

Langhedul

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Flemish family of organ builders. Active about 1475 to 1635, they were one of the prominent families in Ypres during that period, and particularly significant in the early development of the French Baroque organ.

Victor (*d* ?1513) was one of the great organ builders at the turn of the 16th century, as can be concluded from the importance of the churches for which he worked (Courtrai, Saint Omer and Lille). After his death his clients were taken over by Matthijs de Wulf [Matthieu le Leup] (*fl* 1515–22), husband of one of his four daughters.

Michiel the elder, Victor's son, went to England in his youth, probably to allow Matthijs de Wulf to work unhindered; while there he improved and enlarged the organ at Trinity Chapel, Salisbury Cathedral (1530–31). Apparently Michiel returned to Ypres after the early death of his brother-in-law and continued the family business from 1534 to c1570. His name is linked with a great number of organs, including many which he built new, though all are within the narrow geographical range of south-west Flanders and surroundings: Ypres, Courtrai (1534, 1546, 1570), Bruges (1535), Veurne (1536, 1557), Saint Omer (1546), Bergues (1548, 1557), Nieuwpoort (1553, 1557), Dunkirk (1555, 1559), Poperinghe (1569). And as very many village churches in the 16th century had organs, a large number in west Flanders must naturally be ascribed to Michiel. Towards the end of his life he was particularly occupied with the restoring of organs destroyed during the religious troubles of 1566.

Jan (*d* Ghent, 6 Feb 1592), son of Michiel the elder, was active at first in the same area (Courtrai, Ypres), but war, the temporary regime of the Calvinists and economic confusion forced him to move, in 1583 to Lille, and in 1585 to Paris. His Paris organ restorations (St Benoît, the Ste Chapelle, Couvent des Augustines, St Eustache) and the new instrument he built in St Jacques-de-la-Boucherie show several important innovations: a balanced *plein jeu*, a progressive Cornet of four, five and six ranks, and a rich complement of reed stops. He received the title 'Organ Builder to the King of France' for his work in the Ste Chapelle, part of the royal palace. Jan left Paris sometime after 15 October 1590 and returned to Ypres; his last works are found especially in Ghent and were produced in partnership with Guillames [Guillaume] (*fl* Ghent, 1590–95), probably his son. Jan is buried in the Dominican church, the only church in Ghent whose organ survived the religious uprisings.

Guillames' methods are especially known from a pair of plans for a new organ in St Baaf Cathedral, Ghent (c1590), which he submitted but which were not realized. They closely resemble the instruments constructed by his father in Paris.

Matthijs [Mattheus, Matthieu, Mateo] (*b* Ypres; *d* Brussels, 1635–6), son of Jan, was perhaps the most important organ builder of the family. It is likely that he was with his father during the latter's Paris years; when Jan decided to return to Flanders, Matthijs went to Spain. From 1592 to 1599 he was the organ tuner (*templador*) for the Spanish court. From mid-1599 to mid-1605 he was again in Paris, where his family's reputation brought him immediate work: restoration of organs in St Jean-en-Grève, the Cimetière des Innocents, Hôpital du St Esprit-en-Grève, St Benoît, Chapelle St Leu and St Jacques-de-la-Boucherie, and provision of a new *Rückpositiv* organ and a modernized great organ for St Eustache (1604–5). Matthijs's most important organ was the new one he built for St Gervais (1601–2), which provided the basis for the later instrument of the Couperin family. This organ still contains an amount of important pipework by Matthijs, including some with his signature.

It was Jan and Matthijs, together with [Crespin Carlier](#), who laid the groundwork for the classic French organ of the 17th and 18th centuries. In 1605 Matthijs returned to Ypres, from where he built the organ in Hondshoote (1611), the *Rückpositiv* of which is still preserved. About 1613 he settled in Brussels and became court organ builder to the Archdukes Albertus and Isabella. While there, he built organs in a wide radius including Saint Omer, Antwerp and Tongeren, as well as one for the Spanish court at Madrid.

Other family members are: Michiel the younger, son of Michiel the elder, resident of Ypres, organ builder and organist, mentioned in 1610 as organist at Hazebrouck; and two other Jans. One was choirmaster of Antwerp Cathedral about 1570. Another was city magistrate at Ypres, and though himself a Calvinist was able to save the organs of the main church there (certainly products of his family) from destruction during the Calvinist interregnum of 1578. He was a signatory of the Union of Utrecht (1579); after the restoration of Catholicism in 1584, he fled to England, where he died in Norwich.

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