

Leen 't Hart

Concert Tour and Masterclasses in Australia - 1979

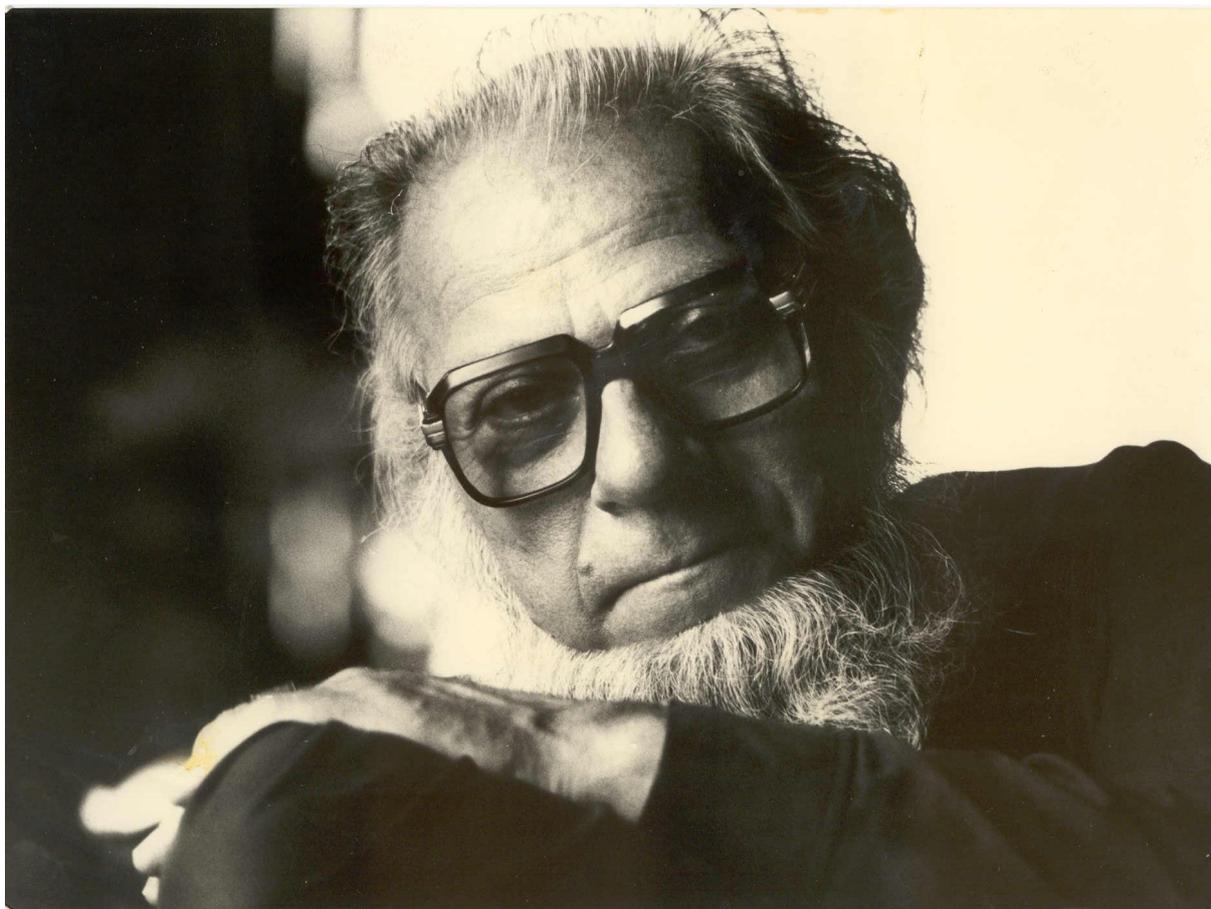
Note by the editor

Leen 't Hart reported twice a year, in person, to the Board of the Dutch Carillon School where he was the director. Besides the required school report, he also reported about his activities abroad.

In 1979 he made concert tours to Australia, Spain and the United States of America. In his archives I found copies of these reports.

't Hart was a fascinating storyteller, although the board held the view that the reports could be somewhat shorter. Here below is the report of the trip to Australia that took place during the Easter holiday season of 1979. 't Hart presented his report to the autumn meeting of the Board.

Editor: Laura Meilink-Hoedemaker



Leen 't Hart in 1981

Leen 't Hart Writes:

Personal relations can sometimes take you far from home. This became evident after the invitation from the University of Sydney, Australia, for me to present a number of recitals and master classes in 1979. I have already mentioned them in my previous report (Spring 1979).

On Saturday 7 April:

At 9.40 am my wife and I left Amsterdam Airport Schiphol in a Qantas Boeing 747 flight to Australia. Travel time is 24 hours. There were two stops, one in Bahrain and one in Singapore. Both locations were very hot with the humidity in Singapore being very high.

We arrived in Sydney on Monday morning, 9 April at 6.45 am. John Gordon, the carillonneur of the University of Sydney, met us at the airport and transported us to

the motel. John, and his wife Val, attended the WCF Congress of Amersfoort in 1978 and stayed with Mrs. Nel Werff, the secretary of our Board. In the evening we paid a short visit to the University.



John Gordon, carillonneur of Sydney University

On Tuesday 11 April:

The official part of our stay began, and it was, as my wife always says, "fetch and carry".

During the morning there was an interview and carillon recordings provided for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC). Then the first recital on the carillon from 1:00 pm - 1.45 pm. At half past three an "Afternoon Tea" at the home of the Dutch Consul Van Straaten. There were some other prominent Dutch people in attendance. An interview followed, for the Dutch program of the ABC, with a professor who is a senior lecturer at the University. In the evening we attended a big party with the Gordons at their home. Many guests were present, with most of them being connected to the university. Even the Vice-Chancellor was present and gave a long but humorous speech.

Wednesday morning 12 April:

Wednesday was reserved for sightseeing. Amongst other things, we visited the fabulous Sydney Opera House, a real landmark when approaching Sydney from the water.



Sydney Opera House - wikipedia

Consul Van Straaten had asked me to visit the Consulate at Bridge Street. There it became known that the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs had paid Dfl 4000 for my visit to Australia. This was a windfall for the Sydney University because I had not claimed a fee for my visit, only travel costs and lodging expenses for my wife and myself.

In the evening I gave a second recital for which there was a very big audience. Radio recordings were made of this concert. The Quadrangle of the University is a splendid listening place. You can sit on the grass or there is a roofed promenade where seats are provided. Obviously no traffic, so an ideal listening place.



*The Main Quadrangle in its complete form as seen today - wikipedia
In the centre the carillon tower.*

The carillon was built by the English bellfounder John Taylor and the big bells are very fine. It was inaugurated in 1928. In 1973 some smaller bells were recast. Invitations for playing there were issued from that time on. Nowadays there is a total of 54 bells equalling four and a half octaves. The lowest bell is a G of some 4 1/2 ton. The keyboard is very beautifully finished and plays absolute noiselessly. John Gordon has played this carillon since 1932! He was officially appointed in 1944.

Thursday 13 April:

On receiving an invitation from its Director, we visited the Conservatorium of Music. This is very well equipped Conservatorium. I had an interesting discussion, with one of the piano-tuners for the conservatorium, about several methods of tuning. He proved to be very well aware of tunings other than equal temperament. In the afternoon we were 'free' and so we paid a visit to the Botanical Gardens. Taking pictures of exotic flowers is a hobby of mine.



Sydney botanical gardens - wikipedia

Friday 14 April:

This was Good Friday and we attended an officially planned 'bush-picnic'. Travelling by car we left Sydney for the bush. We walked around the area for some time enjoying splendid views over the Bay area. We had a barbecue in the bush where several barbecues built of stone are to be found. You gather dry wood and sticks, light your own fire and roast your own hamburgers, hot dogs and sweet corn etc.

Saturday morning 15 April:

We made a trip by Hydrofoil (Hovercraft) to the peninsula of Manly. Manly was very crowded and tourist oriented. Many inhabitants of Sydney (Sydney has a population of 2.000.000 people) make this 15-minute crossing. We sailed back by ferry, which

takes half an hour. The weather was splendid every day. The season was autumn, but with temperatures of 23 - 27 degrees Celsius. The autumn tonings of the trees were splendid, much like the 'Indian Summer' in the USA.

During the afternoon I presented another recital at the University carillon. A reasonable amount of listeners attended, but somewhat less than the other days because many people left the city over the Easter break. After the recital however, many people came to the cabin, as well as those collecting signatures.

Indeed you are able to meet people at the keyboard. The keyboard is located in a room, carpeted and about 20 x 20 meters in size. It has a bay window at the front. A very good practice keyboard is installed in this room. I told the people about the carillon in general and also about the Amersfoort Carillon and the Dutch Carillon School. There was also an elderly man, who had spent his youth in Delft, my native-city. He brought newspaper clippings from Dutch journals printed some years ago. The clippings were articles about me. There seem to be many people like that, and there seem to be even more of them in Delft.

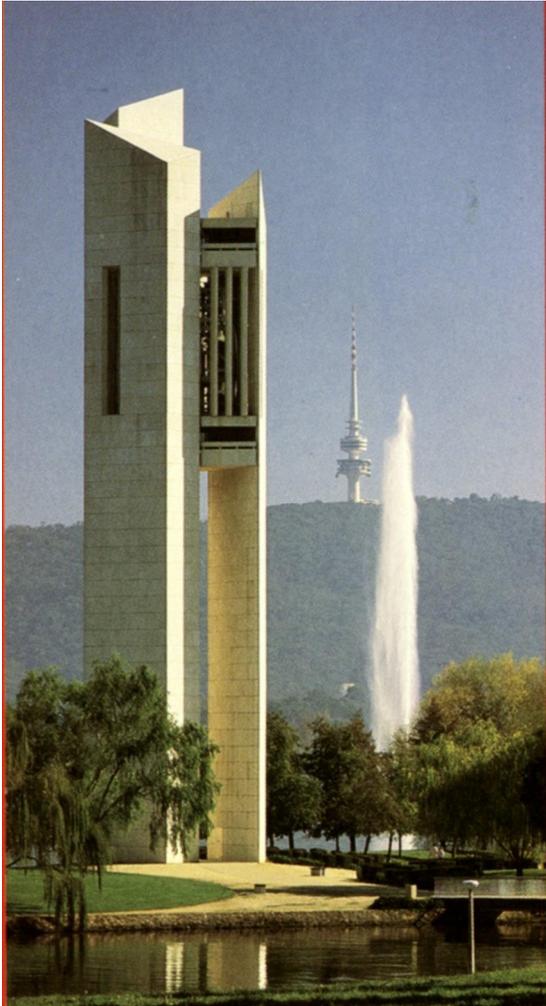
On Easter Sunday, 15 April:

We flew to Canberra which is the capital city of Australia. Canberra has the same status as Washington D.C., the country's capital. We were hosted in Canberra by the government and we had the use of a car with a driver courtesy of The Australian Capital Territory. After lunch we went to the tower where my former student John Barrett welcomed us with a composition written by John Douglas Gordon and called *Welcome to Leen 't Hart*.

Canberra, founded in 1913, is a very nicely designed city. In 1963, at the occasion of the city's 50th birthday, the British Government donated a carillon to Canberra. At the carillon you can read: *'During the 1970 Royal visit the Queen, as Queen of Australia, accepted on behalf of her Australian people the Carillon and declared it open'*.

The carillon here has 53 bells - 4 1/2 octaves. The lowest bell is an F# weighing around 6 ton. Again, excellent bass-bells, a good middle register and small bells of good quality. So small bells do not only come from Aarle Rixtel (Petit and Fritsen) and Asten (Eijsbouts), and, not to be chauvinistic, from Annecy le Vieux in France (Paccard).

In the afternoon I presented a recital to a very large audience. Here too, the carillon is placed in an ideal situation. It is an especially designed tower on an island in Lake Burley Griffin. It has a bridge connected to the main land where a parking lot is. There is no traffic on the island itself. The playing cabin is not as big as in Sydney, but there are cupboards and a toilet along with a shower recess. Here too, there is an excellent keyboard and practice keyboard. The Canberra keyboard is special because the wood originates from a 100 year old oakwooden beam from the original Taylor Bellfoundry. (Some years ago the Taylor Bellfoundry was closed. There is now a new director, Alan P.S. Berry, who acts as a manager for the Bellfoundry. After the recital, coffee, tea and soft drinks were served with all kinds of delicious bites provided by John Barrett's students.



Canberra carillon tower

[Easter Monday: no report]

Tuesday morning 17 April:

Our chauffeur was ordered to show us Canberra for which I think he is especially educated. What he told us about the city and the buildings was amazing! We paid a visit to the Australian War Memorial which has a marvellous memorial room with a big Cupola, a mosaic of very small pieces of stone. We also paid a visit to the National Library with its beautiful stained glass windows and three very large tapestries, which were especially designed and produced for the Library.



Canberra National Library - wikipedia

At 12.30 we went to the house of the Dutch Ambassador in Australia, His Excellency Mr Schiff. A very pleasant reception, first a lunch in an intimidating style with waiters to look after the guests. But Mrs Schiff, my partner at the table, was a very charming woman and soon we were comfortable with more than enough topics of conversation. We spoke about Australia, and in particular Canberra, the Netherlands, Amersfoort and the carillon school. My wife was seated next to Mr Schiff at the other end of the table and amused herself very well. The problem is that throughout all of this "small talk", one could easily forget of the quality of the meat and wine etc.

Because a number of the guests spoke English exclusively, we had to converse in that language. The spoken English here has a special accent. I could almost say: somewhat coarse or vulgar. We did our utmost to enunciate English as well as possible. My wife succeeds better at this than me. I speak with an American accent apart from the Dutch accent of course. Just like in the US some objects have totally different names. When we speak of the trunk of a car, the Australians call that a boot. Never speak to a lady about a 'douche' but ask for a 'shower'. A ladies bag in England is in America a pocketbook.

When leaving we both received, a compliment from the ambassador for our behaviour towards the press, radio, TV and the Australians in general. It caused us to almost blush. Embassy Consul Kasteel told us that the broadcasting of the interview and carillon recordings in Canberra was excellently 'received', in both meanings of the word.

During the afternoon of 17 April I gave a masterclass. The level is not high. Two students are interested in coming to Amersfoort, Paul Innes and Suzanne Magassy. I advised them to first study another couple of years with John Barrett. Suzanne has recently finished my book 'Carillon Playing'. Paul, not even that. They may, if they want, send me a cassette recording of their carillon playing. I can return that with some comment. In the evening there was a party at the Innes' home until very late.

The picture below was kindly provided by Suzanne Magassy. It shows young Magassy, taught by 't Hart.



Wednesday 18 April:

After breakfast (where we stayed had 'chic' breakfast roomservice) I went to the tower to teach John Barrett. He had prepared several works and wanted to demonstrate them. He still aims to work for the Final Diploma, after completing his Practical Diploma.

Then, from 12.45 till 13.30, I played a recital, which was attended, in the playing cabin, by the Ambassador Schiff and his wife, and Embassy Consul Kasteel and wife. It happens so seldom that our diplomatic representatives are so interested. I remember such only from Mr. and Mrs. Bot, Ambassador in Ottawa, Canada, now retired; and in the Hague, the Minister of education. But I wander from my subject.

At this concert there were again many listeners; and during the concert TV recordings were made which were not announced beforehand. You are surprised when during playing a camera suddenly pops up near your face for a close up. Just as I finished my programme, three buses of school children arrived. A quick improvisation on 'Twinkle, twinkle little star' was rewarded with an enormous burst of cheers and applause.

That afternoon our driver was ordered to show us more of the countryside. We made a tour through the bushland, several miles out of Canberra. We visited an historic country-house where we were expected. We observed many Kangaroos and emus in natural surroundings.



Canberra in autumn colors

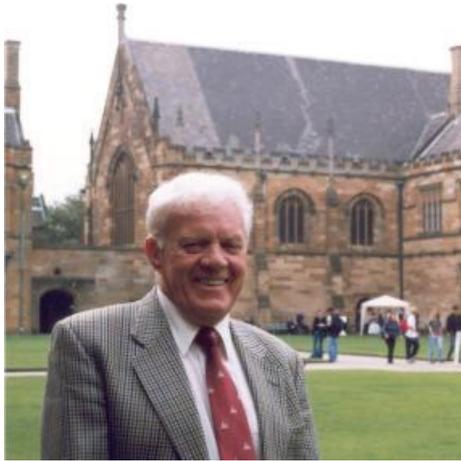
At five o'clock we returned to the city hall for a reception. It was not the Mayor or a Lord Mayor, but the 'City Manager', Mr Gillespie. It was Cocktail time, a mixed company of Dutch and Australian people. A speech, by the City Manager, with a terrible title, concluded with a 'Please, come back'. In my reply I stated, amongst other things, that Australia has a certified carillonneur in the person of John Barrett, who in fact should conduct a course at the Canberra School of Music.

John Gordon had arrived in Canberra as well. He had travelled from Sydney by car to attend my concerts and then to drive us back to Sydney in order that we should see some more of Australia.

Thursday 19 April:

We checked out of the hotel and it was very convenient to only have to sign my signature on such an enormous account. The girl at the desk said: *Sir, I saw you last night on TV, it was marvellous!*

The drive from Canberra to Sydney is truly interesting. There is not much traffic and it took about 7 hours. In the evening we had dinner with Dr. Reginald Walker who is a surgeon and plays the carillon. He lives in a house into which ours will fit three times.



Dr Reginald Walker

Friday 20 April:

An official photograph for the Australian Information Service was taken. The masterclass in Sydney too, had no really brilliant students. This is a pity because John Gordon is not so young and will need a successor in the near future. I gave another recital that evening at 8 pm. Again a large audience. After the concert, you can guess, a party!

Saturday 21 April:

We were invited to attend the graduation ceremonies in the University Chapel. Doctorates were presented, and even an honorary doctorate to one of the Ministers. Everything was very official and very British. Before the ceremony I played the University carillon.

My last concert in Sydney was at 3.00 pm. Again a lot of listeners. After the concert many people gathered around the keyboard and there were Radio-interviews in English and Dutch. I was requested to play on the carillon the tune of the *Dutch Emission* for the ABC. The melody is a very popular and vulgar Dutch song *en dat we toffe jongens zijn, dat willen we weten*.

In the evening we attended a concert by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra in the Opera House. What an extraordinary big building and what excellent acoustics.

Sunday 22 April: Flight back to Netherland by Qantas.

Well I should say, that was more of a travel-story. But in my opinion these travels result in enormous goodwill for the carillon art, especially through the interest of the media. It is also clear when reading a letter from Australia: *You made a big impact on our carillon community, not only for your lovely carillon music, but for yourselves too.* I received a letter from John Gordon with the agreeable announcement that the Canberra School of Music will implement a carillon course. It is moving in the right direction. The 12 copies of my book *Carillon Playing* that I had carried with me will soon render service.

John Gordon wrote to me about another good result - the University will invite a guest carillonneur in 1980. John has invited Hudson Ladd for that. Ladd is carillonneur of Michigan University in Ann Arbor USA. Moreover John writes: *I hope we will meet again. When you retire, please retire to Sydney.* Altogether this was a well spent Easter holiday.

Postludium 1992

Based upon personal communication by Leen't Hart in 1992

- The tour in Australia was paid for by the University of Sydney. But after the tour 't Hart got a check of Dfl 4000. He donated this money to the University. He never heard how this amount of money was used for if it ever was.
- Upon arrival in Sydney the 't Harts took a taxi to the hotel. It was a journey of one hour. The return journey, from hotel to airport, took 10 minutes only. This is in contrast with what 't Hart says in this diary: He was seen at Sydney airport by John Gordon. Did Gordon transport the 't Harts to the hotel? Or did the three of them hire the taxi.



Rie and Leen 't Hart with Suzanne Magassy - 1986 Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA - Leen 't Hart collection