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Conclusion

The search for Gheerkin de Hondt as a *zangmeester* (Part I) and composer (Part II) yielded new insights, which I will sum up here.

The first trace of Gheerkin de Hondt is found in the archives of the Nieuwe Kerk in Delft, where he became *coraelmeester* on 3 June 1521. He left the church in 1523 (probably in December), to return on 1 August 1530. In March 1532 he left again, 'without saying goodbye'. A few months later, on 13 July 1532, Gheeraert de Hondt is mentioned in a copy of a foundation act as *zangmeester* of the Sint-Jacobskerk in Bruges. He served until the end of 1539, when he was appointed *zangmeester* of the chapter of the Sint-Janskerk and the Illustre Lieve Vrouwe Broederschap in 's-Hertogenbosch; he received his first payment there on 31 December of 1539. Because his wife did not take good care of the choirboys, who were maintained under his supervision, he was fired unilaterally by the chapter on 2 October 1547. According to the accounts of the Broederschap, Gheerkin left for 'Vrieslant', taking one of the choirboys (named Simon) with him. After that, we lose track of him.

Gheerkin de Hondt was born in Bruges, probably around 1495. His father, Jacob de Hondt, was a *tegheldeckker* (roofer/slater/tiler) who was highly respected in the city, where he was an important man in his trade. Jacob was married to a certain Lysbeth Joye, daughter of Abel Joye, a tailor (*sceppere*). Together they had at least three children who were younger than Gheerkin: Francois, Magdaleene and Jooris, the last one also being a *tegheldeckker*. Jacob de Hondt was a prosperous man when he died in 1546: his legacy consisted of five houses and a small house in the Geerwijnstraat, next to the Prinsenhof (the 15th-century luxurious palace of the Burgundian court). Jacob was not the first member of the De Hondt family to be a *tegheldeckker* in Bruges: both his father and grandfather had the same occupation, and they all lived in the wealthy parish of Sint-Jacobs. It seems to have been a true roofer family: city documents mention at least five more men with the same profession. The family was esteemed: almost every year between 1470 and 1577 a member is represented in the *Ambachtsbesturen* (boards of the crafts) and for many years they functioned as the city tilers. Gheerkin's father probably had at least one brother who was not a roofer but was also well-to-do: Adriaen de Hondt, who bought *lijffrentes* for Jacob's minor son and daughter Francois and Magdaleene in 1536/37. Jacob

himself became guardian of the choirboys of the Sint-Jacobskerk, from 1532/33 onwards.

The name De Hondt was a common one in Bruges – as it was in the entire county of Flanders, and many of the family members were parishioners of the Sint-Jacobskerk. Another branche of the De Hondt family had quite a few grocers. One of them was also called Gheeraert de Hondt. He has led to confusion with his contemporary namesake, the *zangmeester*, because both men lived in the parish of Sint-Jacob, where their dead children were buried. But I was able to demonstrate that it was Gheeraert the *crudenier* who was buried in the church in March 1562 and not Gheeraert the *zangmeester*.

That Gheerkin de Hondt was born in Bruges is confirmed by a legal document of February 1540. Gheeraert de *zangher* takes out a summons against a fellow townsman, referring to the sale of a pied mare on 2 December 1539. The judgement was passed *Ten poorterssche*, meaning that both men were burghers of the city of Bruges. Since Gheerkin did not buy his citizenship after he had come to Bruges in 1532, he must have been born there, probably around 1495.

In the first half of the 16th century, Bruges was losing its prominent trading position to the city of Antwerp, but was still an important and large city (housing approximately 42,000 inhabitants), with a capital spent among other things on art. Bruges was still a Mecca for music. From the 15th century onwards, in no fewer than six churches the liturgy was celebrated by professional singers and musicians, among them famous composers like Jacob Obrecht, Lupus Hellinck and Benedictus Appenzeller, singing music of colleagues working all over Europe. Gheerkin must have had a fine basic musical education in Bruges, although we do not have any concrete information about it. He also might have been a choirboy and singer in other towns. There are no indications that he completed his training with a university degree.

Gheerkin's career shows an upward trend. Delft was one of the leading cities in Holland (with approximately 12,000 inhabitants) and had two parish churches where professional music was sung, whereas in Bruges (42,000 inhabitants) there were six churches where the liturgy was celebrated with polyphony. The Sint-Jacobskerk, however, was 'just' a parish church, like the Nieuwe Kerk in Delft. Gheerkin's last known position as *zangmeester* was in 's-Hertogenbosch (circa 20,000 inhabitants), where there was only one large church, however, it functioned both as a parish and a collegiate church.

Because of the trajectory of Gheerkin's professional life, it remains a mystery why he chose to go to 'Vrieslant' after he was fired in 's-Hertogenbosch. Many of his colleagues proved that dismissal was no hindrance in getting an equal or even better

position somewhere else. But to go work in Friesland – in the upper north of the Low Countries – was clearly a large step backwards for a professional *zangmeester* and composer with such a good record of service as Gheerkin had. The Broederschap clearly did not want Gheerkin to leave and might have had an influence on the choice for Friesland: an elegant solution for a delicate question.

None of Gheerkin's appointment texts has been preserved. But from the appointment texts of other *zangmeesters* in the same churches and payments to Gheerkin and his colleagues we are able to describe his duties. His tasks were mainly liturgical. In all churches Gheerkin led the singing of the daily Divine Office and High Mass. Furthermore, there were other Masses, major feasts, feasts of saints, processions, *Lof* services, Requiem and memorial services for parishioners, personal foundations and celebrations by brotherhoods, guilds and crafts having their own altars in the church. As leader of the group, Gheerkin chose the polyphony to be sung and was also responsible for the recruitment of the singers and the musical education of the choirboys; in 's-Hertogenbosch the boys were kept in his care. Composing probably did not officially belong to his job responsibilities, but in 's-Hertogenbosch it was appreciated and at least once he was paid an extra remuneration for composing some motets.

The repertoire sung during the liturgical services was many-sided. Masses and motets by famous composers and *Kleinmeister* from all over Europe was on the music stand, but also local singers added their own compositions to the musical collections in the churches. Only one set of music books Gheerkin used during his work has been preserved, namely the one in 's-Hertogenbosch belonging to the Illustre Lieve Vrouwe Broederschap. It contains both chant and polyphony, written by local priests, one of them (Philippus de Spina) being a singer for the chapter and the Broederschap, but also from the famous workshop of Petrus Alamire. All music was used during the liturgy held in the private chapel of the Broederschap, and includes music for Vespers, Masses, feasts, *Lof* services and memorial services. It can be divided in three main categories: 1) music for Marian devotion, 2) music for specific feasts and saints and 3) music for general use. As it turned out, Gheerkin had an influence on the compilation of at least two of the manuscripts, both most likely dating from the 1540s, which says something about his personal taste.

The singers performing the music under Gheerkin's direction were part of a large network, and came mainly from the Low Countries and northern France. One of them, Gommar van Lier, probably sang under Gheerkin's supervision both in Delft and in 's-Hertogenbosch. Another one, Franciscus of Namur, might have sung with Gheerkin in Delft and in 's-Hertogenbosch, and worked as a singer in the church of Our Lady in Bruges when Gheerkin was *zangmeester* in the Sint-

Jacobskerk, but we also have to take into account that it might have been two or even three different persons. Finally, Hendrik de Mol van Mechelen was already in 's-Hertogenbosch when Gheerkin arrived there, but the men had previously met in the early 1520s, when they both sang at the Nieuwe Kerk in Delft.

All churches where Gheerkin worked attracted guest singers. Some of them came to seek a job, others only passed by to sing with former colleagues and friends. In 's-Hertogenbosch there were quite a few important guests when Gheerkin worked there: the *zangmeesters* of important churches in Antwerp and Dordrecht, but also the *zangmeesters* and singers of Emperor Charles V (among them Thomas Crecquillon and Cornelius Canis) and the governess of the Low Countries Mary of Hungary (Benedictus Appenzeller), belonging to the most famous chapels in Europe.

The upward trend in Gheerkin's career is not only visible in his successive jobs as *zangmeester*, but also in his financial position. Starting in a middle-sized town that was not particularly rich, he went to a church in a very wealthy part of the metropolis Bruges. His final known post in 's-Hertogenbosch brought him a job with a high work pressure and long working days (seven days a week, fifty-two weeks a year), but the remunerations were in line with the workload: in income Gheerkin belonged to the higher middle class of society. Besides, the city attracted many artists and singers and Gheerkin worked for the top of the (local) society.

Gheerkin de Hondt was a typical product of the late medieval Low Countries: a local *zangmeester* who had had a solid education that allowed him to function at a very high level. He never seems to have left the Low Countries, although we cannot rule out the possibility that he went abroad anyway, for example in the period 1524-1530 or even before he accepted the job as *zangmeester* in Delft in June 1521. Nevertheless, Gheerkin was part of the network of professional *zangmeesters* in the Low Countries and even beyond, following the high musical standards that were so characteristic for the area, and leading in Europe for such a long period.

The position Gheerkin de Hondt fulfilled in the network of *zangmeesters* is also valid for his role among his fellow composers. As it turns out, Gheerkin had a thorough knowledge of the music of previous and contemporary generations of composers (Part II).

Five Masses, four motets and nine songs had already been attributed to Gheerkin de Hondt. The chanson *A vous me rends* is also ascribed to Adriaen Willaert, in a Venetian print published in 1535 by the Scotto firm. The Dutch song *Het was my van tevoren gheseyt* only has the attribution 'Geerhart' in a Susato print of 1551, which also makes other composers with that first name a candidate for the composition. The song *Oncques ne sceu avoir* is attributed 'Gheerkin' in a Phalèse

print of 1553, its only source. Furthermore, two motets had previously been connected to Gheerkin: an *Ave Maria* and a motet on the text *Dum penderet / Petrus in cruce*.

Today the work of Gheerkin de Hondt is spread in manuscripts and prints all over Europe and even beyond. The main body (fifteen of the eighteen works) has come down to us in four beautifully illustrated paper partbooks, copied by the Bruges merchant Zeghere van Male between 1540 and 1542. Van Male was a parishioner of the Sint-Jacobskerk and must have known Gheerkin well. Since the music was collected before 1540, and therefore during Gheerkin's employment as *zangmeester* at the Sint-Jacobskerk, Gheerkin most likely had an influence on the compilation. Gheerkin himself and Benedictus Appenzeller (also a former *zangmeester* at the church) are the best represented composers in the manuscripts, which give a very good picture of the music circulating in Bruges at the time Gheerkin de Hondt worked there. This music contains all kinds of genres, from a variety of composers of different generations.

Another manuscript on the compilation of which Gheerkin de Hondt probably had a large influence, and which contains two of his Masses, is now in the collection of the Illustre Lieve Vrouwe Broederschap in 's-Hertogenbosch. MS 176 belongs to the group of three manuscripts that were written by Philippus de Spina (one of the singers) in the 1540s, when Gheerkin was the *zangmeester* of the Broederschap. Many Masses in this manuscript can be directly or indirectly related to Gheerkin. Especially remarkable is the large body of Masses by Hellinck and Vinders.

Another set of four paper partbooks, now kept in Gdańsk (Poland), contains three of Gheerkin's chansons (anonymously) which we also know from the Zeghere van Male partbooks. The books were prepared in a simple way and were written by different scribes, but the original parts (containing the anonymous chansons, including Gheerkin's) were probably written in the Low Countries in the 1540s in a scribal workshop.

Four of Gheerkin's songs have been admitted to prints by Scotto in Venice (1535/1536), Susato in Antwerp (1551) and Phalèse in Louvain (1552 and 1553), all of them sets of partbooks. Further research brought to light that the Scotto print of 1535 had a reprint in 1536. On the basis of the combination of the font types and the years of publishing incidentally mentioned in the books, it was possible to assign all the copies to one of the print runs.

Based on the fact that the collection in the Zeghere van Male partbooks was compiled when Gheerkin de Hondt was the *zangmeester* of the church Zeghere himself attended, the attributions in that manuscript to Gheerkin must be correct. The questions on how Gheerkin's chanson *A vous me rends* also ended up in a

Venetian print of 1535/1536 and why it was attributed to Adriaen Willaert can only be answered in a speculative way.

Four of Gheerkin's five Masses are based on polyphonic motets composed by his contemporaries: Nicolas Gombert (*Missa Ceciliam cantate pii*), Johannes Lupi (*Missa Benedictus Dominus Deus Israel*) and Lupus Hellinck (*Missa Panis quem ego dabo* and *Missa In te Domine speravi*); the fifth Mass is based on an anonymous motet in the Zeghere van Male partbooks (*Vidi Jerusalem*). And although there is no doubt about the authenticity of these five Mass compositions, their compositional style further proves that they are in fact by one composer.

Gheerkin divides the text of the Mass Ordinary according to a certain – but not rigid – formal plan. Especially remarkable are the following features: (1) the Sanctus always starts a new section at 'Pleni sunt celi', 'Hosanna' and 'Benedictus'; (2) the 'Pleni sunt celi' is always set for a limited number of voices, usually two; (3) The 'Benedictus' is always set for contratenor, tenor and bassus; (4) there always is a separate section in the Credo on 'Et incarnatus est' and on 'Et resurrexit'.

Gheerkin uses his models according to the conventions of his time: the themes of the motets return as themes in his Masses, although he does not use all the themes and not always in the order in which they appear in the models. However, the first theme of the Prima Pars of the motet is always used at the beginning of each main Mass section, the first theme of the Secunda Pars often serves as main theme in secondary Mass sections. Gheerkin liked to adapt his themes: he rarely repeats a motif or a complete polyphonic section literally.

Three of Gheerkin's Masses are related to each other: *Benedictus Dominus Deus Israel*, *Ceciliam cantate pii* and *Vidi Jerusalem*. In these Masses he changes the time signature in the Credo at 'confiteor unum baptisma' to *tempus perfectum*, a signature which is unique in his complete oeuvre. Furthermore, the three Masses share melodic material from the motet *Ceciliam cantate pii*. This use of 'foreign' themes in his Masses is a typical feature in Gheerkin's Mass oeuvre.

The 'self-borrowing' of motifs frequently occurs in Gheerkin's – rather small – motet oeuvre. The opening of *Benedicite Dominus* returns in slightly different forms in the motet *Jubilate Deo omnis terra*. And the main motif of *Jubilate Deo omnis terra* also appears in variants in *Benedicite Dominus* and *Vox dicentis* and even in Gheerkin's *Missa In te Domine speravi*. In its purest form, however, this specific motif (consisting of a rising fourth, a descending third and a rising fourth again) turns out to be the opening of the chanson *Je me repréens* and therefore I call it the *Je me repréens* motif.

In the chanson *Je me repréens* the motif causes trouble in the opening, where it produces fifteen unwanted consecutive octaves in contrary motion within nine bars.

But it turns out to be a magnificent example of word-painting, because the text reads: 'I hold it against myself that I have loved you'. This type of word-painting also occurs in other songs and in Gheerkin's motets. The 'falling flower' in *Vox dicentis* is symbolised by a descending melody and an open cadence; above the word 'enemies' in the Secunda Pars of *Inclina Domine aurem tuam* an upside-down cadence appears; and in *Contre raison* the words 'struck me almost dead' are shown in the music by failing imitation, consecutive octaves in contrary motion and an apparent repetition which all comes to a full stop in the middle of the chanson.

In all three genres Gheerkin shows that the text he sets to music is very important to him: the text is always very audible, following the rhythm of the words and using a correct accentuation, and exhibiting a preference for keeping the (sub)phrases of the text musically separated. Gheerkin even adapts standard texts to his own taste, for example Psalm 85. Overlaps in text only appear incidentally, and when they do, it is always for a limited number of bars. Therefore, the text determines the shape of each composition. This is further strengthened by the fact that Gheerkin likes to use chordal passages. In his Masses they always appear in pure form at the beginning of the 'Et incarnatus est', this section mainly moving in chords anyway. In his motets, every time the music moves in chords the word God or Christ is heard, or the text refers to (one of) them. And in the songs chords are used to stress specific words.

Gheerkin took his chanson texts from all kinds of sources, originating from the middle of the fifteenth century up to the 1530s. But only one of the texts has an identified author: *Contre raison* is a poem by Jean Marot. Three of Gheerkin's motet texts are derived from the Bible: *Inclina Domine aurem tuam* (based on Psalm 85), *Jubilate Deo omnis terra* (Psalm 99) and *Vox dicentis* (Isaiah 40:6-8). Gheerkin's fourth motet text, *Benedicite Dominus*, is a table blessing, probably originating from the north of France.

There are remarkable resemblances to two songs on the same texts by Benedictus Appenzeller: *A vous me rends* and *Contre raison*. As it turns out, *Langueur d'amour* too shows clear similarities with *A vous me rends*. Since Appenzeller was most likely about ten years older than Gheerkin and he had worked in the home parish of Gheerkin's family, he might have been Gheerkin's teacher. This would be an extra argument in the conclusion that Gheerkin influenced the compilation of the Zeghere van Male partbooks, in which both men are overrepresented. The least we can say is that they knew and respected each other's work, which is confirmed by Appenzeller's visit to 's-Hertogenbosch in 1545 and the presence of his music in the 's-Hertogenbosch choirbooks, written when Gheerkin de Hondt was *zangmeester* there.

Gheerkin's chansons *Mon petit coeur* and *Het was my van tevoren gheseyt* are both based on pre-existing monophonic melodies. *Mon petit coeur* is part of a group of eight chansons on the same text, of which three are closely related to each other, among them Gheerkin's chanson. All the motet texts were also used by other composers to make their own settings, although there are many variants on the text of Psalm 85 (*Inclina Domine*), none of them the same as Gheerkin's. Furthermore, none of the compositions has any relation with Gheerkin's work. The same goes for the Masses: the motets *Panis quem ego dabo* and *In te Domine speravi* by Lupus Hellinck were also used by other composers, among them Hellinck himself. But the composers all produced their own compositions, with their own formal plans and their own implementation of the pre-existing material, adjusting it to their own personal styles.

The two motets *Ave Maria* and *Dum penderet* that had earlier been connected to Gheerkin de Hondt are not by his hand. Zeghere van Male attributed *Dum penderet* to 'Gheerkin de Wale' / 'Gheerkin Corael'. The accounts of the Sint-Jacobskerk mention the funeral of a child of a Gheeraert de Wale in April 1559. Therefore, it is possible that this man was a choirboy ('Corael') at the time Zeghere van Male copied his work. Furthermore, stylistically speaking, the motet has features that do not match Gheerkin de Hondt's style. So we may safely conclude that Zeghere's distinction between Gheerkin de Hondt and Gheerkin de Wale was correct. The *Ave Maria* in the Leiden Choirbook 1442 also differs stylistically from Gheerkin's work; therefore, on the basis of the style of the motet, the generally accepted attribution to Jacobus Clemens non Papa is probably correct.

Het was my van te voren gheseyt and *Oncques ne sceu avoir* have been attributed to 'Geerhart' and 'Gheerkin' respectively. The first work is included in the Zeghere van Male collection and therefore without a doubt by Gheerkin de Hondt. Since no other composer from the Low Countries bears the name Gheerkin, *Oncques ne sceu avoir* may also safely be attributed to Gheerkin de Hondt. Both works show also Gheerkin's specific compositional characteristics.

As a chanson composer Gheerkin de Hondt stands between two styles. On the one hand he follows the Parisian school: he closely follows the rhythm of the words of the text, sets them syllabically, lets the structure of the chanson correspond to the lines of poetry, uses homophonic (chordal) passages and where he uses polyphony (imitation) it is simple. On the other hand he also uses elements of the typical Franco-Flemish imitative style, contrasting with chordal passages, with a full texture.

The same phenomenon appears in Gheerkin's motets. Here, the composer Gheerkin de Hondt is in between two generations: the previous one of Josquin on

the one hand, and his own generation of Gombert, Crecquillon, Hellinck and Lupi on the other. For example, the clear divisions of the text and the imitation in voice pairs dates from the Josquin generation, but with the irregular imitation at very short intervals, ceasing the imitation after only four or five notes, Gheerkin composes more according to the conventions of his own generation.

As for the Masses: here Gheerkin is really among his contemporaries. All the models he uses are written by colleagues who worked at the same time, in the same Franco-Flemish area, and all his Masses are 'modern' parody Masses. But again, in his preference in setting the text musically as clearly as possible, he is a bit conservative.

Gheerkin de Hondt may be classified as a typical product of the Low Countries, both as *zangmeester* and composer. The network in which he functioned as *zangmeester* supplied him with all sorts of music, over several generations. He was born in the Mekka of music and art, Bruges, where he laid the foundation of his career. Although his first known position was in the middle-sized and mainly industrial town of Delft, the next two steps in his profession showed an up line trend; especially the cities of Bruges and 's-Hertogenbosch attracted many singers and artists and Gheerkin worked for and with men who fulfilled important positions in the Low Countries, as an organizer, performer and composer. In 's-Hertogenbosch and in Bruges, he came in close contact with scribes and probably also workshops specialized in the calligraphy and printing of music, through which he was able to get his own works and his personal choice widely disseminated.

As a composer Gheerkin mainly seems to have lived between two generations: on the one hand his work contains characteristics of the 'old-fashioned' traditional Josquin generation, on the other hand he follows his contemporaries like Nicolas Gombert. He was influenced by Benedictus Appenzeller, but also admired the work of his contemporaries Nicolas Gombert, Johannes Lupi and Lupus Hellinck, Hellinck being his colleague *zangmeester* in Bruges. Gheerkin de Hondt obviously left his mark on two important music collections of the 1540s: the Zeghere van Male partbooks and a set of choirbooks in 's-Hertogenbosch. The styles of two generations that are characteristic in the Van Male partbooks also return in Gheerkins own personal style, making the setting of the texts his own personal trademark. Gheerkin de Hondt was indeed a so-called *Kleinmeister* in the Low Countries, but with the emphasis on *Meister*, not on *Klein*.