

In search of 'the voice of the city'

Programmes and reviews of carillon concerts at Rotterdam City Hall in the summer of 1957
Presentation to the Congress of the World Carillon Federation – Oslo 2004

by

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Definition of location, time and subject

The theme of this congress is 'the voice of the city'. Within the context of Dutch carillon art I have looked for a way of hanging a story onto the 'peg' thus provided. I have sharply defined the location, period and subject. Rotterdam is my place of action. I have defined the period arbitrarily by using the results of earlier studies of the carillonneur Leen 't Hart. As he started as the city carillonneur of Rotterdam in 1957 I have focussed upon the year 1957. Leen 't Hart (1922-1992) was a key figure in the carillon world of 1957. When he began his duties in Rotterdam he had previously been appointed city carillonneur in Delft (1943), Leiden (1951) and Amersfoort (1953). Moreover, he had been the director of the Dutch Carillon School in Amersfoort since its foundation in 1953.

Nowadays in Rotterdam we have carillons in the towers of the Laurens church, the City Hall, the Erasmus University and in Delfshaven, but in 1957 there was only one carillon available, that of the City Hall, a 4-octave carillon made by Petit & Fritsen, dating from 1948.

But now back to 'the voice of the city', the subject of this presentation. What kind of a voice is it? Does the carillon speak to the city or does the city react to the carillon? I will call upon both voices, defining my subject as 'programmes and reviews of carillon concerts in Rotterdam 1957'.



Leen 't Hart at the keyboard at Rotterdam City Hall - 1957

Compiling and analysing reviews

I was able to derive the voice of the carillon from the programme booklets for the summer evening carillon recitals of Rotterdam City Hall, which from the year 1951 onwards were published. These booklets were distributed at the carillon concerts and served as free entrance tickets.



Cover of the programme booklet - 1957

The reaction of the city is recorded in newspaper reviews, which reflect the listener's appreciation. In Leen 't Hart's personal records I came across a batch of reviews of carillon concerts in Rotterdam, supplied to him by the Municipal Council's newspaper cuttings office. The reviews cover the period 1953-1959 and they are pasted on forms with stamped dates. But the dates are not always clearly legible. For the year 1957 there are 22 cuttings, from 8 different newspapers, relating to 8 concerts performed by Leen 't Hart. I was able to date these clippings with the help of the concert programmes, Leen 't Hart's scrapbooks were another source of reviews. There are 10 scrapbooks with newspaper cuttings, including reviews. Leen 't Hart pasted the first three books himself, I compiled the other seven books for him, shortly before his death in 1992.

Unfortunately 't Hart did not always note the origin and the date of the reviews and he pasted some reviews in the open spaces between older cuttings. I was able to date these reviews as well, with the help of the published programmes.

For the year 1957 Leen 't Hart's scrapbook shows 14 reviews in four different newspapers. Five of these 14 reviews were also present in the collection of the municipal cuttings office. There was something striking about the reviews compiled by Leen 't Hart, both in the cuttings service batch and in his scrapbooks. They all concerned his own performances only. With the exception of one, he had no reviews of the other concerts.

Classific.: _____	Dot.: 28 JUNI 1957
Bron: _____	Trouw

Leen 't Hart speelde nieuw werk voor de beiaard

LEEN 't HART weet zijn programma's voor de toernooispanoed-bespeelingen van de stadhuisbeiaard altijd aantrekkelijk samen te stellen. Hij kan zich dan ook een ruime keuze der uit te voeren werken veroorlooven, omdat zijn uitmuntend spel, dat zich kenmerkt door een groot technisch vernogen, een veelzijdig pedifferenteleerd toucher en een brede muzikaliteit, hem geen zekere beperking in dat opzicht oplegt.

Woensdag nam voerde hij als pike de resistance om te beginnen de door Jan van Dijk in opdracht van het Departement voor O.K. en W. geschreven „Tocata voor de beiaard“ uit, een muzikaal krachtig, lichtvochtig en met vaak gecomponeerd werk, dat mogelijke aantrekkelijke yondst bevat en geheel vanuit het karakter van het instrument klankgestalte kreeg. Derhalve een aantrekkelijke aanvult voor de carillonliteratuur, hetgeen onderwil eveneens kan worden gezegd van 't Hart's eigen compositie: Inleiding, Lied en Fuga „Wie dat zichzelf verheft tenel“, en zeer doorsichtige klank bezit, qua vorm en inhoud een compositorische evenwichtigheid toont, en uiteraard brillant voor de beiaard is geschreven.

Beschreef het Prædium in G van Jef. Daarbij eveneens een aantrekkelijk oorspronkelijk stuk voor de klokken, bracht 't Hart verder nog een aantal „gebruikelijke“ volksliedjes, (overigens een prettige en gezellige afwisseling in een beiaard-programma) benevens verschillende kleine en bekende composities in betrekking tot geluise, en besloot zijn bespeeling met een zeer knappe improvisatie, waaraan hij zich evenals trouw

was in al de reeds gezamde werken, waar een musicus van formaat toonda.
A. I.

E. D. 3 1800 D 56

26 juni 1957

BUREAU VOORLICHTING EN PUBLICITEIT
STADHUIS KAMER 221, TELEF. 1 81 300 (Trouw 217)

Review of a carillon concert – Rotterdam City Hall

Elly Salomé is the only critic still alive. I know her in person and paid her a visit. She told me about how reviewing was carried out in Rotterdam. Reviewing originated in the newspapers. The critics submitted their reviews to the papers but they were only paid if the review was printed. A group of reporters visited a variety of concerts in Rotterdam. They all had their own field of interest and reviewed for their own newspaper.

The critics were seated in the courtyard of the City Hall, somewhat apart from the audience. They did not exchange opinions about the concerts. When a critic was unable to attend, a colleague took over his task, writing two reviews in different versions and under two different names, his own and the initials A.I. which stands for Ad Interim.

When the weather was bad Elly Salomé stayed in her car, parked on the nearby street named Coolsingel, and listened through the open window of her car. Elly Salomé was very precise. She had compiled her own reviews in scrapbooks and she gave every review two dates, one for the concert and one for the day it appeared in the newspaper.

Table: Eight newspapers and their critics

Newspaper	Critic
Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad	G.M. Dersjant en L. de Q.
Het Vrije Volk	Eugène Eberlé en Rien Ouwerkerk
Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant	Alex van Amerongen
De Maasbode	Bernard Geise.
De Rotterdammer	Van der Does and Van der Born
Het Rotterdamsch Parool	Elly Salomé
Trouw	A.I. = Ad Interim
De Tijd	Chris van Raay

Further research in newspapers

In 1957 Elly Salomé reviewed six carillon concerts, some of them performed by guest carillonners. This is what first gave me the idea of compiling the reviews of all 17 concerts in Rotterdam in the summer season of 1957.

Of course the most important source of these reviews are the original newspapers. Although in 1957 there were reviews in 8 different newspapers, the Municipal Archives of Rotterdam provided only four of them. The Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant, The Rotterdammer, Het Vrije Volk, and the Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad. I have screened the editions of the four summer months. I was pleasantly surprised to find an almost complete series of reviews in the Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad.

The cutting office, the scrapbooks and the newspapers resulted in 50 different reviews of the 17 concerts as published in the programme booklet.

22 reviews from the Municipal Cutting Service

14 reviews in the scrapbooks belonging to Leen 't Hart

6 reviews in the scrapbooks belonging to Elly Salomé

19 hitherto unknown reviews in the newspaper collection of the Municipal Archives.

Analysis

After selection of the subject and the compilation of reviews, several questions arose.

1. How was the series of concerts set up?
2. Who were the 8 guest carillonners?
3. How were the programmes compiled?
4. How was the compilation of the programmes rated?
5. How was the performance rated?
6. Which information is derived exclusively from the reviews?

Results

The concerts are 'the voice of the city', reflecting the theme of this congress. The first three questions could easily be answered with the help of the programme booklet. The answers to the last three questions are found in the reviews. In my view these answers are a characteristic 'voice of the city'.

Question 1: How was the series of concerts set up?

By studying the programme booklets I was able to obtain the names of the other carillonners and their programmes. In 1957 there were 17 concerts on Wednesday evenings in June, July, August and September. Leen 't Hart performed 9 of these concerts, more or less alternating with guest recitalists. All the guest recitalists were male. They originated from Leen 't Hart's network: former fellow students in Mechelen and pupils from the recently founded carillon school in Amersfoort. Leen 't Hart's approach in his first year of office in Rotterdam corresponds with that of his predecessor Ferdinand Timmermans in the previous year of 1956.

Question 2: Who were the eight guest recitalists?

The carillonners are presented in order of their year of graduation. Ferdinand Timmermans did not show up, due to illness. Cor Don performed in his place. Peter Bakker took over for Cor Don, in August.

Table: Leen 't Hart and his 8 guest carillonners

carillonners	year of birth - death	education	year of examination
Ferdinand Timmermans	1891-1965	Mechelen	1925
Leen 't Hart	1920-1992	Mechelen	1949
Gaston Van den Bergh	1924-1994	Mechelen	1949
Rien Ritter	1922-1991	Mechelen	1950
Jacques Lannoy	1934	Mechelen	1953
Chris Bos	1920-1996	The Netherlands	1954
Henk Herzog	1910-1975	Amersfoort	1956
Karel Borghuis	1927-1992	Amersfoort	1956
Peter Bakker	1923-1998	Amersfoort	1958
Cor Don	1913-1981	Mechelen & Amersfoort	1960

Question 3: How were the programmes compiled?

The programming of all carillonners in 1957 can be classed as traditional. This is just as in 1956, Ferdinand Timmerman's last year in office. The programmes in general have a symmetrical build-up and are compiled in the style of Jef Denijn of Mechelen, in the beginning of the 20th century.

Opening
 Three solemn songs
 Three arrangements
 Original composition
 Three arrangements
 Original composition
 Three folk songs
 Finale, improvisation

Three programmes in 1957 in Rotterdam have a different structure. Jacques Lannoy performed a French flavoured repertoire, notwithstanding his professional education in Mechelen. On the recital of July 10, Leen 't Hart presented four compositions derived from a contest. On the final evening of the season the audience were allowed to make requests from 't Harts previous programmes. This was followed by tea and an informal talk by Leen 't Hart.

Question 4: How was the compilation of the programmes rated?

In the Netherlands reviews of carillon concerts have not been systematically compiled or analysed. The reviews reflect the 'other' voice of the city. The critics highly approved of original compositions, not only the familiar Flemish romantic repertoire, but also recent Dutch compositions.

Question 5: How was the performance rated?

From the reviews I have selected the following three components: technique, musical expression and improvisation, and assigned the following ratings.

+++ = excellent
 ++ = good
 + = satisfactory
 - = unsatisfactory
 -- = bad

n = no improvisation

Table: rating of the performance

Month	Day	Carillonneur	Technique	Musicality	Improvisation
Juni	5	Leen 't Hart	+++	+++	n
	12	Leen 't Hart	++	++	+++
	19	Cor Don	++	+	n
	26	Leen 't Hart	++	++	+++
Juli	3	Rien Ritter	++	++	+++
	10	Leen 't Hart	n	++	n
	17	Henk Herzog	++	++	+++
	24	Leen 't Hart	+++	+++	+++

	31	Jacques Lannoy	+++	++	n
Aug	7	Karel Borghuis	++	++	n
	14	Peter Bakker	+++	+++	n
	21	Leen 't Hart	+++	+++	n
	28	Gaston Van den Bergh	-	-	n
Sept	4	Leen 't Hart	++	+++	++
	11	Chris Bos	+++	+++	+++
	18	Leen 't Hart	+++	+++	+++
	25	Leen 't Hart	+++	+++	n

Henk Herzog had a difficult start but finished with a brilliant improvisation. Karel Borghuis needed to get used to the keyboard but very quickly regained control. The presentation of 4 new compositions on July 10th by Leen 't Hart was brilliant. The presentation by Gaston Van den Bergh of Mechelen is striking. In 8 of the 17 recitals there was an improvisation: five by Leen 't Hart of which four excellent and one good. The improvisations by Henk Herzog, Rien Ritter and Chris Bos were brilliant.

Question 6: How much information is derived exclusively from the reviews?

There is indeed exclusive information from the reviews.

6a The presentation of four new compositions on July 10

Leen 't Hart performed four compositions, submitted in 1956 in a contest, organised by the Rotterdam Carillon Committee. The assignment was a work for 4-octave carillon, with a playing time of 5 to 7 minutes in an optional musical format. The compositions had to be submitted under a motto. The judges graded the entries. The audience was not informed about this grading and they were allowed to give their own opinion after Leen 't Hart's performance. Among those who agreed with the judges a prize was drawn. But there was also a prize drawn among those who agreed with the choice of the audience as opposed to that of the judges.

The critics agreed with the judges as to which was the best composition, but they supposed the winning composition to be written by the old hand Wouter Paap. Surprisingly it turned out to be by the young composer Wim Franken.

The audience disagreed with the judges about the second place. They preferred Sjef van Balkom's Sonatine to Gerard Boedijn's Suite.

Table: The judges' and audience's grading of four compositions

Composer	Composition	Grading by the judges	Grading by the audience
Wim Franken	Prelude, Fantasie en Rondo	1	1
Gerard Boedijn	Archeologische Suite	2	3
Sjef van Balkom	Sonatine II	3	2
Wouter Paap	Suite voor beiaard	4	4

6b: Background on the weather and attendance figures

The reviews give some information about the weather, such as 'in spite of the bad weather'. When discussing the performance of Gaston van den Bergh the critics say that the audience left the courtyard before the end of the recital and certainly not because of the bad weather. The atmosphere in the City Hall courtyard is mentioned several times with approval. There is a lot of echo from the walls in the garden but on the other hand there is hardly any audible traffic noise. We could not establish a connection between the weather situation and attendance figures.

Table: The weather and attendance figures

Month	Day	Carillonneur	The weather	Attendance
Juni	5	Leen 't Hart	n	n
	12	Leen 't Hart	n	n
	19	Cor Don	n	n
	26	Leen 't Hart	n	n
Juli	3	Rien Ritter	n	quite a lot
	10	Leen 't Hart	n	appr. 40
	17	Henk Herzog	splendid summer	fair number
	24	Leen 't Hart	n	large amount, extra chairs were added
	31	Jacques Lannoy	mild summer	large amount, extra benches were added
Aug	7	Karel Borghuis	sombre	large amount, chairs were added
	14	Peter Bakker	n	n
	21	Leen 't Hart	n	n
	28	Gaston Van den Bergh	somewhat cool	n
Sept	4	Leen 't Hart	n	n
	11	Chris Bos	storm and rain	n
	18	Leen 't Hart	cold, chilly	quite a large number
	25	Leen 't Hart	bad weather	quite a large number

n = not mentioned

6c: Peter Bakker's first appearance

Without the reviews we should have missed Peter Bakker's first appearance in Rotterdam. Peter Bakker took over Cor Don's concert on August 14, as Don had to take over Ferdinand Timmerman's concert on June 19. We may assume that Peter Bakker had already received the invitation in June and had some 8 weeks to prepare. Peter Bakker was one of Leen 't Hart's students in Amersfoort where he did not graduate until 1958. According to the headlines in the newspapers he was a big surprise to the press:

Piet Bakker shows sound musicality in carillon playing
 Surprising first encounter with carillonneur Bakker
 Carillonneur P. Bakker underestimated the swift capacity of the city hall carillon

The third headline may sound negative, but it came out that, thanks to his virtuosity, Bakker played his recital within 45 minutes instead of the planned 60 minutes. He had to play four encores, which were well received by both the press and the audience.

6d: Reconstruction of the request programme on September 25

The favourites of the audience are mentioned in the reviews, so the programme could have been as below:

Rotterdam city anthem by J.B. van Krieken

Three traditional Dutch songs by among others Brandts Buys and Viotta.

Three arrangements of compositions by Grieg

Solvejgs Lied

Solvejgs Wiegenlied

Letzter Frühling

Original composition for the carillon

Wim Franken: Prelude, Fantasie en Rondeau

Four arrangements of classical compositions

Bach: Wohl mir das ich Jesum habe, Jesu joy of man's desiring

Mozart: Menuet from Eine kleine Nachtmusik

Beethoven: Für Elise

Schubert: Ständchen

Original composition

Sjef van Balkom: Tweede Sonatine

Three popular songs from abroad

Frankrijk: Au clair de la lune,

Schotland

not known

Dutch national anthem: Wilhelmus

Summary

I have interpreted the theme of this congress 'the voice of the city' in two ways: the voice of the city carillon and the voice of the people of the city. I have restricted my study to Rotterdam and 1957, the year in which city Carillonneur Leen 't Hart took office in Rotterdam.

I was able to reconstruct the voice of the carillon with the help of the published programmes. I was also able to discover the reaction of the city by investigating a compilation of reviews. This brings me to the following conclusions.

Conclusions

1. A traditional concert series was organized in Rotterdam in 1957 by city carillonneur Leen 't Hart, in his first year of office.
2. The city carillonneur performed most of the concerts himself.
3. Guest recitalists were recruited from the circles of professional education and tuition.
4. The concerts were compiled in the same way as in 1956 which was the final year in office of Leen 't Hart's predecessor Ferdinand Timmermans.
5. The programming of the recitals was traditional.
6. The reviews provide extra information about how the concerts were rated by critics and listeners.
7. The performances were of a very high quality.
8. The critics preferred original compositions to arrangements and popular songs.
9. Due to the illness of Ferdinand Timmermans in June Peter Bakker was able to make a surprising debut in August.
10. The entrances in a composition contest were brilliantly presented by Leen 't Hart and graded differently by the audience and judges.
11. The critics were greatly in favour of new compositions.

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