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Uri M. Kupferschmidt. *Strings and Celebrities—Hakkert’s “First Dutch Stringmakers.”* Haifa: Pardes Publishing, 2019. 389 pp., 221 illus. ISBN: 978-1-61838-505-5, \$54.00 / €47.00 (paperback).

This publication provides an account of the life and professional activities of the violin maker and gut-string manufacturer Jacques Wolfgang Hakkert (1891–1944), who was active in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, during the years between the two World Wars. His parents founded the renowned music store Muziek Hakkert, which was taken over in 1925 by Jacques’ younger brother Max. Tragically, Jacques and Max, as well as most of their close relatives, all Jewish, were murdered in the Nazi camps during World War II. Only a few family members survived, among them Max’s wife Flora, who reestablished the music store after World War II, and one of Jacques’ two daughters, the mother of this book’s author, who regained her father’s shares in the gut-string factory after the war.

This latter enterprise and its founder are the book’s subject. The text informs us that the company flourished during the interbellum years, making gut strings for musical applications, but also for medical and technical purposes, as well as for tennis-racket stringing. To reach such a high level of production in a short timespan was an accomplishment, especially considering that no longtime string making tradition existed in the Netherlands. The name of the company, First Dutch Stringmakers, appears to have been somewhat inaccurate, however, as Hakkert was preceded in the making of gut strings several years earlier by his fellow citizen and violinist Carel Blitz, who started string making in 1904, eight years before Hakkert. Still, the Hakkert Company turned out to be much more prosperous: in 1917 a new production facility opened around the same time that the Blitz Company ceased its activities. Underlying Hakkert’s success were his keen entrepreneurial and marketing skills. We learn that already from the company’s outset, Hakkert managed to obtain recommendations for his strings from numerous Dutch and international musicians, eventually including famous performers such as Casals, Heifetz, Milstein, and Menuhin. Among other things, this resulted in a brochure for promotional use featuring photographs and handwritten testimonials for Hakkert’s strings from those artists. The acquisition of a rare extant copy of this promotional item by the author, Uri M. Kupferschmidt, provided his motivation to write the book reviewed here.

The content and structure of Kupferschmidt’s book is closely molded

(to use violin-making vocabulary) after the said brochure, more specifically the version from spring 1931. The main part of the book consists of facsimiles of the brochure's pages, displaying on a single page a photograph of each musician or ensemble with their endorsements, complemented on the adjacent page with the author's added biographical annotations. In total, 140 entries are included. Regarding the musicians' profiles, the author states that he mainly relied on available publications such as dictionaries, journals, memoirs, and biographies, as well as less formal online sources. Given their brevity, the resulting profiles should be considered biographical sketches based on existing information rather than new findings or in-depth analyses of each performer's life and artistry. Nevertheless, with the inclusion of the facsimile brochure pages, this section provides a unique, but not necessarily exhaustive, insight into the music scene between the two World Wars both in the Netherlands and globally. Additionally, the author quite rightly emphasizes the aesthetic and semiotic values of the photographic portraits.

Preceding this core section of the book is a 72-page Introduction discussing the lives of Jacques Hakkert and his family, as well as their professional activities. In contrast to the central section, which displays the trade brochure, the preceding section features full endnote references, providing scientific solidity. For me, as an organologist with an interest in bowed string instruments and biographical research, this section proved to be the most informative and significant part of the book. It starts with a short biography of Jacques Hakkert, which describes his youth with his brother Max in their parents' music store, his study as a luthier, the subsequent start of his atelier in Rotterdam, and finally the deportation and gruesome fate of Jacques and his relatives. Other personal information, for example regarding his living conditions, marriage, and the birth of his children, appears to be missing, which suggests that the information was either considered private or the information was lost, caused by the events during the war. In a similarly concise manner, only one violin made by Hakkert is discussed and illustrated in the main text, allegedly his first. It may be hoped that the current book will induce continued research and interest in Jacques Hakkert's instruments, possibly resulting in a published catalog. The Introduction section also vividly discusses gut-string making and gut violin strings in general; Hakkert's entrance, progress, and marketing strategies within the string business; his professional and in some cases amicable relationships with the endorsing musicians; concert life in

Holland; the transition from gut to more modern strings; and finally the transfer and ultimate closure of the gut-string factory in the late 1970s. Although these discussions offer solid contextual information to augment the value of the book's central part (the annotated brochure), a minor point of criticism may be expressed concerning the treatment of the more technical, instrument-related topics, such as gut strings, violin making history, and developments in violin construction. The information provided appears somewhat one-sided at times, lacking the inclusion of more diverse references and up-to-date viewpoints. However, the author anticipates such an evaluation in the book's final section by mentioning that he is not a musicologist. In this six-page afterword, he also adds a welcome personal perspective by elucidating some of the backgrounds and motives behind his research and writing process.

Until the publication of the book currently reviewed here, information on the violin maker Jacques Hakkert and the associated music store and string factory was scarce and scattered. Pre-war violin making encyclopedias (e.g., those by von Lütgendorff and Vannes) briefly summarize Jacques' education as luthier and praise his violin making capacities. The book *400 Jaar Vioolbouwkunst in Nederland / 400 Years of Violin Making in the Netherlands* (by J. H. Giskes et al., Abcoude: Uniepers, 1999) contains a similarly short entry, but mentions also "more than a hundred violins to his own design," the string factory, and, of course, Hakkert's death "under tragic circumstances." Max Möller already provided comparable information in his book *The Violin-Makers of the Low Countries (Belgium and Holland)* (Amsterdam: M. Möller, 1955). Further previous sources include a short mention in a twenty-fifth-anniversary magazine by the Dutch Musical Instruments Foundation (2013), a 100th-anniversary booklet for the Muziek Hakkert company (1980), containing mostly photographs and reproductions of relevant documents, and a website and Facebook page maintained by the last Muziek Hakkert manager, Albert Rottier (the music store closed in 2007). Kupferschmidt's book is the first scholarly publication regarding the family and their activities involving musical instruments, and a valuable contribution to the field of organology. The book is well written, and given the trade brochure as its foundation, not only informs us about the life of the Hakkerts and their music store and string making business, but also provides an enlightening view of the classical music scene of the era. Understandably, antisemitism and the German occupation form a major theme in the book, reflected by the terrible fate

of the Hakkert family and several of the Jewish musicians featured in the brochure; the destruction of Hakkert's former house and atelier during the 1940 Rotterdam Blitz; the confiscation of the string manufacturing company in 1942 (presumably for its production of suture thread); and the apparent indifference towards—and even collaboration with—the Nazis on the part of several Dutch musicians (among them some included in the Hakkert brochure), conductors, and impresarios.

The author of the book is a professor emeritus at the Department of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies at the University of Haifa. Although this book is his first major publication concerning a musical topic, and it is thus outside of his specific academic field, it nevertheless shows analogies with his previous research, especially regarding the micro-historical focus towards a particular individual or family, the emphasis on entrepreneurship and commercial publicity, and the attention to “small technologies.” This results in an expert treatment of the topic, especially regarding its socio-economic aspects, and therefore the book is highly recommended for readers interested in entrepreneurial activities in the Netherlands during the first half of the twentieth century in general and the musical instrument and string business and its promotional tools in particular. Moreover, the personal relation between the author and the subject has allowed him to create a worthy and impressive monument for the immediate family members whom he never got to know in real life.

GEERTEN VERBERKMOES

BERGEN OP ZOOM, THE NETHERLANDS