



THOMAS JENSEN LEGACY

VOLUME 10



BENTZON VIOLIN CONCERTO 1 *WITH* CHARLES SENDEROVITZ
SALOMON • BENTZON 1 • THYBO CELLO CONCERTOS
WITH ERLING BLÖNDAL BENGTTSSON
SYBERG SYMPHONY

CD 1

Niels Viggo Bentzon (1919-2000)

Violin Concerto No. 1, Op. 50 (c.1952) 42:38

[1] I. Tempo giusto 23:08

[2] II. Cantilene interrotti: Presto - Rondo: Allegro 19:26

Charles Senderovitz, violin

Broadcast concert, Danish Radio Concert Hall, September 26, 1957

Franz Syberg (1904-55)

Symphony (1940) 26:19

[3] Andante molto - Allegro moderato - Andante molto 10:39

[4] Adagio molto 8:12

[5] Allegro moderato - Allegro non troppo 7:20

Studio broadcast, Danish Radio Concert Hall 27 May 1961

Knudåge Riisager (1897-1974)

[6] Primavera, Concert Overture, Op. 31 (1934) 5:26

Studio recording, 1960

Odeon MOAK 10 (XKPX 58 A)

[7] Little Overture for strings (1934) 4:09

Studio recording, January 27-28, 1949

Tono X 25146 (Mtx 3410)

CD 2

Siegfried Salomon (1885-1962)

Cello Concerto, Op. 34 (1922) *29:08*

[1] I. Allegro moderato *14:19*

[2] II. Andante cantabile *7:04*

[3] III. Allegro giocoso *7:40*

Studio broadcast, June 16, 1959

Leif Thybo (1922-2001)

[4] Cello Concerto (1959) *22:38*

Moderato - Allegro energico - Moderato - Vivace

Broadcast concert, Danish Radio Concert Hall, May 30, 1962

Niels Viggo Bentzon

Cello Concerto No. 1, Op. 106 (1956) *20:34*

[5] I. Fantasia *5:31*

[6] II. Rondo *3:43*

[7] III. Aria *5:11*

[8] IV. Alla marcia *6:01*

Broadcast concert, Tivoli Concert Hall, August 16, 1957

Erling Blöndal Bengtsson, cello

Danish Radio Symphony Orchestra

Thomas Jensen, conductor

Born on 25 October 1898 in Copenhagen, Thomas Jensen entered the Royal Danish Conservatoire of Music in 1913 where he studied with, among others, Carl Nielsen. Between 1917 and 1919 he was a solo cellist of the Northwest Skåne Orchestra in Helsingborg in Sweden. From 1920 to 1927 he played in the Tivoli Symphony Orchestra in Copenhagen, first as 3rd, then 2nd cellist.

The cellist Jensen nurtured ambitions as a conductor which he began to fulfil in 1923, as conductor of the amateur Euphrosyne orchestra. Two years later, his conducting of Stravinsky's *L'histoire du soldat* at Det Ny Theater (The New Theatre) attracted attention, and he decided to further his conducting career with periods of study in Paris and Dresden, returning once in a while to conduct at the Nørrebro Theatre, and at the Tivoli in the event of its permanent conductor Frederik Schnedler-Petersen being indisposed.

When Johan Hye-Knudsen left the Scala Theatre in 1925 to join the more prestigious Royal Theatre, Jensen was encouraged to apply for the vacancy. He chose instead to become conductor of the Philharmonic Society in Aarhus. The post enabled him to take on more purely orchestral repertoire, even when coupled with work at the Aarhus Theatre, but he probably also saw the opportunities afforded by the city's cultural potential. Plans were afoot for a university (founded in 1928) and even a permanent symphony orchestra. This ambition took another decade to bear fruit with the Aarhus Civic Orchestra, founded and named in January 1935 by Jensen himself.

In the meanwhile, Jensen did not restrict his work to the relatively provincial Aarhus. In 1931 he was invited by the head of Danish radio, Emil Holm, to apply for a new post as a second conductor to the radio's symphony orchestra, assisting the work of Launy Grøndahl and Emil Reesen (and from 1936 Erik Tuxen). Even though several board members suggested hiring him without further ado, the management (mostly Holm) insisted on an open audition. Jensen came third, and the post went instead to the Austrian conductor Fritz Mahler, whose father was a cousin of the composer Gustav Mahler. Jensen's reputation had preceded him, however, so that he nevertheless

returned to the DRSO as a guest conductor.

1935 was a watershed year for Jensen. As well as founding the Aarhus City Orchestra he made his debut with the DRSO in November with a programme of light popular music. The two ensembles continued to lie at the centre of his work for the next two decades. With 26 permanent members, the Aarhus Civic Orchestra was a Classically constituted ensemble, whereas the radio orchestra was more than twice as large, expanding from 55 musicians in the 30s to an 'international standard of 92 musicians in 1948. From 1936 to 1948 he also led regular concerts with the Tivoli Orchestra, acting as deputy to Svend Christian Felumb during the Aarhus orchestra's annual summer break.

Jensen's background as a cellist surely influenced his repertoire choices as a conductor. He had played in the Danish premieres of Beethoven's Ninth and Mahler's Fourth and Ninth symphonies, given by the Tivoli Orchestra with Schnedler-Petersen. He had also played in the first performances of Nielsen's Fourth and Fifth symphonies, as well as most of the symphonies by Sibelius, under the baton of the composers. From 1937 onwards he gave only symphonic concerts with the DRSO, declining invitations to take on light-music programmes. His debut in the DRSO's regular Thursday concert series, the most prestigious of their engagements, took place on 2 December 1937 with a programme including the First Cello Concerto of Saint-Saëns and the Symphony by César Franck, and thereafter he gave one or two concerts in the series each season. Jensen's connection with the DRSO deepened during the early 50s. The orchestra had come to international attention in concerts led by Fritz Busch at the 1950 Edinburgh Festival, and given a critically acclaimed account of Nielsen's Fourth in London under Launy Grøndahl the following year. In 1952 they embarked on an ambitious tour of the US, giving 39 concerts in 38 cities over 47 days. The punishing schedule did not suit the ageing Grøndahl, and the orchestra's members petitioned for Jensen to replace him. Sharing duties with Erik Tuxen, Jensen conducted 20 performances of Nielsen's Fourth Symphony, as well as works by Dvořák, Grieg and Richard Strauss.

This led to a part-time post with the orchestra in 1953, and when Grøndahl retired in 1956 and Tuxen died the following year, Jensen was finally offered the coveted chair of permanent conductor in the autumn of 1957.

The offer came at a propitious time for Jensen. His relations with the management of the Aarhus Civic Orchestra had become frosty over time, and he departed in anger in the spring of 1957. Standing in front of the DRSO musicians for his first rehearsal as permanent conductor a few months later, he was welcomed with applause. However, Jensen, now close to 60, was not the conductor he had been a quarter of a century earlier at that unsuccessful audition. He had begun to suffer from progressive deafness, and he quietly remarked to the musicians that his appointment with them might have come a little too late. The orchestra itself was beginning to feel the pressure of success, which demanded both more concerts and a more challenging repertoire, leaving its musicians less time to rehearse and perform the international repertoire that had made them renowned both in Denmark and beyond.

However, until Jensen's sudden and early death November 13th, 1963, he and the orchestra made a heroic effort to preserve and pass on a fast-vanishing heritage. They were the guardians of a performing culture derived from Nielsen, and from the orchestra's distinguished early conductors. After 1963, years passed without the DRSO engaging a permanent conductor, and both its playing and *esprit de corps* suffered accordingly. Thus the recordings in this series represent something of a last gasp of a lost tradition.

The music on this album takes a snapshot of Danish idioms in the mid-20th century, drawing on the Romanticism of JPE Hartmann and Niels W. Gade as well as the unavoidable figure of Carl Nielsen. Among the five composers represented here, the most open of them to the trends of European modernism was Niels Viggo Bentzon.

Composed in 1952, the first of his four violin concertos affords a fine example of both his craft and the virtuosity of the DRSO's long-time concert-master, Charles Senderovitz. This performance marked the concerto's broadcast premiere, given in September 1957 within the DRSO's regular series of Thursday concerts. The score seems to have disappeared thereafter, and this broadcast survives as the sole extant record of the piece.

The concerto dates from Bentzon's 'metamorphosis period' of the 1950s, which emerged from the free diatonicism of his early pieces and would in time yield to a more avant-garde dismantling of conventions in the 1960s. In a manner superficially resembling the contrapuntal working of Beethoven's late quartets, Bentzon used the 'metamorphosis' technique to generate dense, overlapping textures from a single motif. In the first movement of the First Violin Concerto, the motif is as simple as a four-note rising scale, separated by intervals of semitone-tone-semitone. The orchestra carries the weight of the harmonic argument while the soloist rhapsodizes more freely above them. A cadenza for the soloist is placed in time-honoured fashion towards the movement's close.

Bentzon conceived the concerto in a spacious two-movement form, and cast the second of them in a predominantly lyrical vein as 'Cantilene interotti' (Interrupted Songs), introduced by a violent orchestral outburst. The solo part is alternately supported and challenged by the accompaniment, while it states and develops a motif which returns throughout the movement like a rondo. A version of the first movement's scale-motif contributes to the accelerating momentum of the concerto's conclusion.

Born in 1916 to a Russian immigrant family, Charles Senderovitz began studying the violin as a child with Anton Svendsen (1846-1930). At the age of 13 he was admitted to the conservatoire in Copenhagen, where he became a pupil of Thorvald Nielsen. Having made his concerto debut in 1929 and graduated four years later, he continued his studies with Marcel Darrieux in Paris while beginning to take up a series of

prestigious concert-master posts, first at the Tivoli (1933-36) and then the Royal Chapel (1936-43). Like many other Jews in Denmark, he fled during the war to Sweden, where he immediately joined the Malmö SO as its leader. Senderovitz stayed there until 1950, when he was appointed joint concertmaster of the DRSO with Leo Hansen. He occupied the post until his retirement in 1980, becoming a highly regarded focal point for the orchestra.

Compared to Bentzon – a clown-king at the court of Danish music throughout the latter half of the 20th century – the figure of Franz Syberg is relatively unfamiliar. Syberg grew up on the island of Funen in a home of painters, including his parents, Fritz and Anna, and his elder sister Besse, who married Thomas Jensen in 1928 (she died in 1944). Syberg chose instead to study music, firstly with the composer N.O. Raasted in Odense, and from 1923 at the conservatoire in Leipzig, learning piano and violin as well as theory and composition. Having graduated in 1928, he returned to the Danish capital, where he applied himself to the organ. In this capacity he returned to his birthplace on Funen as organist at the church in Kerteminde. After his father's death in 1939, Syberg took over the family home of Pilegård, and supplemented the organ job with beekeeping and fruit-growing. The isolated life on North Funen became to some extent Syberg's fate. His place in the cosmopolitan music scene of the capital was over, and his compositional activity diminished in place of work on the ancestral farm and as an organist. In December 1955, he died in connection with a fire at Pilegård, probably from a heart attack caused by overexertion from his efforts to save the burning farm.

It may come as a surprise that the Symphony of 1940 is Syberg's single essay in the genre; he might have written more under other circumstances. Nielsen's influence makes itself felt in the three-part form of the first movement. The central Allegro section itself follows a kind of sonata form, structured with first and second themes. There are impressionistic and rhapsodic elements to the Symphony's introduction, scored with a calm and sensual glow. Calm is restored by the movement's conclusion,

in a more concentrated form. The following two movements share motifs with the first movement, lending a thematic coherence to the whole.

Jensen conducted this performance of Syberg's Symphony within a broadcast of 'New Danish Music' on 27 May 1961, as part of the Danish Ballet and Music Festival, and Syberg's former brother-in-law inspires a committed account from his orchestra, 20 years after the Symphony's first performance in February 1940. That same month, the *Dansk Musik Tidsskrift* published an article by Syberg's composer colleague Knudåge Riisager, who declared: 'The symphony is dead – music must live!'

Riisager's 1940 article took no prisoners in its analysis: 'The monumental musical work is really a problem today. Wherever today's conductors or concert institutions are looking for a musical centre of gravity for the programme, it turns out that the classical or romantic symphony as a musical form quite masters our own few monumental works. This in turn has led to the myth that "great" work is possible only in the symphonic form.'

Quite apart from the irony of Syberg's Symphony in several ways challenging this claim, Riisager's article could be seen as an attack on the hegemony of sonata form. Riisager sought and found his own liberation in newer forms: 'I have no doubt that there is a real urge for new, strong, bold and good material. Nor do I doubt that monumental works in the style, spirit, and form of our own time will be created.' Accordingly his own First Symphony of 1925 had already broken with what he considered outdated blueprints for symphonic architecture. His other instrumental works demonstrate a clear predilection for neoclassical elements mixed with modernist bitonality, French expressionism and (still, inevitably) Nielsen.

In the concert overture *Primavera*, his evocation of spring's arrival bears comparison with a better-known model in the form of Vivaldi's evergreen concerto, as a sensuous journey towards light and thawing. Also composed in 1934, the *Lille Overture* presents a dancing melody in a rondo-like form, which stylistically foreshadows later and better-known pieces such as his ballet *Twelve with the Post*.

On CD 2, the Danish cellist Erling Blöndal Bengtsson (1932-2013) takes centre stage in a trio of 20th-century concertos. Bengtsson trained privately with Fritz Dietzmann, before a scholarship enabled him to study at the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia with Gregor Piatigorsky. He became Piatigorsky's assistant and stayed at the Curtis as a teacher, taking charge of his own cello class at just 19 years old. For the rest of his long career, teaching remained central to Bengtsson's work, both in Denmark (as a teacher and then 'extraordinary professor' at the Royal Danish Academy of Music, 1953-1990) and then at the conservatoire in Ann Arbor, Michigan (from 1990 until his retirement in 2006).

However, Bengtsson also maintained an active concert career. In fact Thomas Jensen had been on the podium for his concerto debut, which took place in 1943 at the Tivoli, playing the concerto by Franz Neruda. The two men made music together countless times thereafter, and the three broadcasts preserved here attest to the mutual sympathy of their partnership.

Broadcast as part of another all-Danish programme on 16 June 1959, the Cello Concerto by Siegfried Salomon is cast in a Schumannesque vein of D minor lyricism; unlikely for 1922, but then Salomon was a full-time cellist (in the Royal Chapel, from 1907 to 1956) and holiday composer. Nevertheless, his output includes operas (notably *Leonora Christine* from 1926, based on the 17th-century Danish countess and political prisoner) and many other instrumental works. Written with the kind of insider knowledge of the instrument for which most composers had to rely on the expertise of cellist friends, Salomon's Concerto sings with exemplary 'cellistic' qualities in a conventional three-movement form, enclosing an elaborate first-movement cadenza, a rapt central cantabile and a bubbly rondo which finally adopts a measure of earthy native good humour.

Dating from the 50s, the other concertos share few points of contact with Salomon's anachronistic romanticism. Leif Thybo (1922-2001) studied music history and organ at the Royal Danish Academy of Music in Copenhagen. He made his career after the

war as an organist (at a number of churches in North Zealand and as a soloist in Denmark and abroad), a teacher (at the university and the conservatory) and composer. His output encompasses music for the church (primarily for the organ), vocal music, a chamber opera and several instrumental pieces.

Thybo's Cello Concerto is still essentially tonal in its argument and cast in three movements to be played without a break. It evokes the kind of pained and wounded heroism that found a natural home in other works for the genre written earlier in the century, notably by English composers such as Elgar, Bliss and Bridge. Thybo's spare and soloistic scoring reserves the weight of the full orchestra for angular outbursts, and the fight-or-flight character of Lutosławski's Cello Concerto (1970) is palpably close in time, if not idiom. Jensen conducted this performance within another all-Danish programme in May 1962 as part of the Danish Ballet and Music Festival.

Back to Bentzon: his First Cello Concerto of 1956 shares its metamorphosis technique with the First Violin Concerto and the Fourth Symphony, while tailored to the cello's apparent propensity for introverted musing as distinct from the violin's ecstatic flight. Listeners may hear traces of Hindemith and Bartók here, Britten and Schoenberg there, but the assertive character of the solo part is particular to Bentzon, and there is a peculiarly Danish quality to the mordant humour of the woodwind contributions. The walking-bass Aria treads on the neoclassical territory of Stravinsky's Violin Concerto, before a final march alternates elaborate counterpoint with strutting outbursts, setting its face into the wind with a kind of mocking defiance which, again, belongs to both Bentzon's music as a whole and to the fundamentally egalitarian ideals of Danish culture. Bentzon wrote the First Cello Concerto (as well as his Third) at Bengtsson's request, and this recording presents the Danish premiere of the piece, which took place in the Tivoli Concert Hall in August 1957.



DACOCD 920

The Thomas Jensen Legacy, Volume 10

2 CD

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As a friend and supporter of many Danish composers in the middle of the last century, Thomas Jensen brought unrivalled energy and conviction to their music. The five composers presented here engage in a dialogue between tradition and modernity which is personal to each of them, from the generous Romanticism of Siegfried Salomon to the biting humour of Niels Viggo Bentzon, and including the less familiar names of Franz Syberg and Leif Thybo. Several first-ever releases feature within new remasterings of live broadcasts and studio recordings made between 1949 and 1962.

CD 1

Niels Viggo Bentzon (1919-2000)

[1]-[2] Violin Concerto No. 1, Op. 50
(c.1952) 42:38

Charles Senderovitz, violin

Broadcast concert,

Danish Radio Concert Hall, September 26, 1957

Franz Syberg (1904-55)

[3]-[5] Symphony (1940) 26:19

Studio broadcast,

Danish Radio Concert Hall 27 May 1961

Knudåge Riisager (1897-1974)

[6] Primavera,

Concert Overture, Op. 31 (1934) 5:26

Studio recording, 1960 Odeon MOAK 10 (XKPK 58A)

[7] Little Overture for strings (1934) 4:09

Studio recording, January 27-28, 1949

Tono X 25146 (Mtx 3410)

CD 2

Siegfried Salomon (1885-1962)

[1]-[3] Cello Concerto, Op. 34 (1922) 29:08
Studio broadcast, June 16, 1959

Leif Thybo (1922-2001)

[4] Cello Concerto (1959) 22:38

Broadcast concert, Danish Radio Concert Hall,
May 30, 1962

Niels Viggo Bentzon

[5]-[8] Cello Concerto No. 1, Op. 106
(1956) 20:34

Broadcast concert, Tivoli Concert Hall,
August 16, 1957

Erling Blöndal Bengtsson, cello

Thomas Jensen, conductor

Danish Radio Symphony Orchestra



5

DACOCD 920

2 CD

Total playing time:
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2 CD

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