

## Summary

### The seventeenth century Amsterdam organists

It goes without saying that Jan Pietersz Sweelinck can be characterised as one of the great ‘purveyors of our culture’. He did not only leave behind a sizable body of instrumental and vocal compositions of very high quality, but had also a great many German and Dutch students who profited from his inheritance. The research into the social position of organists in Amsterdam in the seventeenth century also confirmed Sweelinck’s leading part.

The first question to be answered in this book is, whether the musical members of the seventeenth century Van Noordt family can also be characterised as ‘purveyors of Dutch culture’. This question relates to father Sybrandus who worked as an organist and school master in Schagen before taking up residence in Amsterdam in 1630 as a teacher. Afterwards he became the carillonneur of the Southern Church (Zuiderkerk) in Amsterdam in 1642. His eldest son Jacobus started out as an organist in Arnhem and gained in 1637 a foothold in Amsterdam, initially as the organist at the Chapel of the New Side (Nieuwe Zijdskapel), and later (1652) as the organist at the Old Church. He took over this position from the renowned Dirck Sweelinck. Anthoni, the second son, was appointed organist at the Nieuwe Zijdskapel in 1652, succeeding his brother Jacobus. In 1664, immediately after the death of Nicolaes Lossy, he took his place as the organist at the New Church. The third son, Joan, did not become a musician; he ended up as a historical painter and portraitist, gaining popularity in circles of the Amsterdam elite. The youngest son, Lucas, was granted an Amsterdam scholarship to study theology, and with the assistance of the Amsterdam government he became minister in Diemen. Jacobus’s son, Sybrandus van Noordt, was a promising musician; his fame as an organist was always recognised.

The careers of the Van Noordts are inextricably linked with the favour of the Amsterdam magistracy. It is significant that Jacobus managed to be appointed at the Old Church at a point of time that the members of the Sweelinck family were convinced to have the right of succession. The Van Noordt family also arranged that Anthoni became the organist at the Nieuwe Zijdskapel, succeeding his brother. This is striking because candidates from both the Lossy and Sweelinck families were available.

Jacobus was a man of consequence to the organ culture of Amsterdam. In addition he was responsible for modernising the organs in the Old Church; he also promoted organ recitals to musical events in which instrumentalists and vocalists participated. He persuaded the municipal government to construct galleries for the performing musicians next to both the large and the small organs. Jacobus’ fame as the organist at the Old Church is shown in an ode to him, written by Joan Dullaert in the fifties. Not only did it proclaim his fame as an organist, but also his playing the carillon of the tower of the Amsterdam Stock Exchange and the recorder in the open air. Dullaert may not have been a first-class poet, but his ode to Jacobus was included in a well-known collection of poems called the *Bloemkrans van verscheide gedichten, door eenige Liefhebbers der Poezy verzamelt* (Amsterdam 1659). Some of Jacobus’ compositions – pieces for the recorder – were published, but don’t show his best side.

Anthoni van Noordt did leave a tangible legacy in the area of organ music. In 1660 he published his *Tabulatuurboeck*, full of variations of ‘etlicke psalmen, benefens eenige fantasijen’ (‘numerous psalms, as well as some fantasias’). The work was dedicated to the city magistracy. For the edition no printed notes were used; complete pages were engraved. Although conclusive evidence is lacking, it looks as if the composer did the engravings for the book himself. This took a great amount of time, as every copper plate – there were more than sixty – would have taken several days of work. No effort was saved to have this book published. Van Noordt applied for a patent with the States of Holland to prevent pirated reprints. The title page gives the bookseller

Willem van Beaumont as the publisher. This man received the loose sheets and sold them as such, or had them bound to order.

Thorough research into the spread of the *Tabulatuurboeck* produced only a few results. Just one copy has been found in the *Biblioteka Jagiellońska* in Krakow. Before the Second World War this copy was part of the Royal Library in Berlin, where it had ended up between 1862 and 1882 as a gift from the major collector Prof. dr. Richard Wagener from Marburg. No other copies are even mentioned in any inventories, nor did transcriptions of parts of the book pop up in any musical manuscript. It can therefore be concluded that Van Noordt's music did not become very popular. Was Constantijn Huygens, then, correct when he, at the request of the States of Holland, gave his opinion of Van Noordt's patent application? After all, he stated, there would be very few buyers for the work, which he incidentally referred to as 'meesterlick' (masterly; a work of artisanship). In September 1660 Anthoni requested the mayors for a pay rise; that was rejected, however. Was this an attempt to receive a honorarium because of his dedication of the *Tabulatuurboeck* to the magistrates? Perhaps the honorarium took the shape of an expectation of becoming the New Church's organist.

Anthoni did not do much to promote himself. His life was dedicated to music. It was not for nothing that he, with his love for Dutch organ music, started composing and publishing a tablature book. His *Tabulatuurboeck* proves he was a skilled musician. Yet no odes, engraved portraits or mentions in papers or chronicles have been found. Pierre Bourdieu emphasised that a work of art only gains value when it is recognised by the public as such. It would seem that Anthoni van Noordt did not achieve that, not even with his *Tabulatuurboeck*. Hardly any students of his are known. Consequently it is impossible to trace to which degree he taught his art. His successor Hendrick Rijpelenburgh, who was a pupil of his, was apparently not a great organist. This does, however, not necessarily detract from his stature.

During the decades following Sweelinck's death the enthusiasm for organ culture did not lessen. Although he lived a withdrawn life, Sweelinck's son Dirck was a man of renown. His recitals were popular, and with his traditional, Roman Catholic way of celebrating Christmas ('kindeke wiegen') he must have gained at the same time an enthusiastic audience as well as opposition by another part of the populace. It is remarkable that Dirck's salary was never raised, while the official organists in other cities commanded top wages. The organists at the New Church in Amsterdam, first Willem Aertsz, followed by his son-in-law Willem Lossy and his son Nicolaes, must have been experts in their field, but they had, as it seems, no more than local fame.

The Van Noordts, especially Jacobus and Anthoni, extended the inheritance of organ culture through their recitals. As organists they were as successful as they were in achieving their aim to modernize the organs. Anthoni bore witness of great expertise, especially through his *Tabulatuurboeck*. But for his brother Jacobus a musical career was apparently not enough. In the sixties he had all kinds of additional activities, such as trading in beer and acting as a gauger of wine casks. His greater ambitions are shown by his marriage in a regent family, although in a Catholic branch. In itself, this was not positive for a Reformed organist. Jacobus took a warning by the Calvinist Church Council at heart and did remain Reformed. But in the meantime living at a higher social level he became deep into debt. In 1669 he lost his financial support because of his mother-in-law's death. Some creditors filed for his bankruptcy, Jacobus was even held in prison for a time, fought back hard but never recovered. He had to be grateful that he was allowed to keep his position as town organist, though he was to discontinue his weekly recitals. Times were growing hard in Amsterdam: from 1672 onwards an economic depression started, leading to a general decline in cultural life.

As is to be expected, Jacobus' bankruptcy had its disastrous effects on his family. For a long time, his son Sybrandus gave up on the idea of a career in music. He took a job as a solicitor's clerk. It was not until later that he was given the prospect of his father's position, becoming the title holder after Jacobus' death. But it looks as if this talented Sybrandus did not fit well into the framework

of society. In the end he preferred to act no longer as an official, counting on the benevolence of the local magistrates, but as a private person. Was he so marked by the shame of the bankruptcy? In the case of Jacobus' brothers we can ask this question as well. Does the bankruptcy give an explanation for Anthoni's premature retirement? When the renovation of the New Church organ was finished in 1673, he was one of the inspectors. Soon after, he was no longer able to work and died in 1675. Joan also hit financial difficulties. It appears that he left Amsterdam in 1675 for that reason. Lucas had a steady position in Diemen but, should he even have wanted it, was never called as a minister to a larger congregation – primarily to Amsterdam itself, as was not unusual for an alumnus of a city. The Van Noordts, who came from out of town, tasted the pleasure of rapid careers. The collapse of their social status must have been hard to take.

The successors of the Van Noordts, the municipal organists in the last quarter of the seventeenth century, appeared to have fewer chances to raise their artistic profile as an organist, with carillon players becoming more popular during that time. The introduction of the accompaniment of the congregational singing in Amsterdam in 1680 linked their work more strongly to worship. Cuts in government spending even led to a temporary reduction of salary in the last quarter of the century. Though salaries rose again in the eighteenth century, they never regained the same relatively high level as in the 'Golden Century'.

Municipal organists after the Van Noordts, with the exception of the excellent Jan Jacob de Graaf, were seen as no more than good craftsmen. This kept them far behind in standing and fame to their illustrious predecessors, the Sweelincks and, albeit to a lesser degree, the Van Noordts. Municipal organists were generally seen as experts with a good education. They earned a higher salary than trained craftsmen, certainly after taking perks and supplementary income into account. However they never reached the material and social level of the Amsterdam elite. In the beginning of the 17th century a lot of municipal organists in the Republic still sympathized with the Catholic faith or even were Catholics; but over the course of the century, when the public church grew bigger and stronger, this was becoming more and more an issue. Only the very greatest among them gained a special status. To become famous, recitals were not enough. Luckily, they were the first in line for performances at municipal ceremonies and for giving music lessons. They were also asked to give advice and inspect work on organs and carillons. Acquiring a large capital was, however, only possible by marrying into a wealthy family or through working in a successful commercial business. Though they could achieve a greater reputation by publishing compositions, few did so, possibly because the costs involved were higher than the profit. Some municipal organists had so much impact that portraits and odes in their praise were published. In this area, Jan Pietersz Sweelinck surpassed all his colleagues.

To various degrees, organists were in possession of cultural capital. We do however see that this capital could not yet be exploited purposefully. There was a *personified state* (as Pierre Bourdieu typified it), since organists received a good education, and there was even a Dutch style of organ. Nevertheless, the *objectified state*, in the shape of cultural artefacts, was not yet exploited in a systematic manner; though there were excellent organs, it was rather exceptional that compositions were published. Nor existed much theoretical support for music. The 'Speelkonste' ('art of playing') was promoted in practice; the work of Van Noordt was exceptional, being a reflection of ideas and symbols. In short, there was barely an *institutionalised state* as a form of cultural capital. The authorities let these musicians perform because the public appreciated their skills. Those with more talent were given more opportunities; the government used good musicians to promote municipal pride. The careers of the Van Noordts prove the recognition of their talents by the magistracy. In other words: in the eyes of their contemporaries they certainly were purveyors of Dutch culture. But not of the exceptional level of Jan Pietersz. Sweelinck.

### **The organs**

In the period 1630-1675 a boom in organ building activities took place in Amsterdam. At first the city was lagging behind the other towns in Holland in modernising its organs. For a long time,

both of the Oude Kerk instruments and the organ in the Nieuwe Zijdskapel remained monumental witnesses to sixteenth century renaissance culture. These instruments were characterised by having a large and a small principal, that still resembled gothic Blockwerks, though they were already divided into separate registers. Then there were the contrasting sounds and foot positions of the various stops, which were often still intended to imitate other musical instruments. These organs were instruments that were particularly suited to performing polyphony. The sounds were typified as ‘soft’ and ‘sweet’. Not surprisingly, in each register there were many harmonics in addition to the tonic. Hendrick Niehoff’s organs were structured along a carefully implemented philosophy. The large organ in the Oude Kerk had three separate divisions and an independent pedal.

From the very moment that Levijn Eekman started his work on the organ in the Nieuwe Zijdskapel, he introduced new elements; elements that had not been heard before in Holland. For example, Eekman placed registers with conical pipes. In the *Oberwerk* there was a prestant plenum (Quintadena, Octave 4’ and Sharp), that no longer bore much resemblance to a sixteenth century principal. Sources regularly mention how much the public appreciated the timbre of the Eekman organ: strong, yet sweet.

During the renovation of the transept organ of the New Church, Germer van Hagerbeer introduced elements that he had already used in other Dutch towns. For example, he added an Octave 8’ and an Octave 4’ to the independent pedal, allowing the bass line in a musical work to be identified separately. It is remarkable that no Sixteen Feet was used, as happened elsewhere. The disposition contained the higher aliquots, such as the Quint 3’, Quint flute  $1\frac{1}{3}$ ’, Quint prestant  $1\frac{1}{3}$ ’ and of course Tertian and Sexquialter. Here we already discern the trend of not letting the harmonic tones stand out in the separate register, but through mixing several stops.

Although Germer van Hagerbeer was to build a new great organ in the Nieuwe Kerk, the previous organ having been destroyed in a fire, his untimely death put a stop to his activities. After long discussions, the commission to construct the organ was given to Hans Wolfgang Schonat, who had been resident in the town for some time already. Again, new views were introduced that were wholly unrelated to Dutch organ construction. In the monumental, classicist case, designed by Jacob van Campen, Schonat built in the Nieuwe Kerk an organ that was almost wholly in the Westphalian style. He put mainly prestants on the Haupt- and Rückpositiv and on the crowded pedal. In addition there were, which was typically not Dutch, two conical registers. The flute stops, which are no more than a side issue with prestants, had remarkably narrow diapasons, as was the case for the two quintadenas. A tierce chorus was included in both Sharp registers, this stop may well have been called Cymbal.

Schonat’s work was of high quality; consequently the magistrate granted him an excellent bonus upon delivery. All pipes had been carefully made, as had the wind-chests. As a result wind leakage was limited to the extreme, so that the organ kept its intonation well. According to Jacob van Eyck that intonation, as well as the tuning, must have been very good. Schonat was immediately given the assignment to renovate the small organ in the Oude Kerk. For this organ, too, he used various, typically Westphalian techniques. Again, the dominant stops had a prestant diapason, and there was a tierce chorus in Sharp. This time, the independent pedal did have a Bourdon 16’. Schonat also copied various stops from the small Niehoff organ. At least he used the Holpijp 6’ and the Quintadena from the Hauptwerk, perhaps also the Dulcian from the Brustwerk. For this organ too, the high quality of Schonat’s work, aided by his assistant, is remarkable. The new case, probably designed by Gerrit Barendsz Swanenburgh, was in classicist style. The carved work from the workshop of Artus Quellinius fitted in well with it.

Those who would have expected that Schonat would adapt the rest of Amsterdam’s municipal organs, were disappointed. Apparently some members of the local government felt he had been rewarded too well. The opportunity to give the great organ in the Oude Kerk a facelift went to Jacobus van Hagerbeer. Although he was only ordered to do maintenance work, he realized a number of changes. The case of the Rückpositiv was completely changed. Three new stops were

added and the range of the *Oberwerk* was extended from F up to and including C. It has not been possible to determine, whether Jacobus was indeed also responsible for an increase in the size of the manual of the Rückpositiv, as is assumed. He certainly did re-tune the organ; most likely he delivered it in the C (+1/2)-tone. Although his contract only fixed his own salary, Jacobus claimed a considerable amount of money for assistants' wages; he did not receive a positive decision from the municipal government, however.

Next, Jacobus went to Groningen in order to alter the great organ in the A-Kerk. This kept him away from Amsterdam for some time. In 1664 he renovated the transept organ in the Nieuwe Kerk. Apparently he combined the stops of the Brustwerk and the independent pedal and placed all of them in the Zijwerk. Where there had been independent pedal stops earlier, now this Zijwerk was attached to the Pedal. Strange, and unknown anywhere else in the world, was that for the tones C sharp<sup>1</sup> up to e<sup>1</sup> now a wind-chest with double pipes for all Pedal stops was build for the same tones in the Pedal. It was his unique solution for using three independent stops with only two divisions – Hauptwerk and Pedal. After this reconstruction there were nineteen stops. As a result this transept organ scarcely bore any resemblance anymore to small organs in the main town churches in other cities. Amsterdam had once again shown its ability to deliver something special.

In 1668 Jacobus van Hagerbeer was granted the chance to put the crowning glory on his work. He altered the great organ in the Nieuwe Kerk, for which a large sum of money was available. It became his swan song, for in 1671 he died, well before the job was completed. Roelof Barendsz Duyschot finished the work in cooperation with his son Johannes. Schonat's parts were left largely intact, but so much was added that the original sound could no longer be recognized. To start with, an *Oberwerk* and an upper chest in the Rückpositiv were added, with a total of seventeen new stops. The Hauptwerk and the Pedal kept their original setting. After this operation, the Nieuwe Kerk organ was the largest organ in the Republic as for the number of stops, and would remain so for some time. Schonat's concept was now unrecognizable, because as much as twenty-nine of the forty-three stops were unified. That is unequalled! This not only achieved a greater sound volume, but also a more saturated sound than before.

The principles of organ building that had come from Brabant, as initiated by Jan van Covelens and Hendrick Niehoff were since long abandoned. The flutes, not nearly as wide as in the renaissance, were placed in the Rückpositiv and there was a full plenum on the *Oberwerk*. Here too, the triad Quintadena, Baarpijp and Vox Humana (the imitation of the human voice) was introduced, a trio that would be found on nearly every Dutch organ in the eighteenth century. The Vox Humana was seen as such a success that the diapasons of this stop were put up as an example for many Vox Humanas in the Republic and elsewhere.

All components of municipal organs in Amsterdam in the seventeenth century were described so that it was possible to discover the concepts and ideas organ makers and organists had in those days about sound and its reproduction. This led to more clarity about the relation to musical practice, the ideals of sound, and its registration, but also about finger placement. It was typified as a movement from renaissance to early baroque. Organ stops that were rich in contrast were replaced by more monochrome stops. Especially prestants became dominant. Instead of the very wide diapasons of the flutes and quintadenas – which had a very tonic sound – diapasons were much narrower. Where the reed pipes were concerned, they became much less colourful, but Trumpet and Vox Humana dominated. There might even be a Posaune (Bazuin) in the pedal. Where Renaissance audiences had appreciated a 'soft' and 'sweet' sound in an organ, in the Golden Century there was a growing desire for a monumental sound, with much more tone in the registers. In some cities this was necessary for the accompaniment of songs in church. That was not the case in Amsterdam. A clear shift towards a less flexible wind pressure can also be seen. The channels in the wind-chests no longer had fixed measures, but the wider pipes were getting relatively more air than the smaller ones.

Amsterdam differed from other Dutch cities where organs were concerned. This was not just the result of intentional strategy, but mainly because Amsterdam employed organ builders from other regions, as the city showed its cosmopolitan face. Though the literature often emphasises the Dutch character of organ construction in the second half of the seventeenth century, it can only be concluded that after 1630 there was very little connection to the work of Van Covelens and Niehoff. Despite all the influences from Germany and Flanders, there was in fact still a typically Northern-Dutch organ.

Connecting the developments in organ construction to musical practice, to begin with it was found that an advanced playing technique had arisen in the sixteenth century, which used sharply contrasting timbres. Vocal compositions were played on the organs, with frequent use of diminutions. A flexible supply of wind and a light mechanism helped the organists to give this music its full due. Over the course of the century there were all kinds of developments, such as an increase in the range of tones and the frequent use of the upper keys. To be able to follow vocal developments, organ builders gradually changed the dispositions and included the largest possible variation in registers in their organs. They did not put the emphasis on sharp contrasts, but rather on subtle colorations. Even though the monodic style did exert its influence, Amsterdam instruments remained suitable for polyphony.

### **Organ recitals**

Organ recitals were social and cultural events, but they are difficult to chart, as they only left indirect traces. Therefore the research mainly looked for conventions. Furthermore, it was noticed, from different points of view, how various authorities and people considered them. Historical developments were also charted. Though the focus of this book was on the period between 1630 and 1675, earlier history could not be disregarded. Literature has often emphasised how seventeenth century Dutch organ recitals were in fact the predecessors of modern organ concerts. However, when one looks at their roots, it should be clear that this is not the case.

Organ music was already popular in the fifteenth century. The organ was played mainly during mass, mostly in alternation with the choir. Gradually, the habit of playing before or after the service, as an impulse to come to church, especially during the Lauds, arose. The organ became so popular that civil authorities started spending large amounts of money on constructing organs. These investments improved a city's standing. This also caused resistance, both from the followers of Zwingli and from Calvinists. The humanist Erasmus also felt that the attention for the organ distracted from what church should be about: the worship of God. When in 1566 the iconoclasts tore through the country, in some towns organs became a target of destruction. Yet there were also places where members of the social elite protected the instrument. But from 1572, during the Dutch Revolt, the Calvinists left the organs in most of the large city churches intact. The organs were municipal property and were protected by the authorities.

Few details of the use of the organs in this transitional period are known. It was found that just after the upheavals, in Rotterdam the organist played the organ before Reformed services. This example was followed in other cities. The result was that in the whole county of Holland – despite resistance from Reformed authorities – the organs were usually played during at least a quarter of an hour before and/or after the Reformed service. It is likely that this happened at the initiative – or at the very least with the approval – of the civil authorities. The magistrate kept the whole of the population in mind and thought that the church building should be open. Playing the organ was a way to draw people in, even if only because it brought to mind the old days. The organists were ordered to play the psalms that were to be sung immediately afterwards (without accompaniment from the organ). There were even cities where the organist alternated his play with the singing performed by the congregation. All this served to make parishioners more familiar with the melodies of the psalms. The religious authorities did not feel that the argument of drawing people to the church with the organ music was valid, even if it would lead to conversions.

It is remarkable that, from the end of the sixteenth century onwards, also open organ recitals were given, not linked to services. As officially was explained, the intention was to make visitors stay more pleasant in the church. The church councils hardly had counter-arguments. They saw this kind of recitals as a worldly amusement, typical of this society. That the recitals indeed were aimed at the wider populace becomes clear from the fact that Catholics played a part and even performed religious actions during these free recitals. It is proved that, just as in the case of the other recitals, some cities started the practice and others gradually followed suit. Notable is also that there were some regular customs surrounding the recitals. Every recital started with the opening of the shutters, which were at the end closed immediately. On Saturdays and Sundays the large organ was used, and the small one on weekdays. There was no recital on the Saturday preceding the Holy Communion. These conventions went back to the Roman Catholic period.

Usually organists had a clause in their contracts obliging them to play psalms. That obligation was however always related to the recitals before and/or after the church service. In principle the organists were free to fill in the recitals in their own way. The repertoire contained a number of genres: fantasias, toccatas, arrangements of psalms, intavolations of madrigals and other vocal compositions, Batailles and arrangements of popular songs. The organists continued the usage of the Roman Catholic period, to play not just pieces with a spiritual or religious content, but also dance tunes, satirical songs and songs with a more scabrous bent. In the seventeenth century, they were sometimes reprimanded for playing a too vulgar repertoire. More often, though, they were called to task for playing Catholic music. That too was a reason for the church government to object to these organ recitals.

The aim of entertaining a broad audience can also be seen in the times of the Van Noordts. Under the direction of Jacobus van Noordt, for instance, instrumentalists and vocalists participated in the recitals in the Oude Kerk. Organ recitals, it may be abundantly clear, did not differ in essence from concerts by municipal musicians and the city carilloneurs. Throughout the sixteenth and the seventeenth century they were part of public social life. An important motivation for maintaining them was also, that they drew merchants to the church to discuss commercial topics or international news. The church was an attractive location for informal contacts, especially with an organ recital added on.

Through the decorations of the organ cases and especially through the paintings on the shutters, the municipal authorities provided a décor full of symbolism. In the Nieuwe Kerk the audiences saw scenes from the life of the Old Testament King David. They knew they were looking at a plethora of meanings. The religious meaning was dominant: King David as a reflection of Christ. There were plenty of references to the course of life, focusing on the afterlife. There were also references to making the right choices, and through that to a politics of state in which sovereignty and inspired wisdom took central stage. It was of course important that iconography made it clear that music stood especially in the service of higher purpose and the harmonic. That was a legitimisation of the music, and especially of the organ recitals.

On the one hand many listeners experienced the organ recitals as a means to stimulate devotion. Others sought entertainment in popular tunes with secular texts. But in both cases the affects took central stage. The recitals were full of artistic expression. Yet the danger of anachronistic interpretation is here threatening. After all, the modern researcher's ideas have been coloured by nineteenth century ideas of artisticity and aesthetic principles. But for the Van Noordts and their contemporaries the word 'konst' (art) had a meaning of skill and therefore of artisanship.

Where these phenomena were concerned, there was no crucial difference between the period from 1630 and 1675, and the ages just before and after that period. Of course the repertoire gradually changed, the organs were renovated and sounded differently; no doubt also the taste of the audience will have been influenced by fashions (although there is little information about that). However, organ recitals remained popular during our period and drew large crowds, especially the Saturday night recitals. The most important development in this period concerned questions

regarding the accompaniment of the congregation's singing. Gradually, throughout the Republic, the role of the church organ changed and the organist began to accompany the congregation as it sang. Usually the initiative came from the magistrate, the employer of the organist and the owner of the organ. Church councils were gravely concerned about this type of change. Had not the Synods of Dordrecht in 1574 and 1578 decided that the organ should not be played during services? However, at the same time the congregational singing was generally rather chaotic. Now, by the introduction of accompaniment by the organist, it was given more structure. An additional advantage, which even led to church councils taking the initiative for change themselves, was that after the introduction of accompanied singing the abhorred playing before or after the service was abolished. Both advantages were highlighted in the booklet published by Constantijn Huygens in 1641, which has been constantly referred to as the *Orgelgebruyck* ('the use of the organ'). The booklet was intended for Huygens' home town 's-Gravenhage. It resulted in much unrest, with especially the more pietistic Reformed being vehemently opposed. This caused Huygens, not openly involve himself with the subject again.

In Amsterdam, in the period 1630-1675, there were many supporters of the use of the organ for congregational singing. Joost van den Vondel called them 'zangverquisters' ('wasters of song'). Yet it was not until 1681 that the magistrate decided to introduce accompaniment in the large municipal churches. The details of the positions of the authorities and of the Reformed church council are not known. The main reason for not introducing it earlier seems to be that the authorities in Amsterdam preferred the public function of the recitals. The organ was still a source of municipal pride.

After 1672, a decline in the vitality of organ culture set in. The weekday recitals were abolished. An Italian tourist even called the recitals 'ridicolosa'. The salaries of organists fell, while those of carillon players – sometimes the same men as the organists – rose. Was the carillon seen as more important than the organ? Earlier research took a broad look at whether the decline in the organ culture was caused by the rise of paid musical performances. Although these were clearly gaining in popularity, they did not become fully established until the eighteenth century. Therefore the question arose of what happened first: the rise of a new popular culture or the repression of the old one? Although by the end of the seventeenth century organ recitals were no longer important signs of 'repräsentative Öffentlichkeit', they still existed. It was said after Jan and Annie Romein: 'thus, at walking pace, the transition from the Catholic to the Protestant, no, from the medieval to the bourgeois world, occurred'.

### **The repertoire**

The musical skills of seventeenth century organists are extensively studied here. Also an insight into the repertoire played by the organists has been gained. For this purpose, Anthoni van Noordt's *Tabulatuurboeck*, both the psalm arrangements and the six fantasias, has been analyzed.

The Hoorn organist Juriaen Spruyt (in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century) gave a definition of a composer. He makes clear that it was virtually impossible to draw a line between playing 'from memory' and playing from sheet music. Organists performed the largest part of their repertoire by heart. It was not, however, difficult for them to write down the music. No doubt they employed many formulas and structures that had been memorised before. Written compositions played a large part in educating future organists. They also stimulated the process of *invention* in experienced musicians. During recitals organists also performed works composed by others. Although it is difficult to make general statements here, there are sufficient signals to conclude that these works were played from sheet music. Possibly they only made use of books with unison melodies which they treated in a polyphonic way, alongside works that were fully written down.

Well developed notation systems already existed in Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The system that was used depended on the genre. The one, taken into practice by Anthoni van Noordt in his *Tabulatuurboeck*, was referred to as the 'English-Dutch tablature



notation,' since it arose from the church musician schools that dominated musical life in Europe between 1450 and 1580. This notation system was eminently suitable for registering the work of these composers.

From our researches we learned that more data can be found about the repertoire of our seventeenth century Amsterdam organists than is apparent from the compositions that have been passed down. For instance, it can be seen that, even though very few examples are available, organists arranged various vocal compositions for the organ. *Batailles* proved to be popular; it is even possible to reconstruct how they must have sounded. Exploration of this kind of repertoire is necessary, since organists were used to apply all kinds of programmatic and illustrative elements. It could not be determined, whether this was also the case for the *fantasias*. These polyphonous compositions were based on one or more themes that were used in various ways and which allowed the organist to show his ingenuity.

Van Noordt, as is shown by an analysis of his compositions, was a skilled composer who was well aware of modern European musical developments. Especially in his *fantasias*, he used all possible musical techniques, to be found in Northern German and Italian compositions as well. It would seem that he was familiar with quite a lot of international keyboard music. But it is clear that he applied components of it in his own way. Dutch organ culture may have had little international appeal after Sweelinck, as a result of a lack of printed compositions. This study shows, however, that neither the performance side nor the conceptual one was neglected. Printed compositions are not the only proof of the presence of a lively musical culture. On the performance side, Dutch musicians were by no means inferior to their Italian or North German colleagues. And with regard to the conceptual side: the *fantasias* by Van Noordt have a slightly conservative character as a result of their modal character, but at the same time they also contain numerous modern elements. Gary Lee Zwicky was impressed by their originality. 'It is unfortunate that such musical genius should be isolated.'

It is difficult to give Van Noordt's psalm arrangements their proper place in international seventeenth century musical developments. The song arrangements by Jacob Praetorius and Heinrich Scheidemann, who used a figured notation, are different in character. Closest was perhaps Scheidt in his two and three stop arrangements. The approach by the next generation of German organists, Matthias Weckmann and Jan Adam Reincken, who was of Dutch origin, was already different. Of course, Van Noordt's style may be compared to that of Sweelinck. There are obvious differences between their respective arrangements of spiritual songs. Sweelinck, so came to the fore from an analysis, gradually seems to have employed in his psalm arrangements a more and more sophisticated handling of the motives. It should be clear therefore, that Van Noordt was continuing a tradition. Consequently Sweelinck's compositions and those written by Anthoni are subsequent stages in a national development. In order to broaden the picture, study of the music in the *Gresse* manuscript proved to be beneficial. Research has also been done into the compositions by Gisbert van Steenwick, who was the successor of Jacobus van Noordt in Arnhem. His music leaves little opportunity for comparisons with Van Noordt's work, however; for instance, the motivic notation is lacking. After all, Steenwick wrote his music for beginners, whereas Van Noordt aimed at advanced players.

Occasionally, similarities can be demonstrated between Van Noordt's psalm verses and those by Johann Sebastian Bach. However, Bach was further along the road of conceptual and harmonic thinking. He generally applied motifs to the whole verse. The motives underlying Bach's way of working are outside the scope of this study, however. Here it suffices to point out that in his practice of music, Van Noordt was still rooted in the middle of the seventeenth century and lived earlier in a development that would not result in Bach's way of thinking for another half century.

The Belgian musicologist Charles van den Borren passed a negative judgement on Van Noordt's work. In his view Van Noordt's compositions contained 'too much formula' and 'not enough spontaneous inspiration'. Apparently, Van den Borren had little eye for the internal dynamism.

The present book shows, however, how Van Noordt still lived in the world of the *stylus gravis* with its rules for the rigid counterpoint. He considered the polyphonous approach and did everything to emphasise the linear aspect. As is known, many musical personalities from the seventeenth century did the same: Jan Pietersz Sweelinck, Samuel Scheidt, Jacob Praetorius, Heinrich Scheidemann, Matthias Weckmann and especially Ditrich Buxtehude. Van Noordt can be placed in that list as well. His style is characterized by a large degree of inventiveness, especially in the use of motifs, but also in the way that he intertwined aspects of movement.

The *Tabulatuurboeck* lives by the grace of its performance. Van Noordt's music must be played on an instrument with a suitable sound. The lively organ wind and the increase in the strength of the tone towards the descant strengthen the dynamic aspect of the music. Only then will the notes come to life and can the shaping form be experienced.

### Signification

The large degree of *diversitas* and *varietas* that characterises the music of Anthoni van Noordt – analyzed in the last chapter of this book – translated itself into denotative meanings. Departing from statements by past theorists – in which the principles of affect were dominant – the present author saw opportunities to make connections between the texts of the psalms and Van Noordt's music. Although nowadays much has been published about the rhetoric of music, it was not always easy to see why the texts incited Van Noordt to the musical choices he made. Additionally, it was asked to what degree the use of certain style figures was determined by conventions, and to which composers of keyboard music Anthoni adhered, consciously or subconsciously.

The difficulty in this kind of analysis is of course, that we do not always know every rule, applied in the past. Many forms of *tacit knowledge* have been lost. It has never been the intention of the present author to discover Van Noordt's personal ideas and thoughts: this, after all, would be impossible. But it is not unrealistic to investigate, how Anthoni's music fits into the image we have of organ culture of his time. These exercises have extended our knowledge of that culture. The great riches of figures in the *Tabulatuurboeck* allowed for a mix of theological, literary and pictorial objects. Music was far from an independent medium in the seventeenth century. Time and again the analysis shows how important the expressive element, the desire to convey thoughts or emotions, was. This makes it clear that music is not just itself, but that it is the relation with the other senses that enhances it: colour, shaping form, dance and internal mobility all increase. Much is related to emotions. Our conclusion must be that Van Noordt's organ music is not the exclusive expression of a modest, introverted and pietistic view of life.

There is still much left to be discovered in the area of the representative character of seventeenth century organ music. Often, in current research of organ culture, this music is approached from the scope of pure aestheticism. Over and over again one is forced to look at Sweelinck's compositions in order to understand Van Noordt's music. It was found that, in musicology, Van Noordt's music had been approached rarely or never from the expressive side. The *Woordenboek van de Nederlandse Taal* (the 'Dictionary of the Dutch Language') states that aestheticism is an 'exaggerated interested, too large a degree of worship for the aesthetic, the beautiful'. In seventeenth century performance practice, edification and entertainment – as has been argued in chapter three – played as large a part, if not a larger one. This demands a performance that conveys something and is therefore expressive. Perhaps this was the main reason for Huygens' view, the recitals had to be looked upon as nothing special. Ds. Uittenbogaert, however, was 'silently' singing to himself while listening to an arrangement of a psalm that was performed fervently by the organist. Others walked around in the church, letting themselves be entertained by the music. These were not cerebral events. The listening experience must have been mostly emotional, even physical.

### Nuances of current perceptions

Organ culture has always been determined strongly by the images it evokes. Generally, edification, entertainment and art have been emphasized. Over time, different accents have been placed. This has already been seen with Constantijn Huygens. For example, look at the following epigram on the organ from his *Korenbloemen* ('Cornflowers'):

Het mensch-gelijck geluyd van pijpen, soet en sterck,  
Is wel en stichtelijck te besigen op aerde:  
Is' maer vermakelick, en vreughd sijn' hooghste waerde,  
Wat doet het in de Kerck?

(The human sound of pipes, sweet and strong,  
May be very well and edifying on earth:  
'Tis but entertainment, and joy its highest worth,  
Why is it in the Church?)

As he wrote in his *Orgelgebruyck*, Huygens was opposed to organ recitals in church. Were the organ to be used in an edifying manner, that is to say for the use of the Reformed liturgy, he would approve. When it only served a public purpose, it was in his view an anomaly. Not for nothing did he emphasize the antithesis between spiritual and worldly in his *Orgelgebruyck*. However, other Calvinists, for instance the Hague minister ds. Caspar Streso and Jan Jansz Calckman, a member of his congregation, proved to be prepared to allow the civil aspect. Their reactions to Huygens' *Orgelgebruyck* were likely attempts to prevent religious or liturgical functions for the organ by stressing that the instrument, though it was placed in the church, had mainly, or only, a public function.

This study of seventeenth century organ culture concentrates on Amsterdam, where the connotation of the organ was not automatically edifying or religious. Accompaniment of the community was not introduced here before 1681. Up to then the organ was here exclusively a concert instrument. Therefore, stronger than elsewhere was the use of organs in Amsterdam rooted in sixteenth century public culture, the recitals being comparable to performances by town musicians and carilloneurs. It was felt that music provided entertainment. It was mostly expected to affect upon the listener. Musical performances were also seen as a way to strengthen civil harmony. Consequently, the presence of first-rate musicians and excellent organs made a valuable contribution to municipal pride.

Nowadays it is easy to familiarise oneself with music, including that from other countries, through audiovisual aids. In the seventeenth century, when these aids did not exist, organists played an important part in the diffusion of music. It was they who played intavolutions of vocal and instrumental works during their recitals, including especially madrigals. This meant that it was possible for the audience to enjoy music from Italy, France and Germany in Amsterdam. Of course the music was filtered by the way the organist had arranged it. Adding coloraturas would not have improved recognisability. The repertoire also included the popular songs and dance tunes of the day. Again, these were passed through the filter of the organist. After all, there were hardly any norms for the way music was performed or arranged. This too, is difficult to understand for a twenty-first century music lover, as there are nowadays many explicit and implicit norms to which performances are expected to conform. In the seventeenth century, those norms were found much more in the power of persuasion with which the organists presented themselves. Did they do their jobs well, then their adaptations were certainly recognized: in a poem to the organist Joan Crabbe the poet Joan Dullaert wrote:

De geest, de kunst en wetenschap  
Van Fresco Baldi en Libert[i],  
Die hoordme in u, o jonge Krab.

(The spirit, the art and science  
Of Fresco Baldi and Libert[i]  
Those I heard me in you, o young Krab)

Slightly further on Dullaert said that Crabbe even rivalled Heinrich Scheidemann. Crabbe's play allowed the public to enjoy the Italian style. He was also capable of providing the very enjoyments that Scheidemann could give as a performing artist.

Willy Apel felt that those who regarded 'an echo-fantasia by Sweelinck [...] as expressive would simply render the term meaningless'. Raymond Monelle did not agree, however; he pointed to the 'religious implications of Sweelinck's techniques'. Would this mean that for Monelle this type of music does evoke only the transcendent and the deep? Based on this present book, it can be suspected that there is more nuance to it. The close relation has been shown between the arrangements of psalms in the *Tabulatuurboeck* and the accompanying psalm texts. Do we realise that this was an expression of emotion? If so, we cannot deny that this music was expressive. All kinds of interpretation are possible, certainly. But when the interpreter becomes more familiar with musical conventions of its time of origin, his interpretation will not lead to wild speculation and forms of eisegesis.

Nevertheless, the compositions of Anthoni van Noordt and Jan Pietersz Sweelinck are often seen as musical abstractions and as forms of absolute music. For many people it is difficult to discern that this music might also illustrate the extra-musical. What to think of the genre of the *batailles*? Do not handed down seventeenth century compositions with extra-musical titles and referential sub-headers indicate that it was completely normal to find illustrations of concrete situations in music? Musical practice in those days was not just aesthetic, but was a true mirror of daily life. If there was a victory to be celebrated, triumphant music was played. When there was deep mourning, the music remained silent and other ways to express feelings were used. Yet much melancholia was also expressed in music.

Organists had to use convincing means in order to keep the attention-means we might nowadays typify as banal and vulgar. The audience did not attend organ recitals to quietly and devoutly sit and listen. Performances were boisterous, there being many disturbances. The same holds for the theatre performances of the day, where the audience was particularly rowdy, so as its attention had to be kept by all kinds of showmanship and tricks.

Even so, many attended the recitals for the devotion they found in the music. Upon analysis of the organ cases of the Laurenskerk in Alkmaar and the Nieuwe Kerk in Amsterdam, it was found that those cases were designed after the alleged outward example of the temple of Solomon in Jerusalem, a place where one could find God. It is difficult to determine whether listening to music played at the instrument build in such a case was – metaphorically - felt a form of worship. Certainly, the Christian church was seen as the ideal continuation of the Temple in Jerusalem, its worship being the offspring of the one of this Temple. This possibility even holds when Huygens' rejection of worldly music, played at the organ, is taken into account. In the seventeenth century there were no strict demarcation lines between classical music, popular music and church music. It looks as if it was easy to switch between playing edifying works, the repertoire aiming at entertainment and works with more artistic pretensions. The same compositions might even be used to serve all these different goals.

An aspect that this study only looked at indirectly was the great difference between seventeenth century world view and the modern one. For instance, many seventeenth century people held esoteric views. The organ, though made of dead materials, could appear to have a soul. For many ordinary men it must have been miraculous that just one person was capable to produce such a plethora of sound from a technically advanced instrument like this. Looking up from the body of the church, only some of the organ pipes producing these strange sounds were visible. Their amazement must have been strengthened because of the inventiveness of organ builders, which

was on occasions close to phenomenal. Without our modern knowledge of scientific theory, they were capable of solving all kinds of acoustic, mechanical and wind dynamics problems. Oddly enough, very little attention has been given to developments in this field in the history of technology; its study raises the awareness that the Industrial Revolution could easily have started in the seventeenth century.

In the past, organ culture has often been viewed from singular perspectives: church historians emphasised church practice, music historians mainly looked at (published) music and cultural historians described cultural developments. This could easily result in differing conclusions. Those involved with Sweelinck would emphasize the high quality of his music (and therefore of his recitals), while church historians, usually basing themselves on Huygens' assertions, would conclude that this form of musical practice was of little cultural value. It is the purpose of this study to show that an integrated approach, which brings together the three specialism's, would lead to fertile results. It turned out to be an advantage to focus mainly on Amsterdam in the period between 1630 and 1675. Some conventions and developments only became visible by comparison with those in other places; others could be traced by introducing a longer-term view that made it possible to interpolate data from another time in order to draw conclusions. The fact that Amsterdam during this period had its own characteristics in organ culture only made the study more appealing. However broad the study was set up, the author repeatedly felt forced to restricting himself in order to avoid being lost; consequently many territories for research are still unexplored.

### What next?

Next to the three aspects mentioned, this study looked also at the social position of the seventeenth century organ players with a special focus on Amsterdam. Though there are plenty of details available about Dutch organists in other cities, also for other periods, there is not yet a coherent view. What to think, to name just one example, of the organists in the Achterhoek, one of whom is caught a glimpse of in one of the composing members of the Gresse family? It can only be hoped that research into the developments in the social position of organists through the centuries in the Netherlands will continue.

Moreover, the history of organ building has drawn our attention in order to acquire knowledge of the instruments the *Tabulatuurboeck* was intended for. Organ history was traditionally written from a diversity of specialism's: by organ experts (builders and advisors), by music historians and by collectors of archival sources. The time is ripe for synthesis. To achieve this, use can also be made of results of research in the area of acoustics, metallurgy, wind dynamics etc. It is effective to pay attention to all parts of the organ, and of course to the relations between these parts, in any analysis aiming at connections with musical practice of the period intended. Many initiatives have already been taken in this area, such as the GOART project in Gothenburg, which has a strong connection with European partners as well. Nevertheless, the developments in the field of the Northern German organ before Arp Schnitger, for instance, are still almost unknown.

Organ recitals were social and cultural events. Even if this book has been limited to the seventeenth century in its discussion, the question of how developments played out in the eighteenth and nineteenth century is relevant. Here and there, data has been presented, but there is not yet a coherent view. That would clarify even more how the public sphere in the Republic developed. Subjects that could be included are leisure activities and youth culture. To name but one example, the *Medemblicker Scharrezoodtje, ghevangen en ontweydt van verscheyden visschers: overgoten met een sangherssausjen* (the 'Medemblick bric-a-brac, caught and drawn from various fishermen: served with a singer's sauce') published in 1650 by Hendrick Prins, an organist in Medemblick, has barely been discussed in literature. This collection was dedicated to four 'favour expecting ('gunstbeidende') and art loving' young ladies. This type of source has of course a literary background, but the social and cultural sides are at least as interesting.

Concerning seventeenth century organ music there have been enough publications, from the nineteenth century onwards, to fill a fairly large library. Even so, blank areas were found during this research. For instance, whereas much has been written about developments in musical theory in those days, little has been said about the way the organists' idiom developed. How did these organists apply theories, or did they ignore them? Technical analyses of that kind will allow us to recognize the musical and individual language of composers. It has also been possible to reconstruct many facets of the musical repertoire, even where the music itself is lost, for instance in the exercises surrounding the *batailles*. In any case, there should be more attention to illustrative forms of music. Music was more than a collection of abstract structures that only served their own purpose. In organ music too, there were various conventions in the area of the affects, to make music sound expressive. Such research would only make the field of historical music practice more fascinating.

Many fields of research still lie fallow. It is realised: writing history is a story that will never end.

\* \* \*