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John Allen Ferguson. *Walter Holtkamp, American Organ Builder*. Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1979. 142 pp. \$9.50.

John Ferguson's book is especially welcome as the first study of the life and work of Walter Holtkamp to appear since Holtkamp's death in 1961. In organizing Holtkamp's work into four general periods, Ferguson analyzes the creative processes that resulted in Holtkamp's important instruments, many of which may still be considered genuine landmarks in the history of American organ building. Ferguson's information is drawn from the Holtkamp family archives, interviews with Walter Holtkamp, Jr., correspondence with Holtkamp's contemporaries, and the first-hand experience of playing many of Holtkamp's organs. The photographs and selected organ specifications effectively support Ferguson's commentary.

Holtkamp insisted upon freedom from obstruction to the natural speech of pipes as well as an organic and functional approach to designs of chests and consoles. His aesthetic had numerous counterparts in the work of contemporary artists. In discussing Holtkamp's design of the organ in the chapel at M.I.T., Ferguson draws a significant comparison between the organ builder's aesthetic creed and that of the famed architect, Frank Lloyd Wright. Initially Holtkamp's doctrines were formulated as a reaction to the abuses in design perpetrated by American builders of the preceding generation. These doctrines, at one time considered radical, eventually found their way into the mainstream of the "American classic" school of organ building. It is not by accident that today's popular and conservative builders of electro-pneumatic, unencased organs have borrowed heavily from Holtkamp's concepts. Very few, unfortunately, have approached the visual elegance and purposefulness of Holtkamp's best designs.

The most immediate contrast between a typical Holtkamp organ of the late fifties and an organ built by one of today's idealistic builders is visual. The fields of free-standing, unencased pipes typical of Holtkamp's designs have given way to the revival of the organ case. The functional and frequently decorative case serves to blend and focus tone and to place the various divisions of the organ in proper spatial relationship. This concept would have been an anathema to Holtkamp, who once expressed the desire to do his own mixing of sound

without encumbrance from the organ itself. What Holtkamp sought to correct was the prevalent American custom of burying organs in chambers. Organs were forced to speak through walls, around corners, over ceilings, and through virtually any obstacles conceived of by architects and organ salesmen. In his well-intentioned effort to bring the organ into the room in which it was to sound, Holtkamp made a complete break from the past, apparently making no distinction between a reflective case and an organ chamber.

Ferguson speaks of Holtkamp's predilection for relatively small organs of the highest musical quality. One unfortunate vestige of America's dark age of organ building is a propensity for overbuilding organs in relation to sizes of rooms. Holtkamp's integrity regarding the proper musical function of an instrument in a given situation is a lesson still unheeded by certain builders, organ committees, and, too frequently, organists themselves.

Had Ferguson attempted to relate Holtkamp's work to the present scene in American organ building, Holtkamp's position as a pioneer would have been all the more apparent. There is a radicalism today, comparable in spirit to that of Walter Holtkamp, represented by such builders as Brombaugh, Fisk, Noack, and Taylor, who have drawn systematically from historical practices. Following Holtkamp's spirit of adventure, these idealistic builders provide a vital challenge to the *status quo*. Just as Holtkamp's instruments gave birth to a new approach to playing the organ, today's "new wave" instruments are requiring the performer to come to grips with questions of style and technique that relate to the historically based instrument.

An important issue arises from Holtkamp's insistence upon a national style of organ building. In what other area of instrument making has nationalism been a primary concern in the United States? It would be difficult, if not impossible, to point to an American school of piano building, recorder making, or violin construction. Most modern instruments draw on ideals that inevitably have their origins in European traditions. Holtkamp's interests in European traditions were limited. Only late in his career did he travel for the purpose of studying historic instruments. It is significant, despite a vastly different approach to building, that Holtkamp accidentally approached historical ideals—a fact which did not escape the attention of such

authorities as Dirk Flentrop and Albert Schweitzer. Although one can only speculate on what Holtkamp's reactions might be to today's aesthetic, it is interesting to note that the present Holtkamp firm, under the direction of Walter Holtkamp, Jr., has built a few encased instruments with tracker action along with numerous organs in the older style.

Ferguson points out that Holtkamp built a few small tracker action organs in the late thirties, nearly three decades before any other American builder would consider taking such a risk. Except in his late instruments, Holtkamp also made use of key-channel (slider) wind-chests, more commonly associated with tracker action. His early experimentation with tracker action was not revived during the post-war years. In explaining Holtkamp's unwillingness to follow the trend toward tracker action in the late fifties, Ferguson suggests age and success as the factors discouraging new ventures. After all, Holtkamp had finally achieved the vindication and recognition he had sought for so many years. Today's idealistic builders seem to be unanimous in their appreciation of Walter Holtkamp's idealism, which continues to be an inspiration in spirit if not substance. It is most appropriate that John Ferguson has made it possible to look at Walter Holtkamp's philosophy in a perspective possible only some twenty years after Holtkamp's death.

ROBERT CLARK

Arend Jan Gierveld. *Het Nederlandse huisorgel in de 17de en 18de eeuw*. Vereniging voor Nederlandse muziekgeschiedenis, 1977. 501 pp.; 102 black-and-white plates. Hfl 100.

This weighty volume was written to satisfy requirements for the Doctorate of Letters at the University of Utrecht; the degree was awarded in 1977, and the author's thesis adviser was Dr. M. A. Vente. It is the first work to offer an overview of the development and the variety of the domestic organ in the Netherlands from 1600 to about 1820; it lays a solid foundation on which all further work in this field will gratefully build.