



◀ Sankt Andreas Kirke

▲ Badskær Kirke organ, 1890

▶ Krummerup organ with Dr. André Palsgård



Copenhagen's Orgelsamling

A Treasury of Danish Organ Building

By Benjamin A. Kolodziej

At the north end of Copenhagen's city center, nestled peacefully near the botanical gardens on Gothersgade, lies the Sankt Andreas Kirke. Its exterior, unassuming by European standards, belies the musical treasures harbored within its cavernous interior, namely a collection of nine small church organs built in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, all of which were collected from throughout Denmark and which represent various Danish builders. These small pipe organs, ranging in size from one to four ranks, comprise *Orgelsamlingen i Sct Andreas Kirke*, or "The Organ Collection of St. Andreas Church," a cooperative collaboration between the church and the collection's curator, Dr. André Palsgård, a Copenhagen physician. Although the first organ was renovated and installed in the gallery in May 1998, the collection was not inaugurated until February 2000, at the time comprising only four organs.¹ The *Orgelsamling's* growth and development during the last decade, attributable to the passion and effort of Dr. Palsgård, not only allows scholars and church musicians a glimpse into Danish organbuilding practices, but also serves as an educational, interactive museum by which the pipe organ and its music are promoted.²

Historical background

Interested in music since a child, André Palsgård began acquiring and restoring modest pipe organs during the 1970s, even building a larger home to accommodate his growing collection of musical instruments, including a harmonium and a pneumatic organ that had been stored in a hen house! As Dr. Palsgård cultivated his knowledge of organ restoration, his colleagues would

approach him regarding organs that had become redundant. His first such relocation project occurred in 1989 when he discovered that the I/6 organ built by Immanuel Starup (1862–1944) for the village church in Smørum was to be replaced with a new organ. Through his initiative, it was brought to Copenhagen to install in the chapel of the Sundholm, a social welfare institution. Although this idea never came to fruition, it was eventually installed as the choir organ of the Helligåndskirken, the Church of the Holy Spirit, in the medieval center of Copenhagen, undergoing a restoration by Svend Nielsen in 1998, which included the addition of significant casework and gilding.³ The redundant organs that would become available were not always the simple discards of a thoughtless church committee. That none of them have pedals and that all of them have unpretentious tonal schemes, negating the ability to play much organ literature, prompted some of their organists to campaign for their replacement with more complete, modern instruments.

Recognizing the need for a permanent location for several historic instruments that might otherwise face destruction, Dr. Palsgård approached the pastor of the Sct Andreas Kirke, Mads-Bjørn Jørgensen, a former flight museum administrator and a proponent of organ music, with the idea of establishing a permanent home in the church's wrap-around balcony. Having found a favorable reception, the *Orgelsamling* has been housed in the spacious side balcony since 1998 and has grown to seven instruments upstairs, one beneath the balcony, and one in the chancel, and all within view of the imposing Frobenius organ, the

primary instrument for the church's liturgy, in the west gallery.

These organs must be considered in their proper historic context within the greater purview of the Northern European organbuilding tradition, Denmark being thoroughly Scandinavian, yet heavily influenced by its southern neighbor, Germany. Since its founding in 1806, Marcussen & Søn, established by Jürgen Marcussen and, at least by 1820, assisted by Andreas Reuter, has dominated the Danish organ landscape, with instruments attractive to buyers as much for their reliability as for their aesthetic ideals. Marcussen, based since 1830 in Åbenrå, found itself annexed to Prussia (and subsequently Germany) from 1864 until 1920 with all of Northern Schleswig, allowing its remaining Danish competitors room to develop, if not to flourish. And it is these competitors, some of whom specialized in the market for small church organs, or whose pipe organ building encompassed only a small portion of an output otherwise dedicated to pianos or harmoniums, whose work is represented in the organs of the *Orgelsamling*. In this essay, each organ shall be referred to by its place of origin.

The collection includes:
 Badskær Kirke organ, 1890
 Krummerup Kirke organ, 1898
 Venø Kirke organ, 1900
 Indslev Kirke organ, 1900
 Øster Hjermtsløv Kirke organ, 1902
 Børglum Kirke organ, 1903
 Alling Kirke organ, 1906
 Øland Kirke organ, 1906
 "Dr. Felter's House Organ," 1943.

Nineteenth-century organs

Frederik Nielsen (1844–1903), who had established himself as a piano

manufacturer in Copenhagen before adding organbuilding to his marketable skills, established an organ *fabrik* in Århus, where he published a catalogue with nine different organ models from which to choose. **The Badskær Kirke organ** in the collection, built in 1890, is the first and cheapest of his nine specifications; an 1887 catalogue listed the price as 950 to 1000 kroner. Although the specification of this instrument is Principal 8', Gedact 8', and Fløite 4', Nielsen's catalogue promoted other instruments with a Bordun 16', a practical advantage for any instrument lacking a pedal division. The keydesk is located on the side of this rather squat, square instrument, with its multiple Doric columns lending an air of neo-classicism. A number of these instruments have keydesks located on the side, a practical necessity for a small village church with minimal space and possibly no choir loft. In this case, the organ's original location had been in the back corner on the ground floor, providing sufficient tonal egress as well as allowing the organist to see the chancel.

The **Krummerup Kirke organ** dates from 1898, when it was built by Christian Anton Schuster (1850–1911) for the Johan P. Andresen & Company. Johan Andresen (1854–1926), an amateur musician, opened a furniture factory in Ringkjøbing in 1882 in which he also repaired harmoniums, giving impetus to his interest in building the musical instruments that he called "Orgel-Harmoniums." Although his firm would build 15,000 harmoniums from 1891, Andresen apparently employed Schuster in his pipe organ division, a fact that might not have been known except for Schuster's signature within the organ. Schuster's exact role in the building of



◀ Venø Kirke organ, 1900

▲ Indslev Kirke organ, 1900

▶ Øster Hjermitslev Kirke organ, 1902



this instrument is not known, but the questions raised elucidate some of the common business practices in which organ firms engaged.

Born in Denmark, Schuster apprenticed with organbuilders in Copenhagen before settling in Sweden, where his instruments are known. However, between 1896 and 1901 he seems to have built no instruments, although his address in 1898 was in Ringkjøbing, suggesting a connection with Andresen. Both Schuster and Andresen had been to Germany in 1896 to study contemporary building methods, and it is possible they entered into an agreement for Schuster to work at the Andresen factory. It is also likely that, rather than building new organs for Andresen, Schuster merely assembled them as they were shipped to Denmark from a continental builder, a fact suggested by the windchest of at least one Schuster organ, which bears a stock number, implying a larger factory than Andresen's, ostensibly either Laukhuff or Rieger. Indeed, Rieger-Kloss factory records indicate that 19 organs were delivered to Denmark between 1900 and 1905, including one in 1902 to Ringkjøbing.⁴ Schuster's role, then, seems to have been as an assembler and voicer of Rieger organs that would then bear the Andresen name.

The Krummerup organ, restored in 1995–96 by Dr. Palsgård, was the first in the Orgelsamling and contains a Violinprincipal 8', Gedacht 8', and Fugara 4', to which a Gemshorn 2' was added in 1956, in addition to an original bass and treble coupler that is activated via a pedal. As with all the organs in the collection, a modern blower has been added, even though all the original hand-pumping apparatus remains.

Turn-of-the-century organs

These chronological distinctions being rather arbitrary, the **Venø Kirke organ** dates from 1900, only two years later, again from the Johan Andresen firm through the craftsmanship of Christian Schuster. This little organ, bearing the appellation "the smallest organ in Denmark," contains only a Geigenprincipal 8', supplemented with a bass and treble coupler of the same mechanism as employed by contemporary harmoniums.

The late nineteenth century was epochs removed from the outset of the century during which traditional methods of organbuilding continued much as they had for centuries prior. By the turn of the century, industrialization had been incorporated into organbuilding methods, with factories encouraging an economy of scale unimaginable to the provincial builder only decades before. Such industrialization could result in standardization of organs that could be built cheaply, efficiently, and be delivered to their ultimate destination through the clockwork reliability of the European railroad system. Social interaction, fostered by increasingly reliable forms of transportation and communication, encouraged a free interchange in which organbuilders could learn and employ new ideas. Andresen, for example, toured southern Germany during the summers of 1896 and 1897, visiting significant installations by notable builders in order "to study the

new and improved design of church organs."⁵ The Venø Kirke organ, having been placed in two successive churches, a museum, and finally an abbey church before coming into Dr. Palsgård's possession in 2003, evidences in its compact simplicity the potential Andresen might have seen in the small church market. Requiring no more space than a harmonium, here was an instrument that could be constructed, shipped, and installed with economical ease.

Technological innovation was a logical consequence of this progressive *Zeitgeist*, evident in the **Indslev Kirke organ**, built in 1900 at Roerslev Margaards Pianoforte-og Orgelfabrik at Nørre Aaby. Hans Jørgen Hansen, apparently a largely self-taught builder, studied books on pianos and organs and visited organ factories in Odense and Germany before founding the firm in 1892, building about 6,000 pianos and 70 organs before the company's closure in the late 1920s. This organ possesses a Bordun 16' in addition

to a Principal 8', Gedakt 8', and Fløite 4' on a slider windchest, boasting also an "adjustable collectiv," a type of mechanical system reminiscent of the *freikombination* assists on pneumatic instruments. Each stop knob is paired with a smaller knob situated below. These small knobs may be drawn in order to prepare a new stop combination that is only engaged with the pull of a lever on the organist's left side. The strength required to engage the adjustable *collectiv*, as well as its location, suggests that this would have been the task of an assistant in addition to the *calcant* (bellows pumper) located on the other side of the case, resulting in a four-rank organ requiring no fewer than three people to play! Dr. Palsgård posits that this rather unwieldy arrangement might have been an attempt to imitate the characteristics of pneumatic action without actually having to incorporate the new technology, which only by the turn of the century had reached southern Denmark. Unable to escape



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Pipe Organ Collections



Børglum Kirke organ, 1903



Børglum double-labial pipes



Alling Kirke organ, 1906



Øland Kirke organ, 1906



Øland organ keydesk

technological progress, the Indslev Kirke organ is marred by a 1929 modernization project, which installed swell shutters over the façade pipes; although the swell mechanism has been removed, a superfluous swell pedal remains.

Later organs

The **Øster Hjermitslev Kirke organ**, built in 1902 but acquired by the Orgelsamling in 2007, sits beneath the balcony. Having a Geigenprincipal 8', Gedackt 8', and Gemshorn 4', a pull-down pedalboard had been added but was removed with the restoration. Although its exact provenance is uncertain, with its conspicuous tripartite façade it bears a similarity to the organ at the Garder Church in Norway, an instrument built in 1900 by Rieger. So, too, would Rieger have built this instrument under the auspices of Andresen. Dr. Palsgård observes that this instrument utilizes slider chests, placed in an organ case typical of Rieger's, which normally employed cone chests (*Kegellade*). Interestingly and perhaps surprisingly for organs of such limited tonal resources, none of the instruments has a divided keyboard, as their American contemporary equivalents certainly would have had. A conclusion is dangerous to posit, especially given Denmark's rather isolated and parochial organ culture, but one can surmise that, if the primary goal of these instruments was to lead the congregation in the chorales, there would be as little use for a divided keyboard as there would be for colorful solo stops.

Gebrüder Rieger likewise built the **Børglum Kirke organ** as Opus 837, but the instrument was delivered and installed by the Andresen firm in the Bangsbostrand Kirke in Frederikshavn in 1903, where it remained until it was moved to Børglum in 1945. This mechanical cone chest instrument has a Rorfloite 8', Principal 8', and Octave 4', with a Bordun 16' extended from the Rorfloite. The Rorfloite is curiously double-labiated, with the mouths oriented on opposite sides of the pipe to form the equivalent of a Doppelflöte but with the *ror* (chimney.) The only registrational aid is a tutti pedal. The organ was restored by Dr. Palsgård in 2000 and entered the collection the following year.

The Børglum organ demonstrates one hitherto unexplored characteristic of Dr. Palsgård's restoration technique, namely the color scheme. Painted pink with light blue trim and green cornices, complete with faux marble on the Doric columns of the façade, the organ certainly appears more vibrant than its original oaken hues. The Venø organ is light blue, the Badsker organ is the same color with red and white trim, and the Krummerup organ is pastel pink and blue, with only the Indslev organ retaining its original varnished wood. The controversial color scheme broadly reflects some of the church's own colors, with the pews trimmed in green and red. Additionally, the brighter colors, some of which are more reminiscent of carnival or theatre instruments than those in

service to the church, lend an aura of visual excitement to the many student groups who visit the collection.

The **Alling Kirke organ**, also from Roerslev Margaard Pianoforte- og Orgelfabrik in 1906, has a mechanical cone chest with an Aeoline 8', Gedackt 8' (the lower octave of which is shared with the Aeoline), and a Flöte 4'. Again reflecting neo-classical casework, the organ stands only 208 cm and its flat top was flush with the flat ceiling of the choir loft in the Alling Kirke, where its façade pipes spoke only a few centimeters above the railing. Additionally, the case's ornamental woodwork mirrors the symmetry and patterns of the original decorative patterns of the church and choir loft, suggesting an organ uniquely tailored for its location even by a "factory" builder. This distinctive character is only enhanced with a silver plaque on the keydesk, which notes that the organ was a gift in memory of Søren Lauersen and his wife Johanne Kathrine Westergaard.

In his restorations, Dr. Palsgård has retained each rank's original voicing, revealing principals of clear but mellow character, and flutes of restrained, pure tone. Each of these organs exhibits a comparable specification based on the Principal 8' (with the occasional addition or substitution of a weighty string for a principal), their stoplists dictated by the ubiquitous practicalities of liturgical performance and hymn singing rather than by any sort of Danish national musical stylistic consciousness. Instead,

the Danish musical aesthetic is present in the voicing and character of each stop, Dr. Palsgård equating these sounds with the bowing of a stringed instrument, producing a lively "singing" tone whose affinity to the human voice promotes hymn singing. Ole Oleson, researcher at the Danish National Museum, characterizes Danish organbuilding during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as producing "... dignified, mellow instruments with no brashness, special effects or spicy sounds, and devoid of the intense, almost indecent obtrusiveness which is also a part of the Romantic-symphonic organ's personality."⁶ None of these instruments is of sufficient size to bear a tonal palette beyond the most fundamental, yet they all exhibit that particular Danish melodious lyricism whose primary task is to support the human voice.

The **Øland Kirke organ**, built by AC Zachariassen Orgelfabrikken in 1906 and an early acquisition of the collection, exemplifies the belated adoption of pneumatic technology in Denmark. Although pneumatic action had been developing for almost two decades in the German lands, Denmark had been reticent in espousing the new technology. However, a number of practical reasons had begun to mitigate the predominant use of the slider chest. The gradual installation of furnaces in church buildings, often engaged shortly before a service, resulted in abrupt changes in temperature and humidity to which slider chests were not acclimated, pneumatic action being less susceptible to leaks. Furthermore, the homophonic and colorful textures of Romantic repertoire necessitated playing aids such as octave couplers, *freikombinationen*, and the *Walze* or crescendo pedal, all of which could be easily and cheaply achieved with pneumatic action. Smaller instruments, such as those by Zachariassen, were primarily designed for liturgical, not concert use, and pneumatic action was more of a hindrance in terms of increased maintenance and a sluggish key response; in the Øland organ, Dr. Palsgård modified the keyboard slightly to generate a more responsive action.

The Zachariassen firm traced its lineage to P. U. F. Demant (1802–1868), an Odense builder whose son J. A. Demant (1830–1878) profited from organ work in Jutland when Åbenrå, where the Marcussen firm was located, was reappropriated into German territory. After the younger Demant's death, Frederik Nielsen took over the company, which went bankrupt in 1906 after Nielsen's own son was unable to maintain profits. As a consequence of the bankruptcy, organbuilder A. C. Zachariassen (1877–1954) bought Nielsen's tools and machines, eventually establishing his

own organ factory in which the illustrious organbuilder Theodore Frobenius (1885–1972) was hired in 1907. A. C. Zachariasen had observed and possibly apprenticed with German builders prior to establishing his own firm. His 330 pipe organs include many in Copenhagen and even a large installation in Iceland, Zachariasen himself voicing each instrument. The Øland organ, which was electrified in 1943, has an Italianate disposition of Bordune 16', Principale 8', Salicionale 8', and Flauto 4'.

The final organ, referred to as “**Dr. Felter’s House Organ**,” differs greatly from the remainder of the instruments in the collection. Built by Danish builder Wilhelm Hemmersam (1909–1994) as his Opus 1 in 1943, this organ reflects the ideals of the *Orgelbewegung* both in terms of its façade and disposition. Its lack of non-functional casework contrasts with the neo-classical or semi-Victorian casework of the instruments dating from only four decades prior. The stoplist of Gedakt 8', Principal 4', Quintatön 2', and Quint 1½' utilizes slider chests.

Wilhelm Hemmersam trained with Marcussen and would build 25 organs, mostly in Sweden. This organ was built for the Jægersborg Kirke in 1944 but went through a succession of owners before it was purchased by Dr. Ralph Felter, a specialist in diagnostic radiology, as his home organ around 1971. In 2003 Dr. Palsgård, with the help of Pastor Mads-Bjørn Jørgensen, negotiated to purchase this organ for the collection from Dr. Felter’s children, Pastor Thomas Felter and Charlotte From. The organ is placed in the chancel, where it is able to serve the church as a choir instrument.

A living legacy

The *Orgelsamling’s* nine organs are supplemented by seven more instruments, including a four-rank organ built by Jens Johan Peter Schierf in 1843, which are undergoing renovation and have yet to be displayed. All stand as a testimony to those builders and musicians who supplied music to small churches over a century ago. Yet, their legacy is not merely liturgically academic or scholarly; rather, these instruments still contribute to the musical life of Copenhagen. Dr. Palsgård hospitably welcomes and demonstrates the organs to an array of visitors, including foreign performers and interested American scholars and organists. His presentation “How Do Organs Speak to Themselves and Each Other?” is aimed toward Danish schoolchildren who are captivated by the organs’ bright colors and gentle sounds. The *Orgelsamling* presents a



A view of the collection in the upper balcony

busy concert schedule, featuring performances of Danish music as well as transcriptions and even jazz arrangements for these small instruments. The collection even inspired English musician Peter Lea-Cox to compose his *Pièce pour cinq orgues*, which was first performed on the instruments in September 2003.

The rather esoteric focus of this collection—small organs from *fin de siècle* Denmark—might seem too abstruse to have much appeal in an era characterized by a fascination for that which is increasingly bigger, faster, and louder. Long ago bypassed by popular music as well as by the organbuilding world, these instruments are a tribute to a difficult but not exceedingly different time. Most are the products of an industry struggling to make a profit while attempting to integrate new technologies reflecting increased industrialization. These builders must have striven to maintain their artistic integrity while concurrently attempting to ensure their survival by advertising through new media such as printed catalogues. They reflect a conservative cultural and national identity that was being challenged by foreign interactions, which, over the next several decades, would plunge all of Europe into war. Reflecting the simplicity of the Danish Church, these instruments perhaps represent a time of ecclesiastical hegemony that the twentieth century would soon subvert. These concerns are as applicable to the present day as they were over a century ago and, for organists, it is a pleasant lesson when it can be learned from the singing tone of a well-crafted organ pipe.



Jazz saxophonist Karsten Kristensen and his wife organist Simone Fought

Notes

1. The majority of the information contained in this article was taken from an interview by the author with Dr. André Palsgård at Sct Andreas Kirke, June 10, 2010.
2. Scandinavian languages use the post-positive definite article, meaning the definite article (en or et) is placed at the end of the word. Therefore, *orgelsamlingen* means “the organ collection” while *orgelsamling* means an unspecified organ collection. Although Danish does not capitalize all nouns, this essay will consider *Orgelsamling* a proper noun, thus capitalizing it.
3. Ole Olesen, “Organs in Denmark.” http://orgel.natmus.dk/oversigt_oid_rammex.htm.
4. André Palsgård, *Kirkeorgelafdelingen*

på harmoniumfabrikken Joh. P. Andresen & Co., Ringkjøbing, 1897–1908 (Søborg, DK: Eget Forlag, 1997), p. 8.

5. Ibid, 8ff.

6. Ole Olesen, “Musical Fragrance in a Romantic Fantasy,” *The Nordic-Baltic Organ Book*, ed. Anna Frisk, Sverker Jullander, and Andrew McCrea (Göteborg: Göteborg Organ Art Center, 2003), 212–213.

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