

Hendrik Niehoff

Founded/Born

1495 - 1560

Closed/Death

Still active?

no

Description

Hendrik Niehoff (also Nyhoff, Neuhoff, Nieuwenhoff) (* around 1495; † 1560) was a prominent organ builder active in 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands. In the 16th century, Niehoff brought organ building in North Brabant to its peak, introducing various technical innovations and significantly influencing the development of Northern European organ culture.

Niehoff came from a well-established organ-building family, with his father Nicolaas likely based in Leeuwarden. Hendrik and his brother Herman (* around 1495; † after 1546) both contributed to the family trade. Hendrik trained under Johann von Koblenz and began working independently after his mentor's death in 1532. He later partnered with Hans von Köln, reflecting his growing reputation. Niehoff did not obtain citizenship in 's-Hertogenbosch despite living there for 22 years, indicating his significant itinerant activity.

Niehoff's work is renowned for shaping the "Brabantine organ" style, characterized by a distinctive facade layout reflecting the Werkprinzip. He advanced the use of Springladen (spring chests) and separated the functions of individual registers from the traditional blockwork, paving the way for more versatile organ designs. His organs typically featured a main work, Rückpositiv, and independent pedal, with larger instruments also including an Oberwerk. Niehoff's innovations were influential, providing a model for North German organ building.

During his prolific career, especially from 1538 to 1560, Niehoff built and maintained numerous organs. Notable works include the organ in the Oude Kerk, Amsterdam, where the famous composer Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck later played, and the organ in St. Johannis, Lüneburg. Although few of his original organs survive, Niehoff's contributions left a lasting legacy in the evolution of organ construction and performance in Northern Europe.

Sources

https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hendrik_Niehoff

Lüneburg, St. Johannis (Main Organ)

St. Johannis, Bei der St. Johanniskirche 2, 21335 Lüneburg, Germany



Builder	H. Niehoff
Year	ca. 1553
Period/Style	Renaissance
Stops	51
Keyboards	3+P
Keyaction	tracker/mechanical
Tuning	Equal at 453.0 Hz

Description

The pipe organ was constructed in 1553 by Hendrik Niehoff and Jasper Johansen in the Netherlands, specifically in 's-Hertogenbosch. The church assigned them to build a large organ which was then transported to Lüneburg, Germany via Amsterdam and Hamburg. The famous Brabant organ builders finished the work in 1553 and received a payment of 1000 Talers. In 1576, Dirck Hoyer from Hamburg added a substructure to the pedal, which was otherwise attached to a separate wind chest halfway behind the main work.

In his Organographia from 1619, Michael Praetorius documents that the organ was largely designed as block work and consisted of three sections with pedals and 27 other modules. There was an additional bass octave in the main work, where eight pipes were placed in the lateral flat fields of the main work housing. Outlined by Praetorius, the primary register was playable in the 16-foot counter octave.

Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, the organ was extended several times. Notably, in 1651/52, Friedrich Stellwagen from Lübeck increased the tuning pitch from 415 to 465 Hz. Essential changes to the instrument took place after repairs in the years 1739, 1755, and 1809, including a romantic transformation from 1850 to 1853 by Eduard Meyer.

In 1943, due to its value, the organ's casing was preserved, and under the influence of the organ movement, appreciation for the organ increased in the 20th century. Renowned German organ builder, Rudolf Von Beckerath, restored the organ in several phases. Notably, he conserved the old pipe collection from the Renaissance and Baroque periods and reversed modifications in intonation from later years.

In 1976, the organ underwent significant overhaul – the keyboards and mechanical action were replaced, as well as part of the wind chests. Expanded keyboard ranges and pedal couplings were maintained. In 1992, Von Beckerath renewed the beakers of the bass octave of the trombone 32'. A restoration is planned for 2025-27 by Hendrik Ahrend.

Stoplist/Disposition

I Rückpositiv	II Hauptwerk	III Oberwerk	Pedal
Prinzipal 8' N	Prinzipal 16' N/K	Prinzipal 8' N	Prinzipal 16' D
Gedackt 8' B	Quintadena 16' D	Rohrflöte 8' N	Untersatz 16' H
Quintadena 8' N	Oktave 8' D/M	Oktave 4' D	Oktave 8' D
Oktave 4' N/D/B	Gedackt 8' M	Blockflöte 4' M	Gedackt 8' D
Rohrflöte 4' M/B	Oktave 4' N/D	Nasat 2 2/3' N	Oktave 4' D
Sesquialtera II D/B	Nachthorn 4' M	Gemshorn 2' N	Nachthorn 2' D
Waldflöte 2' M/B	Quinte 2 2/3' D/M	Terzian II B	Bauernflöte 1' M
Sifflöte 1 1/3' B	Oktave 2' N/D	Oktave 1' B	Rauschpfeife II M
Scharff V-VII 1' B	Bauernflöte 2' M	Mixtur V-VI 1' M/B	Mixtur VI-VIII 2' D/B
Dulzian 16' D	Mixtur VI-VIII 1 1/3' D/B	Zimbel III 1/6' B	Posaune 32' D/B
Bärpfeife 8' B	Scharff IV-V 2/3' B	Trompete 8' B	Posaune 16' D/B
	Trompete 16' D/B	Dulzian 8' D/B	Trompete 8' D/B
	Trompete 8' N/B		Trompete 4' M/B
	Schalmey 4' B		Kornett 2' B

Additional: III/II, I/II, III/P, II/P, I/P, Tremulant I Rückpositiv, Tremulant III Oberwerk

Sources

[https://organindex.de/index.php?title=L%C3%BCneburg,_St._Johannis_\(Hauptorgel\)](https://organindex.de/index.php?title=L%C3%BCneburg,_St._Johannis_(Hauptorgel))