



Stichting Stadsorgel Haarlem "Het Kunkels Orgel"

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The foundation became active in 1956 and was formally established in 1962. Its goal was to repair the huge mechanical concert organ of the Kunkels firm (fairground operators) from Roermond. During the last war this organ suffered extensive damage. This restoration was solely done by volunteers in Haarlem and took about 10 years.

On October 5th, 1969, in an old shipyard building beside the recently filled in Werfstraat the finished organ was presented to the public, thus starting the organ museum. Since that day there have been organ recitals each Sunday afternoon as well as additional special events at other times. Over the years, the number of organs on permanent display has increased to 9. On most Sundays there is an extra organ present as a guest.

Due to urban renewal the museum in the Werfstraat had to close in December 2003. This led to the removal to our present building, Küppersweg 3 in Haarlem (in the industrial estate "Waarderpolder") where we are now continuing our activities.

Apart from the Sunday concerts there are often additional recitals on other days and times for pre-arranged visits by groups. Each year, on Whit-Monday, we organise one of the country's biggest street organ festivals (with more than 20 organs taking part) in the Rampart Park near the Haarlem railway station.

THE HISTORY OF THE MECHANICAL ORGAN

The mechanical organ has a long history. Even in the 18th century small organs were built into clocks and pieces of furniture. These instruments were not played by cardboard organbooks as we know today but by a wooden roll, on which the musical pattern was recorded by means of pins for the short notes, and bridges for the long notes. On a roll were 8 melodies, which could last no longer than the time taken to complete a revolution of the roll. To change a melody the roll was pushed a little bit sideways. The wooden rolls were called "cylinders" or "barrels", thus the name "cylinder organ" or "barrel organ".

While the musical furniture and clocks were powered by weights, in the 19th century small portable organs started to be produced which were hand cranked for the use of street musicians. These were especially popular in Germany. Often they were used to accompany the singing of the street musicians.

On the funfair, barrel organs started to be used from the 2nd half of the 19th century. These were of course bigger and a lot louder than the ones used in the street, as they had to compete with all the noise of the fairground, including the neighbouring organs.

In the Netherlands in 1875 Leon Warnies, who came from Belgium, founded the first organ rental company in Amsterdam. He bought instruments of high quality, hired them out to street musicians, took care of the skilled maintenance and made sure that every now and then new music patterns were arranged on the cylinders. The organs he bought (mostly from Germany) became bigger and more attractive to listen to and look at. At some time they reached the size that meant they were no longer possible to carry them around. Thus they were placed on wooden three wheeled carts.

The big revolution came in 1895 from Paris. The organ building company of Gavioli invented the cardboard organ book, a system that is still in use today. Gone were the limitations in the selection of music. Any length was now possible. The number of different melodies was only limited by the room available to store the books. This system of course led to bigger and more beautiful organs. From the early 1900s these were ordered from Paris, initially from the firm of Gasparini, and later from the firm of Limonaire.

Both the funfair and dancehalls started to make use of music which was provided by mechanical book organs. For these target areas the firms of Gavioli, Marengi and Limonaire produced special organs to fulfil their particular demands.

Also in Belgium the production of mechanical organs started to flourish. Factories like Fasano and DeVreese in Antwerp were outstripped in the number of organs built by Theophil Mortier and the Decap Brothers. These companies, especially after the 1st World War, saw their chance to make their organs very attractive. They employed large numbers of people to meet the orders.

Flanders is predominantly the country of dancehalls and cafes. So it is only natural that the organs that were built here were mainly dance organs. These were often placed in true "Dance Palaces" and the organs sometimes had huge dimensions. For the smaller cafes specially adapted instruments were produced.

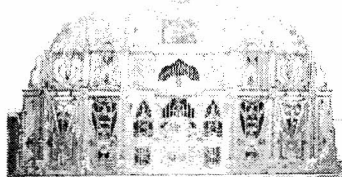
As well as in France, the production of fairground organs was established in Germany. In the Black Forest, particularly in Waldkirch, the art of organbuilding reached high standards. Firms like Ruth, Bruder, Richter, Wrede and Wellershaus built hundreds of fairground organs during the first three decades of the 20th century.

In the thirties, during the world wide economic crisis, most of the organ factories had to close their doors. Only two firms in Antwerp were able to go on, thanks to the changes they continuously made to keep their products attractive. Nowadays only one of those two, the Decap firm is still in existence.

In the Netherlands we had no organ-industry of our own until in 1920 Carl Frei settled in Breda. He originated from Waldkirch where he was taught the art of organbuilding by Wilhelm Bruder and later by Gavioli in Paris. He was not only especially talented at the art of pipe making and voicing the pipes (making sure they sounded beautiful) but he also was highly skilled in arranging and composing music for mechanical organs. After building his first organs in 1912 in Antwerp he moved to Breda to establish his workshop.

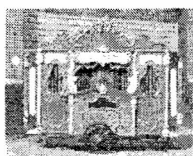
Since by nature people always want things to change, Carl Frei decided to meet that demand by giving existing old organs a new sound by introducing small alterations. This sound, combined with his refreshing new arrangements was very successful with the rental firms. Many of these decided to let Frei alter their organs as well. Carl Frei continuously developed new ideas, resulting in many organs, often built from old parts, emerging from his workshop with a completely new sound. From 1933 onwards he built a series of large organs that were in those days, and even now, very much loved by the public.

After the 2nd World War (in which Frei was drafted into the German army as a hospital orderly), he was no longer welcome in the Netherlands. Happily new generations of able craftsmen emerged to maintain the organs that were left. Some of them even continue to build new organs today.



THE "KUNKELS ORGAN", 112-KEY MARENGHI / FREI (1909)

The Kunkels Organ was built in 1909 by the Paris firm of Marenghi. It played in the dancehall "Keizerhof" in Antwerp. In 1932 Carl Frei of Breda completely altered the organ by order of the showman Kunkels from Roermond. Also the ornate carved front was replaced by a modern facade. In this state it played for many years on different funfairs in the travelling dancetent of Kunkels. During the 2nd World War the instrument suffered extensive damage, making it impossible to use any more. In the 1950s a small group of Haarlem based "Organ Friends" decided to have a go at the restoration. Since 1969 it has been on display in this museum. It has 112 keys and 14 registers and is the country's largest mechanical concert organ.



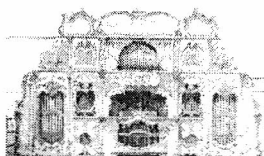
THE "CARILLON", 56-KEY BURSENS

This streetorgan was built in Antwerp by the Bursens firm. For many years it was the property of the well-known Amsterdam rental firm of Perlee, where the organ was rebuilt under the leadership of Mr. Struys. The strange colours on the front were put there on the initiative of the former owner, Mr. De Wit, of whom it is rumoured was colour blind.



THE "GROTE BLAUWE" (Big Blue One), 68-KEY MINNING (1930)

This organ was built in the thirties in Rotterdam by Jacq. Minning (whose workshop was situated in the front livingroom of his house). He took the organ JUPITER as his model. In 1970 the organ was completely restored by the Perlee firm of Amsterdam.



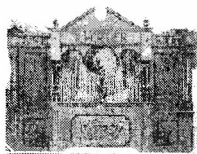
LARGE 84-KEY MORTIER DANCEORGAN (± 1914)

This dance organ was built just before the start of the 1st World War by the Antwerp firm of Mortier. This company produced hundreds of organs for dancehalls in the years 1898 to 1959. This instrument also played for many years of its life in a Belgian dancehall. It has 11 registers.



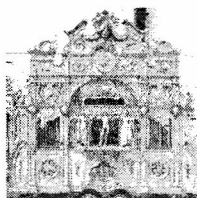
THE "ROSITA", 89-KEY SYSTEM CARL FREI (1974)

Mr. Anton Puer of Bussum built this streetorgan in 1974 from an old Decap danceorgan. It is built to the 90-key system of Carl Frei, a popular organbuilder between the two wars.



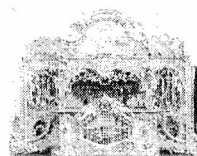
THE "ZWARTE MADONNA" (Black Madonna), 84-KEY MORTIER-ORCHESTRION (1927)

The ZWARTE MADONNA was built in 1927 by the well-known Antwerp factory of Theophiel Mortier. The instrument was used in a cafe in the Belgian village Zandvliet. Orchestrions are compact instruments where all the instruments are housed in one casing. It has 311 organpipes, distributed over 8 registers.



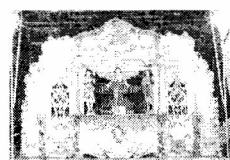
70-KEY MARENGHI DANCEORGAN, FACTORY NUMBER 2457 (± 1912)

This organ was built around 1912 by the Marenghi factory in Paris, to be used in a dancehall (as indicated by the huge facade). In 1960 Theo van Zutphen of Haarlem (who was one of the founders of our Foundation and this museum) bought the organ, which had already been out of action for many years. He started the restoration, but because of personal reasons in 1964 the project ended. It took until 1991 for the organ to see daylight again and the work was resumed. It is now restored to its original splendour.



78-KEY MORTIERORGAN OF JOHAN WEIMA (± 1912)

This one is the oldest of the three Mortier organs on display. It once was owned by the Belgian organbook arranger Abel Frans, and also played for many years in Friesland in the north of the Netherlands. Nowadays it takes part in a travelling theatre-show both as a musical instrument on its own and as accompaniment to the singing.



THE "JUPITER", 68-KEY GAVIOLI / DEVRESE / MINNING (± 1900)

The JUPITER was built around 1900 in Paris by the Gavioli firm. It played in a dancehall until the Antwerp company DeVreese altered it to play as a streetorgan in the Netherlands. Over the years the organ underwent several more alterations, and has become one of the country's most popular organs. In 2001/2002 it has been restored to its former glory.

You can find us on the Internet as well: <http://www.draaiorgelmuseum.org>
(latest news, descriptions and pictures of the organs, MP3-files etc.)