

# Harpsichord & *fortepiano*

**Vol. 10, No. 2   Spring, 2006**

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Musical Instrument Research Catalog  
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# A QUEST FOR MUSIC:

Treasures from the University of Leiden Library Revealed, with a Special Focus on Dutch Music 1650-1750

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by Kathryn Cok

The University of Leiden, situated in a picturesque town between Amsterdam and The Hague, is considered by many to be the Oxford or Cambridge of the Netherlands. When referring to the University, much mention is made of its important faculties in Law, Medicine, Archeology, Mathematics, Languages and the Sciences to name just a few. While assuming that the University Library (UL) therefore reflects the needs of students in the above-mentioned departments, it is not widely known that a significant, and in many respects important, music collection also resides in the same institution.

During the last two years, as a fellow of the Scaliger Institute, named after Josephus Justus Scaliger (1540-1609, Leiden's most renowned scholar during the early years of the University's existence), I have been working to create a user-friendly catalogue of printed music found in the collection, including treatises, theoretical works, and other books having to do with music. Under the auspices of the Institute, set up in 2000 to function as an intermediary between the special collections and their users, I had access to internal databases and other facilities in the institute to help me in my task, including the assistance of a Masters student in *Boekwetenschap* (the Science of Books).

The original idea of the catalogue was that it was to contain music from 1600-1800, especially focusing on works printed with a privilege, which can simply be defined as a grant of special rights in the form of a franchise or monopoly around a printed book. Pietro Antonio Locatelli (1695-1764) was originally from Bergamo and moved to Amsterdam in 1729. Like many composers, he acted as his own publisher, in this case

obtaining a 15 year privilege from the state of Holland to publish his chamber music. One of the true gems to be found in the collection is the complete works of Locatelli.

In addition to music from the UL, treasures found in the *Bibliotheca Thysiana* are also to be included. Situated on the Rapenburg, one of Leiden's most elegant thoroughfares, it was erected in 1655 to house the book collection of Johannes Thysius (1621-1653). Thysius was a former law student from Leiden who left an endowment of 20,000 guilders and instructions for the building of a public library with a custodian's dwelling. The building is pristinely maintained in its original state, and is well worth a visit. While not open daily for the public, private tours can be arranged.

The initial premise was that I would unearth around 250 titles for inclusion in the catalogue. Happily I can say that this assumption was rapidly proven wrong, and at the time of writing consists of more than 1600 titles, from 1499-1810. While there is also much music from 1810 to the present day, it was decided to catalogue that at a later date.

The day to day aspects of the project involved searching internal and external library catalogues, poring over reference works such as the *New Grove Dictionary of Music & Musicians* and *RILM (Répertoire International de Littérature Musicale)*, and receiving much advice from renowned harpsichordist, organist and conductor Ton Koopman, whose voracious reading habits involving any printed matter about music continuously provided new names and ideas. While viewing selected works to ascertain whether or not they contained music, I encountered various reminders of past owners, making it a bit like a journey

in a time machine. Countless pressed flowers and other plant matter, the destructive nature of bookworms (at times even artistic), the danger of a writing implement in a child's hand, and a valuable book left un-observed for a moment caught my attention. Bookmarks with scribbling indicating someone's attempt to find a good pen nib with which to write, shopping lists for twine, candle wax and other household necessities (good to see people were just as forgetful or busy then as we are today), as well as the book plates of such important personalities as Isaac Vossius (librarian to Queen Christina of Sweden, who abdicated the throne on the 6th of June 1654 to move to Rome and convert to Catholicism) made me aware how privileged I was to be doing such work.

Before giving an idea of what treasures the catalogue contains, it might give the reader a better understanding of why the UL is such an important library, by revealing a bit of its history:

The University of Leiden Library is an institution of many firsts. It is considered by many to be the world's first scholarly library, it produced the first printed catalogue of a library's holdings (*Nomenclature*, by librarian Petrus Bertius in 1595), and was the first of its kind to attempt to create and maintain special collections. The first book acquired was the *Polyglot Bible*, printed by Christoffel Plantijn (active in Antwerp in the trade from 1555 on), and a gift of William of Orange (first president of the new republic of the Netherlands). In addition, the UL was the first Protestant library in the Netherlands. From the library's birth year of 1587, books came pouring in, donated from auctions, acquired from private persons, and purchased by Leiden book buyers in Frankfurt and Paris. The building quickly became too cramped, and a new location was opened on May 24, 1595. At that time there was an ordinance that determined the use of keys – therefore, access to the library's holdings. A limited number of people received keys and were free to use

the collection: curators and professors, the regent and sub-regent of the State College, members of the town council and public administrators. It was the idea that prominent institutions and individuals from the republic could consider the library as their own. Students, being students, quickly managed to take advantage of the situation, borrowing keys from professors and having them illegally copied. It took less than two years to turn the orderly library into chaos, resulting in it being closed for another two years.

Further economic expansion towards the east (due to the voyages of the East Indian trading company and others) meant that books could be bought on site, resulting in the library being an important source for Eastern Manuscripts. Regular donations and gifts increased the library's holdings. The largest purchase in its history was that of Isaac Vossius, *already mentioned above*. When he died in 1689, he indicated in his will that he wished that his collection not be broken up, and that it either go to Oxford, Cambridge, Amsterdam or Leiden. Fortunately, Leiden won out, acquiring a collection containing a number of Greek, but primarily Latin texts that would shine in any humanist's library. The building where the current UL is situated (Witte Singel number 27) and where I did my research, was opened in celebratory fashion by Queen Beatrix of the House of Orange-Nassau in 1984 (herself being a former student).

While traditional chamber and keyboard music is to be found in the collection, one genre that is overwhelmingly represented are *Liedboeken* or *Liedekens*, Dutch songbooks, both secular and sacred. Here again is a brief foray into the history of the seventeenth century to provide a bit of background information: The Peace of Munster in 1648 signalled the end of the 80 years' war between Spain and the Netherlands. The Republic of the (Northern) Netherlands grew to be an important trading centre, largely due to Antwerp being cut off from important trading routes, as well as being a safe haven for different



religions. The increasing wealth led to the rise of the upper and middle classes. This in turn resulted in the founding of music colleges in many cities where members of society combined music making with socializing. Amongst their ranks were to be found very good amateur composers such as Constantijn Huygens (1596-1687) who during his 60 years' service to the house of Orange-Nassau as secretary to the governor, came into contact with various personalities, musical and otherwise, including Giovanni Coprario (c.1570-1626), Joan Albert Ban (1597-1644), Rene Descartes (1596-1650), and Marin Mersenne (1588-1648).

*Liedboeken* were printed with music, or with only the text and the indication "op de wijze van" (in the manner of) or "stemme" (voice), because only people who were trained in music could read notes, and it was assumed in most cases that one would know the melody cited. To illustrate this is page 95 from Jan. Jansz. Starter's *Friesche Lusthof*<sup>1</sup> set to music by Jacob Vredeman (c.1564-1621). At the top of the page we see "stemme": indicating that the text, with music included in this example is to be sung to the tune of *Est ce Mars* also known as *Courante Mars*, which was used in music by composers such as Jacob van Eyck (1589/1590-1657) and Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck (1562-1621), to name just a few.

In the youth culture of the day, young men sang *liedekens* for their beloved, and some wrote them down and had them printed to give to the girl as a present. The majority of *liedboeken* were small enough to be carried, being published in octavo or smaller. Cheaper books cost 3 stuivers, a more expensive book costing as much as 1 1/2 or 2 guilders (a craftsman in 1650 earning about 1 guilder or 20 stuivers per day). The more expensive books were meant for the sons and daughters of the rich, but were also reprinted in cheaper versions for ordinary folk. Those less well off purchased *liedblaadjes* (sheet music) that were sold on the street during the market. Each important city published its own books with the name of the city proudly emblazoned on the title page.

*Liederen* dealt with love, but also concerned pastoral scenes, carnivals and public amusements and were set to poems by such renowned poets as Gerbrand Adriaensz Bredero (1585-1618), Constantijn Huygens and Pieter Corneliszoon Hooft (1581-1647). In reaction to this, poetic ministers such as Dirck Rafaelz Camphuysen (c.1586-1627) and Willem Sluiter (1627-1673) produced bundles with a more moralistic theme that were eagerly sought after and greedily bought by branches of the Protestant church. One example of such a secular *Liedboek* is Joan Albert Ban's *Zangbloemzel*.<sup>2</sup> Ban was a priest, musicologist and amateur composer. In his bundle he sets texts to music by such renowned writers as Huygens and Hooft, both mentioned above, and Joost van den Vondel.

The collection in Leiden also contains a disproportionate amount of theoretical works and treatises such as: *The use and disuse of the organ in the churches of the United Netherlands*, by Huygens,<sup>3</sup> wherein he writes in support of the organ accompaniment of psalm singing in the Dutch Reformed Church which had been forbidden since the Dordrecht Synode of 1574. He also takes time to criticize sharply the calibre of municipal organ recitals given by city organists. While playing organ was forbidden during the service itself, Calvinist churches were open to the public, and daily organ recitals by the organist were intended to preserve public order within the church.

Chamber music from this period found in the collection, in this case originating from *Bibliotheca Thysiana*, include two *Symphonia in nuptias*, celebrating the nuptials of D.I. Everswyn and Luciae Buys in 1641, and Matheus Steyn and Maria van Naples in 1642.<sup>4</sup> Both were composed by Cornelis Thymans Padbrue (1592-1670), who as a city musician played at weddings and banquets, and provided music and dancing lessons (including harpsichord instruction to the blind of the Reformed Church). We also know that lacking an even temper, he was dismissed from his post in 1635.

Representing keyboard music are the

likes of Quirinus van Blankenburg (1654-1739), himself a former student at Leiden, known for his theoretical works and as organist of, among others, the Nieuwe Kerk in The Hague. In the collection is his *Clavecimbel en orgel-boek der Gereformeerde Psalmen en kerkzangen*,<sup>5</sup> in which he provides homophonic settings of psalms and hymns of the Dutch Protestant Church. As well are to be found the harpsichord sonatas of Conrad Friedrich Hurlebusch (c.1696-1765),<sup>6</sup> composer, harpsichordist and theorist of German origin of whose compositions most are lost. These technically undemanding but pleasing sonatas found in Leiden were possibly intended for amateurs.

Of course, in a catalogue of 1600 titles, there are many more works to reveal and many more composers to discuss, but that

will have to be reserved for another time. The catalogue itself will eventually appear in book form in both Dutch and English, with an earlier appearance as an electronic database. An exhibition in the UL is planned from June 3rd to the beginning of July 2005, revealing a selection of 35 representative works from the collection. Being involved in such an undertaking was stimulating and rewarding. In addition it granted me a first row seat in a journey through music history, and has further provided me with the encouragement to pursue my own research.

*Kathryn Cok is active as a soloist and chamber musician on the harpsichord and fortepiano. She is currently pursuing a PhD at the University of Leiden in the docARTES program.*

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- 1 J.J. Starter, *Friesche lust-hof, beplant met verscheyde stichtelyke minne-liedekens, gedichten, ende boertige kluchten*. Paulus van Ravesteyn, Amsterdam, 1621. Sig: 1199 F 27
  - 2 Joan Albert Ban, *Zangh-bloemzel van Joan Albert Ban Haerlemmer : dat is, Staeltjes van den zinroerenden zangh, met dry stemmen, en den gemeene-grondstem : Neffens een kort zangh-bericht, ten dienst van alle vaderlandtsche zangh-lievers.* / Paulus Matthysz. , Amsterdam, 1642. Sig: 1203 B 18.
  - 3 Constantijn Huygens, *Ghebruik, en onghebruik van 't orghel, in de kerken der Vereenighde Nederlanden ...* Constantijn Huygens; verrykt met eenighe zanghen. / Arent Gerritsz. Vanden Heuvel, Amsterdam, 1659. Sig: 1159 E 20:4.
  - 4 Cornelis Thymans Padbrué, *Symphonia in nuptias*. Everswyn et Luc. Buy. Broer Jansz., Amsterdam, 1641. Sig. : THYSIA 807 64-65.  
Cornelis Thymans Padbrué, *Symphonia in nuptias Mt. Steyn et Mar. van Napels* / Broer Jansz., Amsterdam, 1642. Sig. : THYSIA 807 66-68
  - 5 Quirinus Gerbrandszoon van Blankenburg, *Livre de clavecin et d'orgues, pour les pseumes et cantiques, de l'Eglise Reformée, avec les memes notes, que l'assemblée chante actuellement, réduits en voix coulantes, borné en stile & hauteur, pourvu d'agemens & enrichi par l'art.* = *Clavecimbel en orgel-boek der Gereformeerde Psalmen en kerkzangen ...* / Laurens Berkoske, The Hague, 1745. Sig. : 545 D 16
  - 6 Conrad Friedrich Hurlebusch, *VI Sonate di cembelo : opera VI.* ( Amsterdam, [18e eeuw]. Sig. : 545 D 18 / MICFIC 66: 5)  
Conrad Friedrich Hurlebusch, *Sonate di cembelo preservate, come le mie altre composizioni, dalla bizzarria e dal gusto confuso d'oggidi ... : opera V.* (Amsterdam, [1746]. Sig. : 545 D 17 / MICFIC 66: 3