 796 · Volume 4 DACOCD 797 - 798

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Vejle



DACOCD 795
DACOCD 796

2 CD

STEREO ADD

Total playing time

CD 1 76:29

CD 2 75:54

Compilation & transfers
Claus Byrith

Digital sound restoration
by CEDAR

Executive producer:
Jesper Buhl

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LC07075



CD 1
Diderich Buxtehude (1637-1707)

- [1] Prelude, Fugue and Chaconne in C Major
BuxWV 137 4:40
- [2] Prelude and Fugue in F Major BuxWV 145 5:58
- [3] Prelude and Fugue in E Minor BuxWV 142 8:49
- [4] Nun bitten wir den heiligen Geist
BuxWV 209 & BuxWV 208 3:31
- [5] Ach Herr, mich armen Sünder BuxWV 178 2:15
- [6] Nun freut euch, lieben Christen g'mein
BuxWV 210 12:08
- [7] Toccata in F Major BuxWV 156 6:54
- [8] Prelude and Fugue in E Minor BuxWV 143 5:28
- [9] Prelude and Fugue in F sharp Minor BuxWV 146 6:37
- [10] Vater unser in Himmelreich BuxWV 207
& BuxWV 219 11:23
- [11] Magnificat Primi Toni BuxWV 203 7:35

CD 2

- [1] Prelude and Fugue in G Minor BuxWV 150 6:09
- [2] Prelude and Fugue in D Major BuxWV 139 4:58
- [3] Chaconne in c minor BuxWV 159 5:26

- [4] Prelude and Fugue in E Major BuxWV 141 5:36
- [5] Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern BuxWV 223 7:14
- [6] Prelude and Fugue in A Minor BuxWV 153 5:24
- [7] Canzona in C Major BuxWV 166 4:10
- [8] Toccata in F Major BuxWV 157 3:49
- [9] Canzona (Fugue) in G Major BuxWV 175 3:14
- [10] Passacaglia in D Minor (dorian)
BuxWV 161 5:06
- [11] Prelude and Fugue in D Minor (dorian)
BuxWV 140 5:25
- [12] Chaconne in E Minor BuxWV 160 4:30
- [13] Prelude and Fugue in G Major BuxWV 147 3:05
- [14] Canzonetta in E Minor BuxWV 169 2:47
- [15] Prelude and Fugue in G Minor BuxWV 149 7:11

Finn Viderø, organ

CD 1 From From Disque Valois MB 121 + MB 31
Recorded April 8-14, 1958
Sankt Johannes Church, Vejle, Denmark

CD 2 From Disque Valois MB 1 + MB 11
Recorded September 1957
Sorø Church, Denmark