

A Bøhm flute from Aarhus?

When you mention the name Bøhm flute to flautists, they think of the beautiful transverse flute, which was developed around 1747 by the German flute virtuoso, composer and inventor Theobald Böhm. But the Bøhm and the flute discussed here are two completely different things, though they might have something to do with each other.

Our Bøhm, more precisely Gotfried Böhm, became organist at The Church of Our Lady in Aarhus probably after Anders Orgemester, mentioned on 21st May 1665. We do not know where or when Gotfried Böhm was born, but he must have held the office from the late 1660s until his death on 8th May 1677. Neither the organ playing job at Our Lady's Church nor at the Cathedral were at all lucrative jobs and both offices were merged some years after Böhm's death, and even then, as appears from the Diocesan Office's copy book of March 20, 1792, it was a problem to live on the wages:

"It is quite probable that the Aarhus Churches have for a long time had little fortune, for both together have only been able to give sufficient Entertainment and Remuneration to one Organist for His Business in Public Worship [...]"

But Böhm made the most of his musical talent and in 1669 was also given royal privilege to play for small parties at "sit Positiv, Symphonia och huis anden hand lært hafuer", which meant that on his little portable organ, his clavichord and other instruments he could play upon, he in fact got permission to compete the city musician Henrich Bertelsen Kloch at weddings and other civic feast. It was an unusual permit which went beyond what Kloch would have earned.

From Böhm's post mortem sale inventory of June 12, 1678, we get more precise information about his instruments.

Instrümenter,

1 Possitio med 4 Positiv	60 Rdl
1 stor viol de Gamba	15 Rdl
1 smaa Descant violin	5 Rdl
1 Bander	3 Rdl
1 Cytrinchen	3 Rdl
1 Trompet Marin	4 Rdl
1 Ivalbørns fløjte med guldtræ	1 Rdl 2 Mk
2 smaa Boßbombs fløjter	2 Rdl 1 Mk
2 quart fløjter 2-3 Rdl	1 Rdl 2 Mk

1 Possitio with 4 votes, and a small yellow box with fittings	60 Rdl
1 large viola da Gamba	15 Rdl
1 small Descant violin	5 Rdl
1 Bander	3 Rdl
1 Cytrinchen (small citterns)	3 Rdl
1 Tromba marina	4 Rdl
1 Ivory Flute with case	1 Rdl 2 Mk
2 small Boßbombsfløyter (boxwood flutes)	2 Rdl 1 Mk
2 quart flutes of 3 Mk	1 Rdl 2 Mk

All the instruments together were valued at 94 rigsdaler and 5 shillings, a nice sum at that time. The small portable organ, the positive or 'Possitio' as it is called here, was naturally enough the most valuable and one of the instruments Böhm was allowed to use around and about for little gatherings. On the other hand, we do not find the Symphonia he was also permitted to play. But it appears to be his widow Dorthe Poulsdatter Kramer, daughter of postmaster Poul Reinhardt Kramer in Aarhus, who remarried after Böhm's death, this time to his successor in office Jens Hansen, who inherited Böhm's clavichord, for in her own post mortem sale inventory or 28 August 1682 we find three keyboard instruments

1 Symphony, with strings, to 10 Rdl
 1 gl. Covcordium 4 Rdl
 1 ditto with strings, 3 Rdl

If you compare the instruments and the prices from Böhm's auction, it immediately seems as if it was a mistake that the ivory flute was valued lower than, for example, the Tromba Marina, a single-string instrument with a triangular body built of spruce or pine. This 'Ivory Flute with case' must have been an instrument of the recorder type when taking the date in consideration. In 1677, the baroque traverso was brand new and had hardly come to Denmark yet, and very few Renaissance transverse flutes were made of ivory. Now we do not know how long Böhm had had the instrument; but it is precisely in the years before his death, that this transitional recorder, between renaissance and baroque occurs. We know it from today the depiction in Jacob van Eyck's *Der Fluyten Lust-hof* of 1648/49, and through the 30 specimens found today around museums and in private collections, of which there are two made from narwhal horns from Christian IV's time, located at Rosenborg Castle.

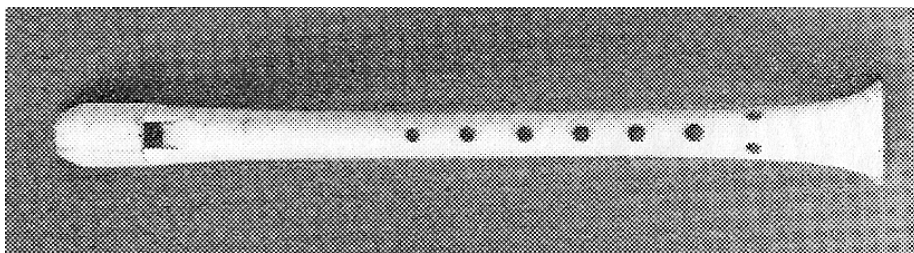


A few years ago, a soprano recorder of this transitional type came to light in the Silkeborg area, unfortunately without information concerning provenance. It is now in the Danish Music Museum in Copenhagen. It is 28.2 cm long, and is made of ivory in one piece and has a leather case. It fits in material, type and date, and in having its leather case, with the instrument mentioned in the Böhm sale inventory. The instrument is not in playing condition. The labium is damaged and the instrument has at the upper end a long and old crack that might well be from Böhm's time. These essential defects would provide a reasonable justification for a valuation of 1 Rdl. for a useless recorder, but which nonetheless was of ivory. So this might be Böhm's flute.



Ivory recorder from approx. 1650-60 found in the Silkeborg area, Danish Music Museum, Copenhagen

Now, a builder's name is not specified in either the sale inventory or on the instrument. And for Böhm's instrument only an original deed of commission or sale or the like could document this. But in the case of the (re)discovered flute, we have the opportunity to compare it with the other known copies of the type. And here there is especially an instrument in Edinburgh that catches the eye: An ivory soprano built by the Dutch instrument maker Richard Haka around 1680. The shape of the two instruments is more or less identical except that Haka's flute is tuned in c, whereas the anonymous recorder is tuned a minor third higher, in *E^b*.



Haka recorder in Edinburgh



The 'Böhm' recorder

Böhm's instrumentarium differs from that of ordinary organists in including woodwinds and strings. It is more reminiscent of city musicians, but Böhm also had the licence of a town musician.

What did he play then on his little ivory flute? Did he wander around the cemetery as the evening fell playing variations on familiar tunes, as van Eyck did at St. John's churchyard in Utrecht at the same period? Well, the sources do not report anything about this, but via Böhm's inventory, we get an idea of what music the flute and his other instruments was used for.

1	Voigtländer's German songs in Folio	33
2	Petzel's Musikalische Arbeit 5 parts in folio	13
3	Rosenmiller's Sonaten 5 parts in folio	13
4	Retz's Exercitationum Musicarum in folio 28	13
5	Voigtländer's German songs in folio	33
6	Voigtländer's German songs in folio	33
7	Voigtländer's German songs in folio	33
8	Voigtländer's German songs in folio	33
9	Voigtländer's German songs in folio	33
10	Voigtländer's German songs in folio	33
11	Griean Heptacordium Panicum in 4to	33
12	Voigtländer's German songs in folio	33
13	Voigtländer's German songs in folio	33
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26	Voigtländer's German songs in folio	33
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1. Viogtender's German songs in Folio.

Gabriel Voigtländer 1596-1643. *Erster Theil Allerhand Oden vnnd Lieder, Welche auf allerley als Italianische, Frantzösische, Englische, vnd anderer Teutschen guten Componisten, Melodien vnd Arien gerichtet, Hohen vnd Nieder Stands Persohnen zu sonderlicher Ergetzlichkeit, in vornehmen conviviis vnd Zusammenkunfftten, bey Clavi Cimbalen, Lauten, Tiorben, Pandorn, Violen di Gamba gantz bequemlich zu gebrauchen, vnd zu singen, Gestellet vnd in Truck gegeben, Durch Gabrieln Voigtländer. Ihrer Hoch-Printzlicher Durchleuchtigkeit zu Dennemarck vnd Norwegen, etc. Wolbestelten Hoff-Feld Trommetern vnd Musico. Sohra (Sorø) Gedrucht auff der Königl: Adelichen Academy von Henrich Krusen, Bestalten Buchdrucker daselbst. Im Jahr 1642.* Voigtländer was employed amongst other things as court trumpeter by Prince Christian at Nykøbing Falster.

2. Beicher's Musikalische Frühling 6 parts in folio.

Dietrich Becker 1623-1679. *Musikalische Frühlingsfrüchte* 1668.

3. Petzel's Musikalische Arbeit 5 parts in folio.

Johan Christoph Pezel (eller Petzel, Pecelius m.fl.) 1639-1699.

Musicalische Arbeit zum Ab-blasen eller Hora decima musicorum Lipsiensium. Sonater f. 2 zinker og 3 basuner. Leipzig 8. Februar 1670.

4. Rosenmiller's Sonatas 5 parts in folio.

Johann Rosenmüller 1619-1684. *Kunne være Sonate da camera cioe Sinfonie Alemande...con cinque stromenti da arco, et altri ca. 1671.*

5. Reltz Exercitationum Mussicarum in folio.

Mathias Kelz ?-ca. 1694. Exercitationum musicarum 1669.

6. Johan Jacob Löwen's Sonatas 4 parts.

Johann Jakob Löwe von Eisenach 1629-1703. Could be from the Düben collection for 3, 4, 5, or 6 from 1665.

7. Gertram Muller's Lieder.

[unidentified]

8. Frederik's Zuber's Sing Spiel.

Johann Friedrich Zuber -1693. 21 songs from G.H. Webers Sing- u. Spiel-Arien 1665.

9. Casper Horn's Parergon Musicum in 4te udi tuinde lange Parter.

Johann Caspar Horn 1630-1685. Parergon musicum consists of 6 publications from the period 1664-76 of a total of 284 4-5-part dances

10. Hammerschmidt's Musikalischer Andachten 6 parts in 4to.

Andreas Hammerschmidt 1611-1675. Musichalischen Andachten, The devotional music in 5 parts came out between 1639 and 1653. Part 2 1641 and Part 4 1646 are the only ones containing 6-parts pieces.

11. Corvian Heptacordum Danicum in 4to.

Hans Mikkelsen Ravn 1610-1663. Heptacordum Danicum 1646.

12. Andreas Herbst Musica Practica in 4to.

Johann Andreas Herbst 1588-1666. Musica Practica Sive Instructio pro , Das ist: Eine kurtze Anleitung, wie die Knaben [...] auff Jetzige Italienische Manier [...] Können informiret [...] werden. Deßgleichen denen anfahenden Instrumentisten. Nürnberg 1642.

Whether Böhm around 1670 played Hammerschmidt and Pezel on his ivory recorder, we will probably never know. Böhm had an ivory flute. The ivory flute found today fits the description of his, but whether it really was his, perhaps the little figure in the attic above the Church of our Lady, where Böhm worked and was buried, sitting and staring out as if awaiting the final proof, is the only one who really knows.

Machine translator by the Editor, this article previously appeared in CUSTOS, the Danish journal for early music.

