

Report

“Orgelfestival Holland 2009”



“Orgelfestival Holland 2009” took place between the 19th and 28th of June, 2009 in Alkmaar, and was organised by the **Stichting Internationaal Schnitger Orgelconcours**. This foundation was founded in 1991 in order to organise musical events that tie into the Schnitger name. Through doing this, they hope to attract both national and international attention to the wealth of historic organs in the city of Alkmaar. The most important event in this context is Orgelfestival Holland, which takes place biennially. In addition to an international organ competition, the festival includes an academy, a series of concerts and lectures as well as other activities. The tenth edition (2009) took as its themes the composers Johann Sebastian Bach and Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck.

Schnitger Orgelconcours – applications and preliminary round

The number of applications for the international organ competition was overwhelming. Almost 60 young organists, from all corners of the earth submitted a CD on which they had recorded the three compulsory works by Sweelinck and Bach.

In total 56 applications were received from 17 countries:

The Netherlands	10	Canada	3	Latvia	1
Germany	7	Belgium	3	The Czech Republic	1
Japan	7	Austria	3	Romania	1
South Korea	5	Finland	2	Hungary	1
Italy	5	Portugal	2	UK	1
USA	3	Russia	1		

The preliminary round was assessed by the organist Jan Raas (former member of the artistic committee) and the two current artistic directors: city organist Pieter van Dijk and Frank van Wijk. As usual, they selected 12 candidates who were subsequently invited to take part in the competition in Alkmaar.

Introduction – Readers’ offer

Prior to the official opening of the festival, the evening of Thursday the 18th of June saw an event organised in co-operation with our media partner, the Noord Hollands Dagblad. This newspaper had published a readers’ offer which gave a maximum of 60 people the chance to visit the consoles and the interiors of both the historic organs in the Grote Sint Laurenskerk. In addition, the organs’ mechanical aspects were explained and many different combinations of stops were demonstrated. The visitors were divided into small groups, and the evening concluded with both Pieter van Dijk and Frank van Wijk performing small improvisations. Although the number of visitors had been limited to 60 due to the limited space around the organs, around 80 people came (many had brought a partner) and the enthusiasm was so great, both among the participants and the organists, that the evening lasted much longer than expected. Please see the attached article by Hans Visser: "Veel plezier schat, en daar danste hij weg naar het orgel".



BACH WEEKEND

Friday 19 June



Orgelfestival Holland opened on Friday 19th June with a weekend devoted to the music of Johann Sebastian Bach. The bell to open the famous cheese market (which on this occasion was designed to tie in with the festival) was rung by Maggie Hamilton, Editor in Chief of the influential British magazine 'Choir and Organ'. This magazine is the festival's British media partner, and featured large-scale coverage of the event in its September/October issue.

During the cheese market, the new city carillonneur Christiaan Winter was also introduced. He performed a number of works by Bach on the carillon adjacent to the market place. Those in attendance were also invited to make their way to the cheese market concert in the Grote St Laurenskerk at 1200.

The invitation was taken up by many people, allowing city organist Pieter van Dijk to open the festival before a packed church. The concert itself was entirely dedicated to the music of J.S. Bach, the bewitching sounds of the Van Hagerbeer/Schnitger organ being enjoyed by over 550 people. Following the concert, the mayor and councillors of Alkmaar Town Council hosted the committee, jury members and participants of the festival at a lunch in the inner courtyard of the town hall.



Competition – 1st round

The first round of the competition began at 2pm and featured, exclusively, the music of Bach. The first four candidates performed three chorale preludes on the advent hymn 'Nun komm der heiden Heiland' and a Prelude and Fugue. The level of playing in the first round promised much for the remainder of the competition, the young organists managing convincingly on the far-from-easy Alkmaar organ, including those with limited experience of playing monumental historic instruments. During the evening session, the second group of candidates performed for the 5-strong jury which consisted of Bine Katrine Bryndorf (Denmark), Paolo Crivellaro (Italy), Reinhard Jaud (Austria), Theo Jellema (The Netherlands) and Dietrich Wagler (Germany). The public enjoyed an enormous variety of colours and playing styles. On Saturday morning, the final four candidates of the first round performed, and the jury completed their difficult assessments. The first round was attended by around 250 people.

Saturday 20 June

Walking Festival

Early in the morning, around 7.30am, the 5500 participants of the last stage of the Alkmaar walking festival departed on their tour of the historic town centre. The Stichting Internationaal Schnitger Orgelconcours took advantage of the opportunity to work together with the 'Le Champion' foundation, organiser of the walking festival, in the field of marketing, as the activities of the two organisations occurred simultaneously. Our organisation organised a chain of 12 fairground organs through the town centre, much to the surprise of the walkers, who were greeted by jolly organ music wherever they went.



Organ Crawl



During the afternoon, the traditional organ crawl took place, taking in four historic organs in Alkmaar town centre. Around 120 people took part. Frank van Wijk provided a stimulating spoken commentary on the history and construction of both the buildings and the organs. The music he chose to demonstrate the instruments tied in with the Bach-theme. All of the registrations used by Frank were notated in the programme book, making it possible for the listeners to appreciate in greater detail the various combinations of stops used. Meanwhile, the 12 fair-ground organs played on...

Opening Concert

The opening concert, which took place on Saturday evening, was performed by Canterbury Cathedral Choir from England, with organ solos provided by the Danish jury member Bine Bryndorf.



The choir follows the traditional English pattern, with the soprano line sung by boy trebles, and the alto line sung by counter tenors.

The unique sound cannot be compared with any continental choral aesthetic. The choir of Canterbury Cathedral justified their reputation, effortlessly filling the



great St Laurenskerk. The 500 visitors experienced goosebumps on several occasions. One of the highlights was the performance of Allegri's Miserere during which the separate quartet of two boys

and two men admirably achieved the famous high 'c' s. The energetic Bach playing of Bine Bryndorf recalled memories of that other great lady of the organ, Marie Claire Alain: full of vitality, clarity, and with a rare feminine touch. This fabulous concert began with the official opening of the festival, the formalities performed by the mayor Piet Bruinooge, and was attended by 510 people.



Sunday 21 June

On Sunday 21 June, the Bach weekend continued with a lunch concert by the former organist of the Freiberg Dom, Dietrich Wagler. His concert featured music by various pupils of Bach, and was performed with craftsmanship and discipline. This was followed by two lectures given by members of the jury. Wagler himself spoke about his lifelong experiences with the organs of Gottfried Silbermann, while Bine Bryndorf discussed Bach's 18 Leipzig Chorales, which were to be performed in their entirety that evening. The lectures were attended by a highly attentive audience including the 20 participants of the Organ Academy.

Chamber Music

The intimate Lutheran Church provided the setting for a concert at 4pm devoted to Bach's chamber music. Violinist Annegret Siedel performed a sonata with harpsichord and also gave a convincing performance of the highly difficult Ciaccona for solo violin. The Alkmaar organists Frank van Wijk and Pieter van Dijk showed their talents for playing the harpsichord, performing a double concerto by J.S. Bach. The afternoon programme was attended by around 145 visitors.

Evening concert

The evening concert combined Bach's 18 Leipzig Chorales with the talents of three Dutch organists. Jury member Theo Jellema was joined by the Alkmaar organist Frank van Wijk and the city organist Pieter van Dijk. The audience were fortunate to experience an interesting contrast in approaches to the Alkmaar organ, while the competition and academy participants were able to experience many of the countless registration possibilities offered by the Van Hagerbeer/Schnitger organ. This concert, which attracted 110 visitors, concluded the first weekend of the festival.

DURING THE WEEK.....

Jury Concerts

The two jury concerts during the festival week took place on Monday the 22nd and Wednesday the 24th of June. The first concert was performed by Reinhard Jaud and Paolo Crivellaro. Jaud performed European music of the 16th century on the Van Covelens organ, while Crivellaro played music by Bach and Buxtehude on the Van Hagerbeer/Schnitger organ. The second concert was performed by Bine Bryndorf and Theo Jellema and featured early music on both organs, as well as a contemporary Te Deum by the Swiss composer Franz Rechsteiner. Both concerts attracted around 180 visitors.

Tuesday 23 June

Competition – second round

The second round of the competition took place on Tuesday 23 June and featured the Van Covelens organ. The six remaining participants (Boos, Choi, Gritter, Jacobs, Unger and Tomadin) had almost all chosen to perform the Sweelinck 'Hexachord' Fantasia. However, the technical difficulties inherent in the same composer's Pavana Hispanica had, in general, been somewhat underestimated. Three of the candidates had chosen to perform 'Spiegel' by B. Focroulle, written for the Van Covelens organ for the competition in 2005. Two further participants chose P. Planyavsky's Partita and one candidate performed the Batalha by J. Verdin. Once again, the exceptional 'Spiegel' impressed when compared with the other contemporary compositions. The three finalists were named as the Belgian Bart Jacobs, the Canadian Michael Unger and the Dutch/Austrian David Boos.



Thursday 25 June

Youth concert “Duet / Duel”

As was the case in 2007, Orgelfestival Holland 2009 featured a special concert designed to



introduce young people to Alkmaar’s organ treasures. Artiance, The Alkmaar Arts Centre, organised this evening in co-operation with the organist Wijnand van Klaveren. The programme took as its title ‘Duet / Duel’ and included a multi-disciplinary performance based on the theme “Everyone is searching. Have you found your soulmate yet?” - freely adapted from Plato. A spectacular production with music for organ, choir and various other instruments, was alternated with theatre and dance. Van Klaveren provided organ improvisations combining all the musical themes heard during the evening, as well as contemporary choral music by the Alkmaar composer Alexander Comitas. The concert was attended by



520 people, primarily young people from Alkmaar who experienced an exciting musical adventure!

Friday 26 June

Competition – Finale

The final round of the organ competition took place on Friday 26 June. The candidates all performed the Bach Passacaglia in c, and, in addition, a trio sonata of their choice. The first participant chose the sixth sonata. The playing was rather uneven, certainly in comparison to his performances in the previous rounds. In general, this candidate played to a high level. The second candidate performed the fifth trio sonata. Unfortunately, his playing was disturbed by too many mistakes, rather upsetting the musical projection. His most convincing playing came during the closing fugue of the Passacaglia. The best playing during the final came from candidate no 3 whose performance of the fourth sonata was calm and persuasive. His Passacaglia was also consistent and even.



The third candidate, Michael Unger won the audience prize. The points of the jury, from which an average was calculated based on three rounds, led to the first prize being awarded to Bart Jacobs. Michael Unger won the second prize, and David Boos the third.

As a consequence of their appearance in the final, all three candidates have automatically qualified for the competition in 2011, which will be organised in co-operation with fellow members of the ECHO organisation Freiberg (Germany) and Innsbruck (Austria). In 2011, the finalists from all three competitions will compete for the first Grand Prix d'ECHO (=European Cities of Historical Organs). For more information, please visit www.echo-organs.org.

The first prize, the 'Rabobank Cultuurprijs', worth € 5.000,- was awarded to Bart Jacobs by Mr Marco Janmaat of the Rabobank in Alkmaar. The second prize, the Flentrop award worth € 2.500,- was awarded to Michel Unger by Mrs Erica Hoorn of Flentrop Orgelbouw b.v.

SWEELINCK WEEKEND

The closing weekend of the festival was dedicated to the music of the so-called 'Orpheus of Amsterdam', Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck. The sixteenth century Van Covelens organ took centre stage. Sweelinck himself played two organs in the Oude Kerk in Amsterdam which had been built by a student of Van Covelens, Hendrick Niehoff.

Saturday 27 June

Carillon



At midday, the new city carillonneur Christiaan Winter opened the Sweelinck weekend with a performance of music by Sweelinck and Van Eyck on the carillon of the Grote Kerk. Thereafter it was the turn of the academy participants to perform a lunch concert on both organs of the Grote Kerk.



Chamber Music

During the afternoon, a chamber music concert was performed by Satoshi Mizukoshi, tenor, Elina Keijzer, recorder and Frank van Wijk, harpsichord. The programme consisted of Dutch music by Van Eyck, Sweelinck, Huygens, Van Noordt and the Alkmaar composer De Fesch, allowing the audience a good impression of the extraordinary level of composition in the Netherlands at the time.

The evening concert presented a cross-section of Sweelinck's multi-faceted vocal oeuvre, performed by the Camerata Oude Kerk directed by Henk Verhoef. Austrian jury member Reinhard Jaud contributed works by Sweelinck's central European colleagues Hassler and Erbach, music in which he has specialised. Saturday's events attracted 145 visitors.

Sunday 28 June

Lunch concerts and lectures

The programme for Sunday 28 June opened with a lunch concert performed by Paolo Crivellaro on both organs, taking as its theme the Seconda Prattica. The music of Giovanni de Macque provided an example of early 17th century modernism. Jury member Crivellaro demonstrated his feeling for timing and subtle articulation throughout the recital. The afternoon programme included three lectures by, respectively, Paolo Crivellaro, Erik Winkel (assistant director of Flentrop Orgelbouw) and Jurjen Vis (historian). Crivellaro's lecture dealt primarily with the Seconda Prattica and the Stylus fantasticus, and the inherent consequences for performance. Winkel discussed the restoration of the Van Covelens organ, and the knowledge gained as a result. Jurjen Vis, a former resident of Alkmaar, cast new light on the relationship between Sweelinck and Alkmaar.

Closing concert

The concluding evening concert by the vocal ensemble Cantus Modalis, directed by Rebecca Stewart and featuring city organist Pieter van Dijk, allowed the audience to experience how the Van Covelens organ functioned in the period when the Laurenskerk was still Roman Catholic. A mass by Heinrich Isaac was performed in alternatim with organ verses by Hans Buchner. Many of the audience acknowledged the 'time-machine' aspect of the concert, as they were transported back to the 16th century. One of the festival's most loyal visitors spoke on behalf of the public at the conclusion of the concert, and expressed his appreciation of the festival. The final Sunday was attended by 175 Sweelinck-fans.

ORGAN ACADEMY

In addition to the organ competition and the various concerts, the festival also featured its traditional organ academy. Under the direction of the Alkmaar organists Frank van Wijk and Pieter van Dijk, and the members of the jury, workshops were given on the organs of the Grote Kerk, the Kapelkerk, the Grote Kerk in Beverwijk and the Ter Coulsterkerk in Heiloo.

Around 20 participants from various countries attended the academy, ranging from amateurs, organ students, eliminated competition participants and professional organists. Four Russian participants, students at the conservatories of Moscow and St Petersburg, were able to

attend thanks to the generosity of the Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds. The participants were well-prepared and highly interested both in the historic instruments, and the chance to work with the teachers. Their work was showcased during the participants' concert on 27 June.



MARKETING & PUBLICITY

In order to generate as much public attention as possible, and to achieve our goal of attracting 3000 visitors to the festival, the foundation co-ordinated a considerable marketing and



publicity campaign. Long before the opening of the festival, advertisements were placed in national and international organ magazines, and both English and Dutch language brochures were enclosed as inserts, as well as being sent to conservatories all over the world. The English language brochure was made possible thanks to generous financial support from the Alkmaar Town Council. In addition, we are very grateful to our media partners The Noordhollands Dagblad and the international magazine Choir & Organ, for the publicity they generated. All of the Dutch language organ magazines covered our festival, and we also placed advertisements in the national newspapers. Prior to the festival, posters were placed at key locations

in Alkmaar, while the Noordhollands Dagblad published 14 four, or five column advertisements. In addition, articles appeared in various national newspapers, as well as in a large number of regional newspapers.



The television stations RTV Noord-Holland and RTV Alkmaar also dedicated broadcasts to Orgelfestival 2009.



The co-operation with the Alkmaar Walking Festival, which concluded on Saturday 20 June, and with the Stichting Draaiorgelvrienden, who, on the same day, provided the fairground organs, was especially gratifying. We were also grateful for the publicity afforded us by the cheese market on Friday 19 June. The informative and richly illustrated programme book proved to be a much appreciated guide and souvenir for the festival's visitors. It included the biographies of the jury members, competition participants, performers, ensembles, as well as a description of the organs in Alkmaar.

Sponsors, subsidisers and media partners

A festival such as the International Schnitger Orgelfestival cannot be organised without financial support. The festival committee spent much time and energy sourcing the necessary funding and would like to take this opportunity to express its gratitude for the generous support provided by the organisations listed below. Thanks to them, "Orgelfestival Holland 2009" reached its target of attracting at least 3000 visitors, and was able to achieve a positive financial result.



Volunteers

The success of our festival is not only determined by the level of financial support it receives, but also by the activities of its many volunteers. In this context we would especially like to mention the staff and volunteers of the Grote St. Laurenskerk and the Friends of the Organ (Vrienden van het Orgel) organisation.

The committee of the Stichting Internationaal Schnitger Orgelconcours

Our foundation is a non-profit organisation, and all committee members work on a volunteer basis in order to ensure the festival's success. Their only reward is the championing of the Alkmaar organ culture through its exposure to as wide an audience as possible. The organising of the festival is entirely the work of the Schnitger committee and the foundation's volunteers. The organisation costs account for less than 6% of the total budget, as a result of which virtually all subsidies and sponsoring is channelled directly into the cultural goals of the festival.

The committee members:

Wim van der Ham, chairman

Frans Seijdell, secretary

Paul Stoop, treasurer

Pieter van Dijk, artistic committee

Frank van Wijk, artistic committee

Chris Bragg

Erica Hoorn

Hans Kelder

Henk Pruis

More information

All information regarding the activities of the Stichting Internationaal Schnitger Orgelconcours can be found on the website: www.alkmaarorgelstad.nl

Alkmaar, October 2009