

Gaudeamus Composition Project

The Dom tower of Utrecht (Domtoren)

The carillon of the Domtoren – the tallest church tower in The Netherlands, is considered one of the best instruments in the World. Of the 50 bells in total, 34 bells were cast in 1664 by the master carillon makers – brothers Pieter and Francois Hemony.

The carillon plays an important role in the life of the city of Utrecht. Besides being played twice a week by a city carillonneur Malgosia Fiebig, it also plays an important role during national holidays and special occasions.

- 50 bells: G, Bb, C1, D1 - chromatic - c5
- Manual keyboard: g1 – c5
- Pedal keyboard: G, Bb, C1, D1 - g2 (1,5 octave).
- Tuning: Meantone. To avoid the carillon sounding false, recommended keys: no more than two sharps and two flats. Atonal compositions do work on a meantone instrument.
- Carillonneurs play with their fists. Intervals up to a fourth can be played with an open hand as well.
- Big chords are often played arpeggio.
- By repeating two or more keys in a very fast tempo, the result will be a tremolo-effect.
- The lowest bells are normally played in a not too fast tempo / rhythm.

Interesting links

- What is a carillon? <http://www.gcna.org/carillon-instrument.html>
- There are recordings of the compositions that won 1st, 2nd and 3rd prize in a carillon composition in Zwolle (NL) in 2015 on Youtube. You can look at the score while listening to the music:
 - 1st prize: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lfZlzWZUya4>
 - 2nd prize: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3bdsOs_-xeE
 - 3rd prize: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EsObE-INjwQ>
- It's possible to watch a lot of carillon concerts on the YouTube channel of the Domtoren: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCZHt_oQLv_5HM-S3lksWCJQ