

Two Carillons in São Paulo, Brazil

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The Parish Church of Vila Formosa, a suburb of Sao Paulo, Brasil



The Cathedral of downtown Sao Paulo, Brasil

Presentation to the Congress of the World Carillon Federation, Groningen 2008

Both pictures by Serge Joris

Introduction

This article deals with the origin of the two carillons in São Paulo, Brazil. It is based upon the diaries, newspaper clippings and a photo album of Leen 't Hart (1920-1992), who inaugurated the instruments in 1951 and 1959 respectively.

The carillon of Vila Formosa, a suburb of São Paulo, was produced in 1950 by the Royal Eijsbouts Bell foundry, who allowed me to consult their files, consisting of approximately 200 letters. The carillon for the Cathedral of São Paulo was cast in 1958 by the Royal Bell Foundry Petit & Fritsen. The archives of P&F regarding that period are not yet in order and the Leen 't Hart Collection contains only newspaper clippings and some letters.

Both carillons were visited by Serge Joris from Gembloux, Belgium, in 2006 and he has contributed recent data to this publication.

Vila Formosa

When Padre Frans Jansen visited Delft in 1949 on the occasion of his brother's wedding, he heard the carillon of the New Church and decided to have such a musical instrument in his parish church in Vila Formosa, which was then under construction. He made inquiries of both Eijsbouts and Petit & Fritsen. Eijsbouts advised him to install an automatic playing mechanism, if there was no possibility to appoint a carillonneur. And in addition he recommended an ivory keyboard as a simple additional tool to the automatic system. In January 1950 Eijsbouts made an offer for a carillon, similar to the one he had cast in 1949 for Oisterwijk, the Netherlands, consisting of 42 bells based upon f1. In April 1950 Padre Frans could announce that the fundraising went satisfactorily, which made it justifiable to work out the plans in more detail. The Padre played the two bell founders off against each other and decided finally in favour of Eijsbouts.

The three largest bells had to be installed as swinging bells as well and the fourth largest bell got an Angelus mechanism. The three largest bells showed an image of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, after a design by Mrs Lucker, artist in Asten. In September 1950 the majority of the bells had been cast. The largest ones were delayed as they were waiting for their lettering. The last and biggest one was cast on October 18th. In the meantime Eijsbouts set up the belfry, which had been ordered by Frans separately from a Brabant construction firm.

Inspection

There had been some correspondence about the desirability and possibility of testing the bells, preferably in operational situation. Eijsbouts suggested to have this inspection done by the renowned campanologist dr W. van der Elst (1882-1963) from Utrecht. The bells were on display at the bell foundry from October 28 till the first of November. Besides the experts Dr Van der Elst, Herman Teygeler (1908-1969) and Toon van Balkom (1886-1958), the carillonners Willem Créman (1895-1970), Cees Roelofs (1905-2005) and Leen 't Hart were present. And also Padre Jansen's family had been invited. Tape recordings were made. The inspection report surprisingly mentions that the bells were tuned in mid-tone tuning. We should take into account that shortly before André Lehr had discovered that 17th century bells were tuned in that manner.

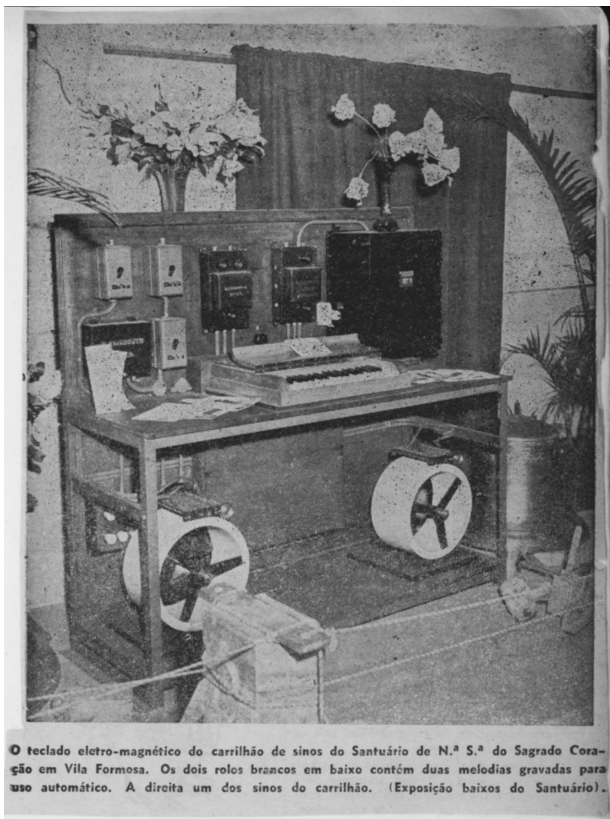
Now that the bells sounded so agreeable Eijsbouts asked Padre Frans to consider installing a keyboard and to have a carillonneur in Vila Formosa for a 2 to 3-month period.

Gramophone records

Earlier in the summer of 1950 Eijsbouts had supplied Padre Frans, on his request, with gramophone recordings of carillon music for which Eijsbouts had called in Cees Roelofs. Padre Frans had supplied a list of Brazilian and Dutch songs. The gramophone records were to be used in his radio fundraising campaign. As the bells did not yet exist at that time the recordings have been made on an other carillon. Eijsbouts made copies of these recordings on tape.

Chime

The melodies for the chime had to be punched on the surface of exchangeable drums of a type, then new. They had a revolution time of 80-90 seconds and two drums were used for the quarters of the hour. Eijsbouts appealed to Sjeff van Balkom (1922-2004), the Den Bosch carillonneur. Roelofs was asked to send the melodies by mail but he could not find the originals. Roelofs, who was blind, had to make transcriptions from his Braille copies. But Van Balkom refused to use these as some of them did not correspond with the examples in music books and therefore he distrusted all of them. The only thing Roelofs could do, was search until he found the original copies.



The automatic playing installation. On the table an ivory keyboard, below two drums

Transport en installation

In the middle of November the bells and their accessories were shipped from Amsterdam to Santos, the harbour of São Paulo. The bill of lading mentions a total of 14.670 kgs. The cargo was insured at Lloyd's and shortly before departure a snapshot was taken of the bells in front of the church in Asten and with the personnel of Eijsbouts. The invoice dates from the same week and amounts to f 62.350. The shipping and unloading will not have given serious problems. We know that the bells and keyboard were on display in Galeria Preses Maia in downtown São Paulo. Mr Gaston Wijnen from Eijsbouts travelled for free to Brazil by oil tanker to mount the bells in the tower.



Exposition of the 47 bells in Sao Paulo, before transportation to Vila Formosa

Carillonneur

In the middle of February Padre Frans followed Eijsbouts' earlier advice to have a carillonneur there. Initially he intended to invite Kamiel Lefévere (1880-1972), a Belgian carillonneur who lived in New York and would hopefully be paid by The Rockefeller Foundation. But the name of Leen 't Hart, too, was mentioned then. Soon it became clear that 't Hart would come. His passage in April and by KLM was paid for by the Dutch Government.



Leen 't Hart at Amsterdam Schiphol Airport embarking for South America

At that time Leen 't Hart was 30 years of age, he was married to Rie Dorland and the couple had two daughters. In 1949 he was awarded the first prize in the carillon competition of Rotterdam and in 1950 he graduated from the Mechelen Carillon School 'with great distinction'. It was possible to arrange some replacements in Delft, Eijsbouts provided the housekeeping money for Rie, the Dutch ambassador in São Paulo intermediated for the cost of lodging and the parish provided Leen 't Hart with pocket money, which he mainly spent on music paper and cigars. While still in Holland Leen taught himself Portuguese with the assistance of a Linguaphone course, but the result would be disappointing as the Brazilians have their own pronunciation of the Portuguese language.

Travel

On April 12, 1951 Leen 't Hart flew with stopovers in Frankfurt, Geneva, Lisbon, Dakar to Recife in Brazil. There he changed for a domestic flight to Rio de Janeiro and then to São Paulo. He was

accommodated in a luxury hotel suite, where he did not feel at ease. He was impressed by the enormous city. Gaston Wijnen came to collect him for his first visit to Vila Formosa, a 15 km journey by bus. Wijnen had the carillon in playable condition so that 't Hart could test the instrument at once. He played catholic hymns to make a fine impression on the padres and the people. But the automatic drum ran irregularly and the arrangements of Van Balkom were too heavy in the bases. 't Hart decided to reset all 15 drums and to install extra support for the long wires of the carillon. He met the intended carillonneur, Adacir Ferrari and gave him his first lesson.

Arrangements were made for radio recordings, gramophone and TV recordings and that same night he returned to his hotel in São Paulo. But fortunately he could move to the seminary in the middle of the following week. This was a walking distance of 10 minutes from the church.

Parish

The parish consisted of 35.000 people and it was served by three padres. There was a seminary with padre-teachers. The padres were Dutch, their average age was 38-40 years. 't Hart felt very much at ease in the seminary. His days were filled with morning walks, activities at the carillon, punching the drums, teaching Ferrari and Padre Frans, writing letters to his family and articles for a Delft newspaper and for a church bulletin. As there was no electricity after 10.00 pm, he sometimes wrote by candlelight.

On the first Sunday, April 22, he gave a try-out recital for which there was great public interest. The last week of April was spent with interviews for radio, TV and newspapers, photo sessions en drawing up programmes for his recitals in the weeks to come. The church was decorated with greenery and flags. There were spotlights and loudspeakers. The latter for the benefit of the journalist Manuel Victor, a local celebrity with a daily radio programme, who was to comment on the inauguration programme.



The padres of Vila Formosa



and Leen 't Hart (with pipe)

The Big Day

Sunday, April 29, was an extraordinary day. Extra police forces were deployed. Extra motor coaches ran back and forth, each time carrying at least 70 passengers. Cars ran 4 in a row. Downtown at the bus stop there was a queue of 1 km and people had to wait for 4 hours. That's why some of them preferred to walk the 15 kms to Vila Formosa. Some people fainted. As a result of the chaotic traffic the cardinal, who was the guest of honour, arrived one hour and a half late. Fellow-padres came from far and near, some of them travelling 800 kms, others after 30 hours by train. Afterwards the number of visitors was estimated to have been some 100.000!

In spite of the cardinal's delay, Leen 't Hart started his recital at 2.30 pm and he continued playing till 7.00. The audience was in ecstasies and applauded after each item on the programme with the exception of the Ave Maria, and many a one wept, when listening to the national anthem. Leen 't Hart himself was exhausted but he felt grateful for this experience.

Apart from the Cardinal the event was attended by the Dutch ambassador, the representative of the governor of São Paulo, the 1st Secretary of Commerce of the Dutch Embassy and the vice president of the Dutch Upper Chamber.



View from the tower to the crowd on the day of the inauguration of the carillon

The Day After

Monday, April 30 was a special day, as it was Leen 't Hart's birthday. There were birthday greetings in the mail. But there were also TV recordings. Leen performed a Minuet of Boccherini, the Brazilian Anthem and Ave Maria by Gounod. At night the padres celebrated Leen's birthday with him. Between the 10 of them they finished three bottles of champagne. They watched TV and it was the first time that Leen observed himself, while playing, in his undershirt at that!

During this week and those that followed Leen 't Hart gave recitals which were attended by numerous listeners, travelling in more than 100 cars. Inexperienced as they were, the audience took their seats within the church instead of outside. In between these recitals buses with schoolchildren and housewives came to visit the carillon. Leen received them at the carillon in the tower. Leen 't Hart was satisfied with the bells and the playing mechanism, but he kept having problems with the automatic machine. The padres were full of praise for the bells and the way 't Hart handled them. The weather was very warm and Leen 't Hart felt obliged to take a shower at least three times a week, which then was considered to be exceptional.

The remainder of this month was used for punching drums, walks, playing recitals, writing for newspapers and writing letters. He gave a radio talk on 'My profession'. He also gave an organ recital in a church in the centre of São Paulo, which was exceptional as public performances were not allowed in catholic churches.

There were still many buses with visitors, sometimes 600 a day. At one of his Sunday afternoon recitals he demonstrated pianissimo play, which elicited the comment from some Belgian visitors that they had never heard such exceptional expression before. Many visitors came back and they brought even more people along. The Sunday afternoon recital of May 27 was still attended by thousands of listeners, this number being based upon hundreds of cars and long queues of passengers waiting for the buses.



Leen 't Hart in his underwear, sitting at the keyboard of the carillon

Leisure

After that first month of activities there was more time for trips, among others to Santos, the harbour of São Paulo, to a plantation in Campinas and for a trip through the mountains. The padres had an official portrait made to be hung in the playing cabin of the carillon.

Indeed, Leen 't Hart felt at ease with the padres. The food was good and they sang together. But Leen's wife Rie wrote to Eijsbouts that she wanted her husband back home. Eijsbouts had suggested prolonging Leen's stay from 3 to 5 months because he had been invited to inaugurate the carillon of Curaçao. May 28, Rie's birthday, was a day of longing for both of them.

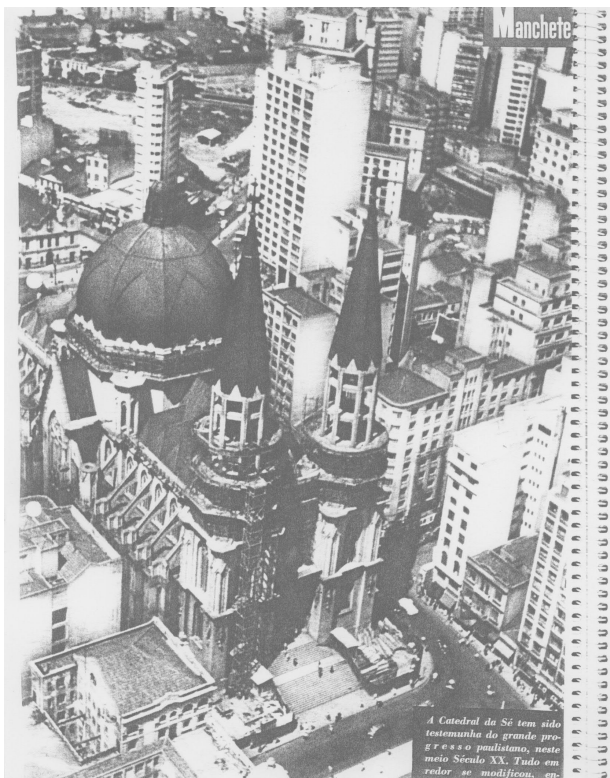
But Leen was satisfied with the progress of his student Ferrari, whom he taught daily for half an hour, after which Ferrari practised for another 5 to 6 hours, thus reaching a fair level of performance, thanks to the fact that he was already a trained organist. Padre Frans Jansen learned how to play the carillon too. In June the electricity in the tower was improved and the automatic installation worked better. But the interest in the concerts decreased. There was some delay in the production of the carillon for Curacao, which obliged 't Hart to stay in Vila Formosa till the end of July. He used this extra time to write teaching material. Finally he left for Curacao.



Official portret of Leen 't Hart to be hung in the playing cabin of the carillon. This copy is from the Leen 't Hart collection. He himself wrote the comment: Wat een vent = What a guy!

Cathedral

Little documentation is available about the origin of the carillon for the cathedral in São Paulo, cast in 1958, as the archives of the Royal Bell foundry Petit & Fritsen for that period have not yet been catalogued. Leen 't Hart was the advisor and he was invited to play the inauguration recital on January 25, 1959. He preferred Petit & Fritsen to Eijsbouts, not for artistic reasons, but in order to create equal opportunities for both companies at the South American market. 't Hart got permission from his employers, the cities of Delft, Rotterdam and Amersfoort, who agreed with his replacements. 't Hart's scrapbooks contain newspaper clippings about this event.



Cathedral in Sao Paulo

2-2-1959

DELFTSCHE

LEEN 'T HART GEVIERT MAN IN BRAZILIË

Carillonconcert in Sao Paulo trok tweehonderdduizend toehoorders

GEBRUIND door de zon, die alles en iedereen in Brazilië in zo'n temperatuur van om en nabij veertig graden stooft, is Leen 't Hart gisteravond om twaalf uur in Delft teruggekeerd van een reis van een maand voor de inwijding van een nieuw carillon in een sinds 1914 in aanbouw zijnde kathedraal van Sao Paulo. Tijdens het concert was het gehele plein voor de kerk — dat maar liefst een oppervlakte heeft van dertigduizend vierkante meter — tot de laatste plaats bezet met belangstellenden. Naar schatting waren er bijna tweehonderdduizend mensen uit alle delen van deze miljoenenstad samengestroomd om „de grootste beiaardier van de wereld”, zoals de Braziliaanse kranten schreven, te beluisteren toen hij de 61 klokken van dit carillon bespeelde.

**Enthousiaste menigte vroeg
toegiften**

Anderhalf uur hebben ze daar resseerd zijn in romantische en

Vila Formosa en is nu ook aange-
steld om het nieuwe carillon te
gaan bespelen.

Direct na zijn aankomst in
Sao Paulo werd de heer 't Hart
opgenomen in de kring van de
Hollandse gemeenschap, welke
ongeveer drieduizend leden telt.
Hij bracht er de Oudejaars-
avond door en iedere zondag
bespeelde hij het orgel van de
Protestantse kerk.

De heer 't Hart heeft bij alle
prettige herinneringen er toch
ook nog een, die hem de schrik
van zijn leven bezorgde. Toen het
KLM-toestel „Jesse Zee” waar-
mee hij de heenreis naar Brazilië
maakte, boven een van de vlieg-
velden van Rio de Janeiro vloog
zag hij beneden zich het toestel
van de Vasp brandend neerstor-
ten.

Het nieuwe carillon van Sao
Paulo werd geleverd door Petit
en Fritsen uit Aarle Rixel welke
firma thans een opdracht heeft

Delft Newspaper of February 2, 1959

In his book 'Manual for the Carillonneur', 1978, 't Hart gives a literal report.

"On Sunday January 25, 1959 I inaugurated the carillon of the Cathedral of São Paulo, Brazil. The audience was larger than it had ever been and will ever be at a carillon recital. Of course I was accustomed to great numbers of listeners in Brazil - in 1951 when I inaugurated the carillon of Vila Formosa there were also some ten thousands of people - but now there were between 150.000 and 200.000! The recital was to take place at 7.30 pm, but at 4.00 pm it was already impossible to cross the huge square in front of the cathedral. There was a general traffic congestion, trams, buses, cars, taxis, nothing could move.

After the Holy Mass in the honour of all the workers at the cathedral and the two towers, which were in fact not yet completed, the carillon was presented to the people of São Paulo and Brazil, by the cardinal, who had been the guest of honour in 1951 in Vila Formosa.

At 7.30 pm I started my recital with the Brazilian anthem. The audience, who were not sure of what they could expect from 61 bells, became ecstatic, when they recognized the melody of their national anthem. After a short silence a burst of Viva, Viva, Viva -cheering rose up to the tower. Unforgettable. In contrast with this exultation was the absolute silence, when I played the Carol Silent Night on the smallest bells. I was told later by some Dutchmen, that they had never witnessed such an enormous crowd of people in such silence.

The official inauguration recital took much more time than planned, because the audience continued applauding after each item. But after some hours a Padre came with the suggestion to repeat the Brazilian anthem. And yes, after a final storm of applause the mass began to move and left the square.¹

Actual situation [2008]

In November 2006 my colleague Serge Joris had the opportunity to visit both Brazilian carillons.²

He visited first the carillon of the church of Vila Formosa. The bells and the bell frames are in reasonable state. The mechanism for the automatic carillon, with the punched drums and the piano keyboard, are out of service at the present time. The wooden structure of the keyboard is in order but the keyboard itself is currently unplayable as a majority of the keys and pedals are completely blocked. The rear view of the keyboard shows a rather particular connection of some pedals to the bass bells. The transmission between the keyboard and the bells is even so particular because of the presence of electromagnets controlling the automatic play of the carillon. The clappers are moved by rods, pulled by the action of the keyboard or by an electromagnet.

The Cathedral of São Paulo is beautifully located in the very center of this enormous city, and the carillon of the cathedral was easy to play. The playing cabin is nicely located between the treble and the bass bells. The bells and the bell frames are in reasonable state. The iconography on these bells is rather particular as it shows 2 dates: the casting of the bell in 1958 and its installation in 1960. The keyboard is in a reasonable state, but at the time of my visit it had not been used since many years. The 9 pedal keys controlling the heaviest bass bells are completely independent of the manual keyboard.

Joris concluded his presentation with a short movie to give an impression of the sound of this respectable instrument.

¹ Leen 't Hart in "25 jaar Nederlandse Beiaardschool", Amersfoort 1978.

² Serge Joris: Le saviez-vous ? Les carillons de São Paulo : les seuls en Amérique du Sud / Did you know this? The carillons of São Paulo, the only ones in South America. in: Bulletin Campanaire de Wallonie.