Report of Flentrop Scholarship 2017/18 (undertaken August 2019)

Alexander Pott

I am very grateful to Flentrop and to the Eric Thompson Trust for allowing me to benefit from this unique and fascinating scholarship. I learnt a great deal from playing some excellent organs around the Netherlands, from having lessons with inspirational teachers, and from seeing how Flentrop build organs and even making some pipes myself.

I grew up learning on various mechanical action organs in England and have always enjoyed organs with a responsive touch. However, I was amazed to discover how many of my preconceptions about historic organs were completely wrong. The 1521 organ in Oosthuizen, for example, which despite its very small size fills the church with a startlingly strong sound, or the heavy action of the amazing Müller organ in the Bavo Church, Haarlem, which compels the organist to play in a very muscular way which suits the gravity and richness of the sound the instrument produces. I was also amazed to discover the variety of vibrant 8ft tone on every organ which balances the strong mixtures built above them, creating a rich sonority so often lacking from the neo-baroque organs.

Helping me get to grips with these instruments and offering expert guidance on interpretation were three fantastic teachers: Jos van der Kooy, Matthias Havingha, and Theo Jellema. Jos van der Kooy was full of enthusiasm for all sorts of music, and had some really interesting things to say about how to interpret historical sources and conventions. He had an infectious energy despite a very early start, teaching us at 7:30 the morning after he had given a stunning organ recital! Playing Mendelssohn to Matthias Havingha on an early 19th-Century organ at the Ronde Kerk in Amsterdam was an incredible experience, and he had a brilliant eye for detail and brought so much out of the music. Theo Jellema introduced us to the remarkable organ of the Grote Kerk in Harlingen, and I learnt much from him about shaping phrases and how to control the action to get the best sounds out of the instrument.

Spending time in the workshops of Flentrop allowed me to see how organs are designed and built - something that I had never seen before. Ross Luescher gave us a tour and made it clear that we could ask any questions we had, no matter how basic – which was lucky as I knew very little about organ building! But by the end of the stay, armed with a metal pipe and a wooden pipe I had made and voiced myself thanks to the expert and patient tuition of many of the staff, I felt I had a much more solid understanding of the incredible skills required to build an organ.

Amongst Flentrop's many helpful and friendly staff, I would particularly like to thank Daniël van Horssen for taking me to a spectacular restaurant and for sharing his passion for recordings and whisky, and also to Ed Lustig for piloting us on a flying tour of the Netherlands – a fantastic and unforgettable experience!

Report of Flentrop Scholarship 2018/19 (undertaken August 2019)

Tammas Slater

'Don't swing your arms,' company assistant Ross Leuscher, himself a one-time Flentrop scholar, warned us as we navigated the narrow aisles between rather formidable pieces of machinery and razor-sharp sheets of lead, sanded smooth and sharp. As a musician, my natural aversion to anything that looks like it could relieve oneself of the digits and appendages vital to one's livelihood is considerable. With palpable trepidation (or maybe that was just me) the tour continues. Seeing multiple sticking plasters festooning some of the *Flentroppers* hands, finding out that aiming for one's fingers with a flat plank of oak seemed to be the best method of whacking a stubborn lead sheet into the smooth conical shape required for a pipe foot, or being told that the ladder descending from the *Hoofdwerk* wind chests of the organ of the Waalse Kerk in Haarlem 'didn't move too much' elicited much the same feeling. The week certainly took me out of my comfort zone.

Before arriving in Zaandam, I had only the sketchiest of conceptions of what went on inside the instrument when I pressed a key. At least now, when I sit at the console, I know how much I don't know. All joking aside, the warm welcome and excellent company extended to me by the *Flentroppers* made me and my fellow Scholar, Alex Pott feel like members of their little organbuilding coterie. This is what makes the firm truly special; this amicable relationship has widened to include players, clients and consultants, whose creativity and ideas are at the heart of the firm.

After the initial trauma and tribulation of the early morning get-up to reach Haarlem for 7:30 am, Jos van der Kooy was in good humour, handing out good advice and allowing us to use the deserted Haarlem Grote Kerk – an ambience I will never forget. I would like to thank Matthias Havinga for his patience as we got acquainted with the organ at Amsterdam's Ronde Lutherse Kerk and its heavy action – I will never call any actions in England tough again! The trip to Friesland to meet Theo Jellema, who was inspirational, and who I would like to thank once again for allowing me to sit in his Rietveld chair, which at the time I was rather excited about.

Whether it was lunching on the final day, being toured around the byways of North Holland on the way to visit the historic organs in Oosthuizen and Edam by Erica Hoorn, listening to Shostakovich at half past eleven on the final night at Daniël van Horssen's house, or suspended a thousand feet above Alkmaar's Grote Kerk in a light aircraft, courtesy of Ed Lustig, where I felt like a latter-day, elevated Ruisdael, surveying the expansive polder landscape in its inimitable geometric glory. The knowledge that I have gained as a result of my time at Flentrop is truly invaluable, and I am extremely grateful to all at both the firm and the Eric Thompson Trust for making it all possible.