

Most 17th century Dutch organs were transformed in the next century: for instance at St Laurens, Alkmaar, the large organ was also originally made by van Hagerbeer, but was then rebuilt by Schnitger in the C18 century, with many changes to the voicing and overall specification including a much fuller pedal division suitable for high Baroque repertoire.

Although Sweelinck was the organist of the Oude Kerk, Amsterdam, he was employed by the City, and not by the Church: his duties included regular organ recitals, and this may be one of the reasons for the brilliance and secular qualities of his variations on sacred themes: these exploited the full range of solo colours available, including some of the first independent pedals parts, used either for the cantus firmus in variations and for the pedal entries of Fantasia themes – for example in the Fantasia 'Ut re mi fa sol la. à voci'. The sacred variations and Fantasias are ideal on the organ, but the secular variations suit the harpsichord better, Sweelinck was also known for his harpsichord recitals, and there is a documented visit he made to Antwerp to purchase a harpsichord, perhaps from the Ruckers family.

Leo van Doeselaar, the titular of the Pieterskerk was enormously helpful with the application of contemporary Dutch stop registrations to this organ, and Pieter Dirksen, author of *The Keyboard Music of JP Sweelinck*, published by the KVNMM in 1997 also advised over textual and registration matters.

The track list, soundclips and direct order information are on this link: [chandos](#)

Detailed information about the organ of the Pieterskerk can be found on www.pieterskerk.com/USA/van_hagerbeer_organ.htm

and

www.hetorgel.nl/e2000-01e.htm

A short article by Pieter Dirksen about his keyboard music is on <http://www.hetorgel.nl/e2002-02f.htm>

*Review in The Daily Telegraph Saturday 1
November 2003*

Sweelinck: Organ Works

Robert Woolley (organ)

Chaconne CHAN 0701, £14.99

Since Holland is revered as the home of some of Europe's finest surviving baroque organs, it is not surprising that Sweelinck, one of the earliest virtuoso organist-composers, spent his whole working life at one of the most important churches in Amsterdam. This splendid recital is played on Dutch organ built only some 20 years after Sweelinck's death in 1621.

This versatile three-manual instrument from Leiden's Pieterskerk has a gorgeous palette of sounds that Robert Woolley exploits to the full, always choosing registrations that match both the spirit and the style of the music, from the brilliance of the opening *Toccata* to the sweetness of the *Mein junges Leben*. Even the most complex polyphonic textures are beautifully clear. He also rises magnificently to all the technical challenges posed by this attractive and well planned programme, covering the full range of Sweelinck's output and including toccatas, fantasias, and variations on Lutheran chorales and Calvinists psalm melodies as well as secular tunes. These require – and receive – a virtuoso display of dazzling finger-work.

Elizabeth Roche