

Johann Christian Schickhardt

(c.a. 1682–1762)

Woodwind composer, performer and teacher

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The name of Johann Christian Schickhardt is known today almost solely to recorder players, and even to them is not well known. From the reference books we can learn only three major facts about him: that he was born in Brunswick; that he lived in Hamburg; and that he later had connections with Leiden, in which town he died in 1762. To all appearances, then, Schickhardt was an extremely minor figure.

Yet Schickhardt was able to publish at least thirty sets of six or twelve compositions with the celebrated Amsterdam publisher Estienne Roger and his successor Le Cène (six of the sets being thought worthy of pirated publication by Walsh & Hare in London) in an era in which composers of the stature of Corelli published only six sets, Vivaldi thirteen, and J. S. Bach eight. This remarkable achievement suggests that Schickhardt was a more important figure than at first appears. Who was Schickhardt? What were the full circumstances of his life? What compositions did he write and what were they like? How was he able to publish so many compositions? These are the questions I shall try to answer in this article.

HIS LIFE

Johann Christian Schickhardt² was born ca. 1682 in or near Braunschweig [English: Brunswick]. This information may be deduced from a document from the University of Leiden dated November 18, 1745, in which his age at that time is given as 63, and he is described as 'Brunsvicensis', i.e. from Brunswick.³ Schickhardt's connection with Brunswick is corroborated by the dedication of his Opus 14 to August Wilhelm, the heir to the Dukedom of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel. In the letter of dedication, Schickhardt mentions that he 'acquired what I know of music by your kindnesses and in your illustrious palace.' One may speculate that Schickhardt received further musical training from one of the oboists in the orchestra of the important opera house in Brunswick.

The first datable documents I have found concerning Schickhardt's employment show him in the Netherlands rather than Brunswick. The link between the two places could have been Friedrich of Hesse-Cassel (later Frederick I of Sweden). Evidence for this is as follows. Firstly, Friedrich was the dedicatee of two operas per-

formed in Brunswick and must therefore have had some connections with the musical life of the city. Secondly, in a letter of dedication to a manuscript orchestral suite dating from after Friedrich had become the King of Sweden, Schickhardt describes himself as 'an old servant' of Friedrich's.⁴ Thirdly, Friedrich was in Netherlands service during the War of the Spanish Succession (1702-1713) and, as we shall see below, Schickhardt had connections with other Netherlands military figures. The link may therefore have been that Friedrich came to know Schickhardt in Brunswick and took him with him on his military duties in the Netherlands.

The first direct information about Schickhardt's employment in the Netherlands is the dedication of his Opus 1 (1709) to 'Madame La Princesse Douairière' (The Princess-Dowager). This lady was Henriëtte Amalia, born a princess of Anhalt-Dessau, and the widow of Prince Hendrik Casimir II of Nassau-Diez, the Stadholder⁵ of

¹A more detailed version of this article, with complete documentation and a full catalogue of Schickhardt's compositions, will be published soon.

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²Although Schickhardt's name is found in many different spellings on the title pages of his compositions and in advertisements and contemporaneous manuscripts, he himself signed it 'Johann Christian Schickhardt' – a version that has therefore been adhered to throughout this article.

³See *Tonkunstenaars voorkomende in het Album studiosorum der Leidsche hoogeschool, Bouwsteenen. Derde Jaarboek der Vereeniging voor Noord-Nederlands Muziekgeschiedenis* (1874-1881), p. 7.

⁴Universitetsbiblioteket, Uppsala, i hs. 58:6.

⁵The Stadholder was the paid executive and hired servant of the estates in each of the Netherlands provinces. For further details see John B. Wolf, *The Emergence of the Great Powers, 1685-1715* (New York: Harper & Row, 1951), p. 121; and Hendrik Willem Van Loon, *The Fall of the Dutch Republic* (2nd. edn., Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1924), pp. 24-25.

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Schickhardt's signature, from the dedication of his G minor Recorder Concerto to Queen Ulrika Eleonora of Sweden (University Library, Uppsala)

three of the Netherlands provinces. From the wording of the letter of dedication, especially the references to her 'singular kindnesses' and the 'delicacy' of her 'ear', it is clear that Schickhardt had been working for her for some time – no doubt in Leeuwarden, the capital of the province of Friesland, the seat of the Nassau-Diez family in the Netherlands.

Schickhardt was also in the service of Henriëtte Amalia's son, Johan Willem Friso, who, as well as being the Prince of Nassau-Diez, held the important title of Prince of Orange. Evidence for this is that Schickhardt's Opus 2 (1709) is dedicated to Friso. And in the letter of dedication to Frederick I of Sweden mentioned earlier, Schickhardt describes himself as 'an old servant . . . especially of His [Majesty's] Blessed Holy brother-in-law, The Prince of the Most Venerable House of Orange'.⁶ Although Friso normally lived in Leeuwarden, he spent most of his short life fighting in the English and Netherlands armies in the War of the Spanish Succession. Two pieces of evidence point to Schickhardt having accompanied Friso on his military campaigns. First, Schickhardt's Opus 3 (1709) is dedicated to 'Swier der Taminga' the commander of one of the regiments in the Anglo-Netherlands service. Secondly, Schickhardt's Opus 7 (1710) is dedicated to 'Seigneur Tibere Pepin' and his wife, who had property in what was then the Spanish Netherlands (now Belgium). Information contained in Schickhardt's letter of dedication suggests that he and a group of musicians in the employment of Friso – and perhaps also other commanders, such as Friedrich of Hesse-Cassel – stayed intermittently with Tibere during their campaigns.

Soon circumstances apparently made it impossible for Schickhardt to remain in the Netherlands. In 1709, Henriëtte Amalia moved away from Leeuwarden, and in 1711, her son, Johan Willem Friso, was drowned.

Schickhardt's Opus 8 (1710) is dedicated to Frederik IV of Denmark and Norway. Since there is no letter of dedication, it is impossible to say whether Schickhardt was now in Frederik's service or was merely soliciting employment.

At some time between 1710 and 1712, Schickhardt auditioned for Ernst Ludwig, Landgraf of Hesse-Darmstadt. This is shown by Schickhardt's dedication of his Opus 13 (ca. 1710-12) to Ernst Ludwig. In the letter of

dedication, Schickhardt mentions that Ernst Ludwig had listened to some music that Schickhardt had played for him and had 'loaded me with favours beyond that which I could wish for'. Schickhardt begs him to 'continue to grant 'him 'marks of your kindness'. Schickhardt is not listed in the published material concerning musicians who worked at Darmstadt. But since Ernst Ludwig did need an extra oboist on at least one other occasion, perhaps Schickhardt had a short irregular engagement at the Darmstadt Court. By 1712, Schickhardt was in Hamburg. The 'famous composer' is listed among the agents for his own publisher Estienne Roger of Amsterdam, in that year: 'in Hamburg at the house of Johann Christian Schickhardt, famous composer'.⁸ Schickhardt's association with Hamburg is also attested to by two eighteenth-century writers – Johann Gottfried Walther (1732)⁹ and Sir John Hawkins (1776).¹⁰ Further evidence for Schickhardt's association with Hamburg is the presence in the music holdings formerly belonging to the Mecklenburg-Schwerin court of a manuscript of trio sonatas by him which is copied in the hand of Peter J. Fick – an organist who originally came to Schwerin from Altona near Hamburg and took to Schwerin his own copies of works by composers from Altona and Hamburg.¹¹

The length of Schickhardt's stay in Hamburg is unknown. Already in the early part of 1713, we find him soliciting employment elsewhere. Schickhardt's Opus 19 (1713) is dedicated to Christoph Wilhelm von Brandt, music director to Sophie Dorothea (whose husband, Friedrich Wilhelm I of Prussia, acceded to the throne in 1713), in whose court *capelle* Schickhardt was probably seeking a position.

Several of Schickhardt's works between 1710 and about 1715 are dedicated to commoners, who are presumably patrons or pupils of his. The first two dedictees – 'Monsieur Jacques Boorboom' (Opus 6, 1710) and 'Monsieur Jean Michel Selpert' (Opus 12, ca. 1710-12) – have names that sound Dutch, and no doubt

⁶Frederick was the brother of Friso's wife, Maria Louise of Hesse-Cassel.

⁷See Wilibald Nagel, *Zur Geschichte der Musik am Hofe von Darmstadt, Monatshefte für Musikgeschichte* XXXII (1900), 53-54.

⁸See François Lesure, *Bibliographie des éditions musicales publiées par Estienne Roger et Michel-Charles Le Cène (Amsterdam, 1696-1743)* (Paris: Société Française de Musicologie/Heugel, 1969), p. 21.

⁹*Musikalisches Lexicon* (Leipzig, 1732), p. 55.

¹⁰*A General History of the Science and Practice of Music*, ed. Charles Cudworth, 2 vols. (New York: Dover, 1963), II, pp. 738 and footnote on 826.

¹¹Information on the identity of the copyist supplied by Dr. Rolf Dempe, letter to David Lasocki, August 17, 1971. On Fick see Clemens Meyer, *Geschichte der Mecklenburg-Schweriner Hofkapelle* (Schwerin, 1913), p. 246.

Schickhardt was acquainted with them while he was still working in the Netherlands. ‘Messieurs J. K. & D. F. Dreyer’ (Opus 16, ca. 1710-12) have a German name, but Dreyers were found also in Scandinavia and elsewhere at this time (see the section on Abraham Dreyer below). ‘François and Jacob Gerbers’ (Opus 17, ca. 1712-15) – Schickhardt had taught music to François’s son – again have a Dutch-sounding name. The patronage of a ‘Monsieur Louis’, Doctor of Laws, and his wife (Opus 20/1, ca. 1715) had extended to them allowing him ‘to play these sonatas for you on your wedding day’. (This piece of information is the only unequivocal evidence we have of the instruments that Schickhardt played. The Opus 20 sonatas are for flute or oboe, although the range makes them more suited to the oboe. Of course, the fact that all his compositions are for recorder or flute or oboe and that he published methods for recorder and oboe strongly suggests that he played all three of these instruments.)

We pick up Schickhardt’s trail again about 1717 in the service of Johann Friedrich, Count of Castel-Rudenhäusen (Castel is in the province of Hesse, near Darmstadt). Schickhardt’s Opus 22 (ca. 1717-18) is dedicated to the Count and his wife, and in the letter of dedication, Schickhardt speaks of ‘the kindness of which you have given me so many proofs’ and assures them that he is ‘striving to maintain . . . the honour of your good graces’.

Schickhardt does not seem to have been in Castel for long. His Opus 23 (ca. 1719-20) is dedicated to Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen – the famous employer of Johann Sebastian Bach from 1717-1723. Since Schickhardt, in the letter of dedication, refers to a recommendation he has had to Leopold from Leopold’s brother-in-law, Ernst August, Duke of Sachsen-Weimar, Schickhardt may have recently been in Ernst August’s service. Schickhardt writes to Leopold of his ‘devotion to the service of Your Highness’, and we may deduce that he was working for Leopold in some capacity. Schickhardt is not to be found in the lists of permanent employees at Cöthen. But from studies of the court orchestra at Cöthen at this time it has been determined that extra oboists were sometimes brought in from outside the court,¹² and Schickhardt may have served in this capacity.

Soon, however, we again find him seeking employment elsewhere. As we have mentioned previously, Schickhardt dedicated a composition to Friedrich of Hëssel-Cassel (later Frederick I of Sweden), and in the letter of dedication he says that he has been employed by Frederick previously (probably while Frederick was taking part in the War of the Spanish Succession – see above). This letter is addressed to ‘Most powerful, most gracious King’. A companion manuscript composition¹³ is dedicated to ‘Most powerful, most gracious Queen’ – presumably Frederick’s wife, Ulrika Eleonora. Since Schickhardt is especially obsequious in these

letters of dedication, he was probably seeking a position with Frederick and Ulrika, perhaps in 1720, the year that his former employer became King of Sweden.

Whether or not Schickhardt succeeded in becoming employed by Frederick, it is in Scandinavia that we find him next. Schickhardt’s Opus 20/2 (ca. 1723?) is dedicated to Abraham Dreyer, a judge and the director of the copper mines at Trondheim in Norway. If Schickhardt was in the service of Dreyer, as the dedication suggests, it need not have been in isolated Trondheim, however, since Dreyer could well have also maintained a residence in Copenhagen.

Schickhardt’s Amsterdam publications continued under Roger’s successor, Le Cène, through the Opus 26 of 1727, the last opus listed in the Le Cène catalogue of 1737. Around 1735, an Opus 30 – a set of twenty-four sonatas in all the keys, for flute or violin or recorder and basso continuo – was published in London, apparently under Schickhardt’s own auspices, with a signed title page in French, and with an appended list of 93 subscribers. The subscribers are almost all unknown and have names that sound Dutch. But we find also such famous figures as Handel, Locatelli, Pepusch, the Dutch composer Willem de Fesch (who had moved to London in 1732), and Schickhardt’s erstwhile publisher Le Cène. The most plausible explanation for the unusual circumstances of this publication is that Schickhardt had moved back to the Netherlands (thus the Dutch subscribers), and that Le Cène had been unwilling to risk publishing such a potentially unsaleable work, so Schickhardt had raised the necessary capital by subscription and issued the work in London – a city noted for its many amateur flute and recorder players and therefore the best place to try to sell it.

Schickhardt was certainly in the Netherlands again in 1745. In that year he is listed in the *Album studiosorum* of the University of Leiden.¹⁴ Thus at the mature age of 63, Schickhardt was enrolled as a university student, although what he studied we are not told (it was almost certainly not music.)

Schickhardt is apparently not to be found in the records of musicians associated with the University of Leiden, and there is no music of his in Leiden.¹⁵ Nevertheless, Schickhardt must have maintained some connections with the university, since after his death in 1762, a document shows that the university Senate was prepared to grant some money towards his burial. Schickhardt is described as ‘a master of musical arts and a member of the Academy’. (It is not clear whether the

¹²See Friedrich Smend, *Bach in Köthen* (Berlin: Christlicher Zeitschriftenverlag, [ca. 1951-52]), pp. 22, 23, 26, and 154.

¹³Universitetsbiblioteket, Uppsala, i hs. 58:5.

¹⁴See footnote 3.

¹⁵Information supplied by Dr. C. C. Vlam, letter to David Lasocki, September 30, 1971.

music academy of the university or another academy is referred to.) The full document reads as follows:

Acts of the Rector Magnificus, Leader of the Senate Gaubius. March 26, 1762.

The Rector Magnificus announced to the Senate that Johann Christian Schickhardt, a master of musical arts and a member of the Academy, had just passed away, and that Schickhardt's daughter had begged him – the deceased having left no funds for the necessities of burial – to have the Senate undertake to provide a grave. (Such had recently been the case with the musician Glemius. The Senate had at that time agreed.) But the young woman had been told that the Senate had found it impossible to assume such a burden. In the case of Glemius, there had been no surviving kin to attend to the matter. But Schickhardt had been survived by relatives in addition to his daughter, to whom the responsibility appertained. Nevertheless, the Rector Magnificus proposed that certain funds be made available out of pocket to the young woman for pious use, should she and her kin, having proved unable to raise enough money for a fitting ceremony, request relief from the Senate due to penury. To this the Senate agreed.¹⁶

THE PURPORTED SCHICKHARDT PORTRAIT

In an article published in 1957, Carl Dolmetsch wrote:

About 1710, Corelli's violin solos and trios were transcribed by the recorder virtuoso, J. C. Schickhardt. His portrait, which is in my possession, shows him holding a fine treble recorder, apparently the identical twin of the instrument on which Arnold Dolmetsch taught himself to play [a Bressan]. On a table by Schickhardt's side can be seen a volume bound in red leather, on which is printed in gilt lettering: 'Corelli's Solos for the Flute'.¹⁷

This portrait was reproduced on the cover of RMM for July 1966 along with the following note:

The original of our cover picture hangs in Carl Dolmetsch's home in Haslemere, where the portrait is known as 'Mr Schickhard' because, 'he occasionally regards us with a somewhat superior air'. Though it is not yet proven that this is a portrait of the 18th century editor and recorder player there is strong evidence in favour of this view. The player, who was certainly distinguished enough to warrant a portrait, holds one of Bressan's finest ivory-mounted trebles. The volume at his elbow, bound in scarlet vellum, bears the legend in gilt lettering, 'Corelli's Solos for the Flute'. Carl Dolmetsch has sent us further information: 'It appears to be a de-luxe copy, and its inclusion could have been a compliment to its editor and arranger'.¹⁸

Carl Dolmetsch has informed me that the portrait was auctioned at Sotheby's in London in 1954, and that the identity of the recorder player depicted was supplied by the firm at that time. Dolmetsch's own ideas about the identity had, however, changed:

Our own more recent research has led us to believe that the portrait in question may well be of J. B. Locillet, probably painted by Robert Woodcock, the marine painter. However, it would be unwise to say more about this until we have definite proof.¹⁹

Evidence against the possibility that the recorder player in the portrait could have been Schickhardt was convincingly marshalled by Walter Bergmann in the next

issue of RMM:

I personally doubt that the gentlemen on your cover picture . . . was Schickhardt. Would not a composer of thirty published [sets of] works (J. S. Bach had only eight) hold one of his own compositions in his hand rather than an arrangement (as in the pictures of Pepys, Bach, Handel and others)? And is there any proof that it was Schickhardt who arranged Corelli's sonatas for the recorder? The arrangements are anonymous, rather poor and quite unlike Schickhardt's own brilliant writing for the recorder. Was Schickhardt ever in England? And why should he, a German, play on a Bressan recorder? Schickhardt's compositions show that he used recorders with a better higher register than Bressan could make.²⁰

The Corelli 'Solos' that Dolmetsch and Bergmann refer to are anonymous arrangements for treble recorder and basso continuo of the second six of Arcangelo Corelli's twelve sonatas for violin and basso continuo, Opus 5, that were published by Walsh & Hare in London in 1702.²¹ The date of 1702 is too early for the arrangement to have been made by Schickhardt: his own compositions did not begin to appear until 1709 and then followed in a steady stream. Moreover, all of Schickhardt's compositions that were published in London by Walsh & Hare were pirated from publications originally issued in Amsterdam by Estienne Roger and his successors. No trace of such a Corelli arrangement can be found in Roger's catalogues or advertisements.²²

Since the fact that the recorder player in the picture is holding a copy of this Corelli arrangement is the main piece of evidence about his identity, we may safely discount the theory that the player is Schickhardt.

To be continued

¹⁶P.C. Molhuysen, ed., *Bronnen tot de geschiedenis der Leidsche Universiteit* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1921), V, pp. 462-63.

¹⁷Carl Dolmetsch, *The Recorder and the Flute, The Consort XIV* (1957), p. 21.

¹⁸RMM, Vol. 2. No. 2 (July 1966), p. 33.

¹⁹Letter from Carl Dolmetsch to David Lasocki, August 12, 1971.

²⁰*Schickhardt in Dispute*, RMM, Vol. 2, No. 3 (Nov. 1966), p. 85.

²¹*Six Solos for a Flute and a Bass by Arcangelo Corelli Being The second part of his Fifth Opera . . . The whole exactly Transposed and made fit for A Flute and A Bass with the approbation of severall Eminent Masters*. London, Walsh & Hare. Advertised in *Post Boy*, May 28-30, 1702. See William C. Smith, *A Bibliography of the Musical Works Published by John Walsh during the Years 1695-1720* (London: The Bibliographical Society, 1948), No. 85.

²²Schickhardt did, however, arrange works by Corelli, and this is perhaps the source of some of the confusion. Jeanne Roger in Amsterdam published ca 1718-19 an arrangement by Schickhardt of six concertos for two treble recorders and basso continuo made up of movements from Corelli's twelve concerti grossi, Opus 6, and this arrangement was pirated by Walsh & Hare in 1720.

Baroque Performance Practice for Woodwind players

David Lasocki is giving a weekly class on this subject on Sunday evenings (7 - 9 p.m.) at the Early Music Centre, W.11.