

JEAN GABRIEL MEDER

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Amsterdam was very musical in the latter half of the 18th century. Music was played everywhere at concert parties and dinner parties as well as important occasions. Such an occasion was the espousal of stadholder William V and Princess Wilhelmina married in 1767 at which the famous Jean Gabriel Meder wrote the music which was exquisitely sung as reported by the town historian, Jan Wagenaar.

Meder was not only a musician but a celebrity. He lived in Pijpenmarkt in the old part of Amsterdam and gave many concerts there including Italian oratorios and concertos and some of his own works. His work was also performed in The Hague including, in May 1766, a six-part oratorio which included parts for trombones an instrument never before heard in Amsterdam.

Little is known of this composer, or whether he was related to the 17th century composers of the same name who hailed from Germany. If that were the case would his name have been Johann Gabriel Meder? What we do know that he left behind a number of symphonies, six marches for two clarinets, two horns and bassoon, which were also known as Marsch van de Erfprins (the March of the hereditary prince) and the Marsch van de Hollandsche Gardes (March of the Dutch guards) for wind instruments, six marches for harpsichord and a sonata for harpsichord with violin and cello accompaniment called L'illusion du printemps.

Opus 3 is a set of symphonies of which the first is in C. It has been described as a lovable symphony in which one or two solo violas play an important part. However, it is two oboes that has the second theme of the opening allegro before a solo viola takes centre stage but the brass take over. The slow movement is in the minor key and the finale is marked allegretto and is a rondo with wind and timpani taking a prominent position. Meder was, after, a composer of marches. There are some exciting moments.

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