

Schnitger in Norway

Works by Buxtehude, Goudimel / van Noordt, G. Böhm, F. Tunder and J.S. Bach

Hans van der Meijden, organ

Played in Dypvåg Church

Organ: Flentrop (2019)

DVH 140325 (2020)

In 2019 Flentrop built a new organ for Dypvåg church. The instrument is made in the Schnitger tradition and is the only one of its kind in Norway. The organ was presented in «Orgelspeilet» I-2020. Now Hans van der Meijden has recorded a CD in Dypvåg with music that fits perfectly on the organ, from Claude Goudimel /Van Noordt to chorale preludes and two free organ works by the young J.S. Bach.

The whole starts with the long Toccata by Buxtehude (BuxWV 155) and the first impression is a mighty plenum with 16' and reeds – and a minimum of reverberation. Can this go well in such dry acoustics? It will turn out that it can go very well. The intonation is lively and clear and the organ appears to be able to unite with the space. Much can certainly be attributed to the wind supply, which, with two bellows, without 'shortness of breath', gives a brisk wind. Part of the honour can also be attributed to Hans van der Meijden's technique; his playing is characterized by clear articulation and «interplay» with the wind supply, even when many registers have been drawn. And despite the minimal reverberation, the room is surrounded by warmth.

As far as musicality is concerned: despite the fact that Van der Meijden articulates thoroughly and conscientiously, some works remain a bit too metrical. Particularly in Bach I could wish for more agogics, a little more «freedom». The early Prelude and Fugue in G minor (BWV 535) is somewhat 'square' and the fugue somewhat slow. Some chorale preludes are also a bit slow. But the well-known Toccata BWV 565 immediately enjoys a good and clear interpretation. In BWV 535 and 565, Van der Meijden uses echo effects in a well-considered extent, enough to create variation, but not so much that the music seems separated from itself. A highlight is the little gem 'Wir glauben all' an einen Gott "(BWV 740), played with Quintads and Vox Humana in soprano as cantus firmus and accompanied in four parts, with double pedal, with the Principal 8'. But this is even surpassed by Georg Böhm's partita "Freu dich sehr, o meine Seele", which is 100% correct – registration, tempo, agogics and articulation. This is exemplary!

The program has been put together to present all possibilities of the organ, and that has been very successful, whether by registering solo voices, combinations thereof or different plena. Some impressions after listening to the program a few times: the Principal 8' is clear, has authority and is supportive. The plenum in Prestants (8', 4', 2') combines naturally, without being so much stronger. The Nasat 3' is surprisingly clear in combination with the other voices, but it is by no means predominant. It functions in the plenum as well as in the solo register. The Sesquialter is clear and penetrating and is valuable in a clear CF registration. The Quintads are charming, with a clear keynote. The organ has four reeds, from the overtone-rich Vox Humana, to the brighter and more distinct Dulciaan 16', the more fundamental Trommet 8' and the pedal's Posaune. The latter provides a solid foundation and is also quick and clear. I would have liked to hear the Siffloit 1 ½ in a combination, but it is not used on this CD. Bach's 'Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern' (BWV 739) is played in its entirety with two parts (8' and 4'), alternating and with the couple; here I miss a bit of variation, despite the two really colourful voices. The contrast is great towards the BuxWV 155 – as mentioned it is quite long, but here, due to all the different timbres used, the entire organ is used to emphasize the architecture and its variation as efficiently as possible. In summary, this production testifies to an instrument characterized by a very good balance, where everything can be combined with everything.

An instrument built in 2019 cannot be a Schnitger organ. But after the first tone there was a sound association with Stade and the organ in St. Cosmae, despite the fact that this space has a completely different acoustics. This indicates that Flentrop has succeeded in building a Norwegian Schnitger organ.

DMP records and Daniël van Horssen have managed to make a warm recording, despite the lack of reverberation. Well done. Some noise from the action is heard in between, but I don't find this disturbing at all. The CD cover with the enclosed booklet contains good photos and informative text (but small print!) About the music, the organ and the organist. In addition, we are informed about the disposition and all registrations. This is a production that gives a clear impression of what kind of organ the church of Dypvåg now has, which should be a good advertisement for both the organist and the organ builder.

The review was written by Sven Atle Johannesen, editor of «Orgelspeilet». He is a teacher at Linderud School in Oslo and is an enthusiastic amateur organist.