

De Cornelis Leendert (The Dutch Canadian)

Henk and Irene Noordemeer

The story started a way back when I was a small boy back in Apeldoorn, The Netherlands. One block behind our home the Gypsies had a parking lot where they would keep their street organs in the winter-time; then once a week they would crank them up. This was music to my ears and I was hooked for life. Every town at that time had street organs. Now only the bigger cities play them in the market squares on weekends.

We named it “De Cornelis Leendert” in memory of my father and the “Dutch Canadian” because Irene and I were both born in Holland and found Canada our home and country.

Visiting the Netherlands in April of 2007 my wife, Irene, and I had my brother, Jaap, and his wife, Joke, take us to Toon Heesbeen in Hilvarenbeek. Toon and Cris van Laarhoven have a museum containing wonderful street organs and dance organs. They have open house dance parties every other Sunday afternoon. Toon showed us around his museum then took us down stairs where he was building new organs. Well, one thing led to another, and we walked away having signed a contract for the construction of *De Cornelis Leendert* (The Dutch Canadian) was born.

After months of intense telephone calls and emails the organ was dedicated in Haarlem at the Street Organ Museum on Sept. 21 2008. Then a whole new project began as we decided to share it with our friends. A trailer was built; posters were made up; and then finally, in June of 2009, it was delivered to our home. The trailer was opened and the organ was turned on with the special attention of Ron Schmuck. It has played in perfect tune since.



Figure 2. The Trumpet section ready to install in the organ.

De Cornelis Leendert is on the MIDI system and has for the melody section 46 bourdons, 46 violins, 23 trumpets, and 23 lotus flutes (**Figures 2, 3 & 4**). The accompaniment includes 12 cellos, and 12 8-foot stopped bass. The bass pipes include 8-foot and 16-foot stopped bass.



Figure 1. The top of the unfinished facade, ready for painting.

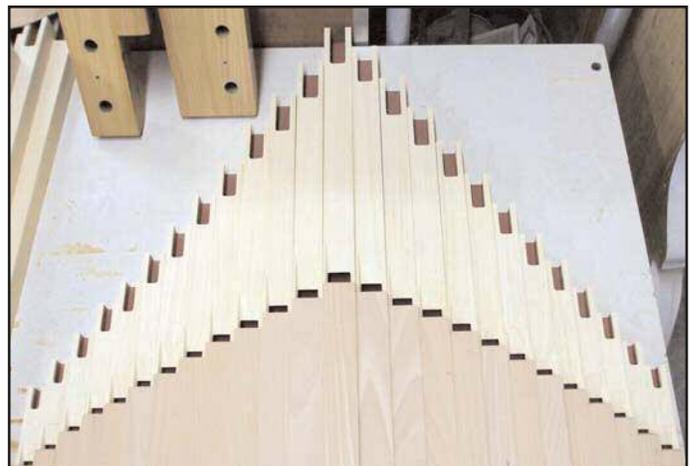


Figure 3. The finished flute pipes before assembly.

The Story of *De Cornelis Leendert* (A Builder's Prospective)

Toon Heesbeen

The NBC (or Dutch Book Organ Centre) is one of the few remaining professional organ builders in the Netherlands. Situated in the town of Hilvarenbeek and owned by Toon Heesbeen, it has been the scene of many high-profile organ restorations, as well as being the birthplace of a wide variety of new organs, ranging from the largest of dance organs to the smallest of street organs. The summer of 2007 saw the start of the construction of Henk Noordermeer's new Dutch street organ *De Cornelis Leendert* (The Dutch Canadian).



Figure 4. The pipework assembled in the new organ case.

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We have taken the organ to Veteran day festivities; Canada Day Parades, Santa Claus parades, county fairs and the rallies in North Tonawanda NY and Sandusky OH in 2010.

We are having a lot of fun sharing *De Cornelis Leendert* with many people, the very young and the older crowd especially seem to enjoy it the most. We hope to be able to take it on the road for many more years.

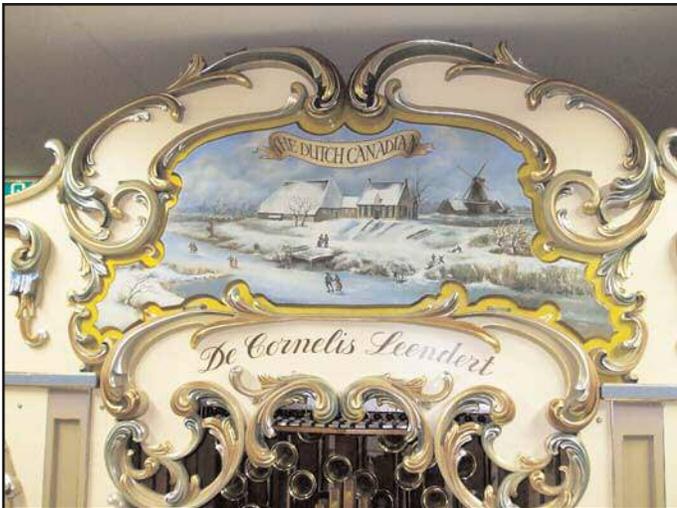


Figure 5. The top of the façade containing the new name of the organ

“De Cornelis Leendert” was to be an organ which would not only embrace the traditional looks and sounds of a Dutch street organ, but would also contain several voices not normally found in this type of organ.



Figure 6. Finished painting ready to be installed.

De Cornelis Leendert was to be an organ which would not only embrace the traditional looks and sounds of a Dutch street organ, but would also contain several voices not normally found in this type of organ. This meant the inclusion of a full melody rank of 23 brass trumpets, as well as a full rank of lotus flutes, a voice which is only found in a very small number of large dance organs, and a glockenspiel. Combined with the traditional bourdon and violin pipes this creates a refreshingly different sounding street organ.



Figure 7. Painting the facade panels.

Internally the organ is much more modern compared to traditional band organs, playing from a state-of-the-art MIDI system rather than cardboard books. This makes expanding the organ's already extensive repertoire even easier, faster and cheaper. It also allows for unparalleled reaction times, so the organ can play tracks that would be impossible with a normal keyframe. Air for the organ comes courtesy of a silent centrifugal blower mounted inside the organ's case. These two systems combined make for an easy to operate and low-maintenance instrument that still looks, sounds and acts exactly the same as any normal street organ.

A lot of work also went into the outward appear-

ance of the organ. An elaborate carved wooden façade was made entirely by hand by one of the NBC's professional carvers, taking into account the dimensions of the organ case and the layout of the pipe work (Figure 1). This was then painted in a traditional color scheme and decorated with both silver and gold. It was finally adorned with a number of specially commissioned paintings showing nostalgic Dutch scenes (Figures 6 & 7).



Figure 8. Lee Noordemeer and builder, Toon Heesbeen, in front of the completed organ on it's new three-wheel cart.

It was finally placed on a traditional three-wheeled wooden trailer [cart—ED] that was specially made for the organ (Figure 8), and in late September 2008 the completed organ finally left the NBC workshop for the first time to be introduced to the public at the well known Haarlem organ museum (Figure 9).



Figure 9. The finished organ at the dedication at Haarlem, The Netherlands.

A custom display trailer was later created that would house the organ, which was also decorated by the NBC with elaborate painted



Figure 10. Unloading of *De Cornelis Leendert* plus trailer in June, 2009.

doors that opened to show the complete organ, while allowing it to play in nearly all weather conditions.

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Once this had been completed, *De Cornelis Leendert* and its trailer were shipped to Canada before finally arriving with Henk Noordermeer in June of 2009 (Figure 10). It has since played at many events to great result, always attracting a large and enthusiastic crowd wherever it goes, and because of the future-proof techniques used in building this organ, it will likely continue to do so for many more years to come (Figures 11, 12 & centerfold).



Figure 11. Signage on *De Cornelis Leendert*'s organ trailer.



Figure 12. *De Cornelis Leendert* present at the Polish delegation at the 65th anniversary of the Dutch Liberation of Holland in London, Ontario, in May, 2010.

A biography of Henk and Irene Noordemeer can be found in the "Meet Your Member" column on page 39. We also enjoy playing and showing our Wurlitzer 125 Military Band organ and our collection of music boxes phonographs to our family friends and fellow collectors.

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