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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN.

Dear Sirs,

**The 1892 'Father' Henry Willis Organ in Leiden**

It was my immense pleasure to play the inaugural recital on the organ in the Leiden Hooglandsekerk on Friday last, and I can say without fear of overstatement or contradiction, that it is many years since I have enjoyed playing an organ more. Dr. David Wyld and his team are to be heartily congratulated on their first class and most sensitive restoration of an instrument which I first played in my early teens here on Merseyside.

Henry Willis (I), or 'Father Willis', as he was affectionately dubbed, was perhaps the most highly regarded organ builder in Britain in past centuries; his instruments transformed the British organ scene and led to an unrivalled dynasty of organbuilding which still exists today. His instruments are held as being equivalent to a Rolls Royce or a Stradivarius, and known throughout the world, for their beauty and high standard of construction. The Leiden organ is one-such, and the authorities are to be congratulated on their vision and industry to make this project a reality.

Tonally, the Leiden organ is a magnificent specimen; whilst possessing many lovely solo registers, it boasts fine choruswork and fiery reeds, implying an instrument of twice its size; its pleno has a Cathedral-like grandeur and nobility not often found in many instruments of its size and date. It is also a most versatile instrument for accompaniment of choir and congregation, and speaking freely into the building as it does, is capable of playing most organ repertoire with authenticity.

It possesses all the signature Willis stops: Claribel Flute, Lieblich Gedact, Great (tierce) Mixture, Choir Corno di Bassetto, Swell Hautbois, and fiery (French-style) chorus reeds; all voiced with a freshness and perfect balance not always there in his later work. It also possesses a rare example of the Willis version of the 'Barker-lever' action to the Great and its couplers... it could not be more special.

It is very exciting to think that development of the Pedal Organ and completely new Solo Organ are planned, with all the colour and extended possibilities for repertoire these will provide. This second phase will make it a most complete and flexible instrument worthy of any great building.

I warmly commend the restoration and the extension of this fine Father Willis to you and hope that as many of you as possible will be as generous as you can, in order to aid this worthy project; preserving and enlarging this iconic instrument, which, when complete, will make Leiden a Mecca for Organists and Organ-lovers alike.

Yours faithfully,

*Ian Tracey*

Professor Ian Tracey.