

Forschungsportal Schola Cantorum Basiliensis

URL: www.forschung.schola-cantorum-basiliensis.ch/de/forschung/ina-lohr-project/rutters-and-the-early-music-aesthetic.html

Published: 5. September 2016

SNSF research project "Ina Lohr (1903–1983). Her Influence in Switzerland and the Netherlands"

H. R. and the Formation of an Early Music Aesthetic in the Netherlands (1916–1921)

Jed Wentz

Abstract

Herman Rutters was one of Ina Lohr's teachers at the Muziek Lyceum in Amsterdam. His thought was very important for the development of the idea of Early Music as a performance practice in the Netherlands between the two World Wars.

An early version of this article was given as a paper during the Roots of Revival conference at the Horniman Museum, London, in 2014. A later version was published in the Tijdschrift Oude Muziek as 'Rutters oude muziekethetiek' (see: Tijdschrift voor Oude Muziek, 2015-1, 20-26). It is presented here in an expanded form.

Introduction

H. R. stands for Herman Rutters (1879-1961), a highly influential Dutch musicologist, pedagogue, reviewer. For readers of his music reviews, the acronym H.R. came to be a logo indicative of quality, consistency and substance. As one contemporary journalist put it, when these two letters appeared at the end of a newspaper column, it was 'synonymous with a music review combining information and judgment.'¹ H.R.'s aim was to educate. His judgments were often harsh, but they always conformed to a rigorous and undeviating set of criteria.

Rutters was born in Amsterdam on the 22 December, 1879. He was variously described by those who knew him as 'tireless', 'obstinate', 'emotional; and 'incorruptible'. As a young man he completed his musical studies with the important Dutch composer and pedagogue Bernard Zweers. Rutters thereafter worked for the Dutch national opera company and taught music history in Amsterdam at the Volksuniversiteit and the Muzieklyceum. He held important positions on the boards of

¹ Muller 1959, 9.

many music societies, including one called *Muziek en Religie* (Music and Religion) – which he co-founded and whose journal he co-edited – with the well-known Protestant theologian and politician Gerardus van der Leeuw.

A confirmed Protestant himself, Rutters' religious views influenced his aesthetic stance.² Dutch Protestantism, dominated by the Calvinists, was and still is wary of the seductive power of musical sensuality. Indeed, in 1890 the respected Dutch theologian J. H. Gunning JHz. felt the need to plead for music in the church, albeit during special weekday services:

Is a *zangdienst*, a “service of song”, like that held from time to time during the week in The Hague, in which the congregation alternately hears edifying [stichtelijke] sacred music — masterpieces by Händel, Bach, de Lange among others [e.a.] — and then themselves sing well-known psalms and hymns accompanied by a few well-chosen words from one or more of the pastors to start and finish, is something like this really so wrong?³

Though traditional Calvinist services — in which the music was supplied by the congregational singing of psalms — were to remain the norm, the opening decades of the 20th century saw a discussion among certain Dutch Protestants (who were inspired by the goals of the *Neue Bachgesellschaft*) concerning the feasibility of introducing the music of J. S. Bach into the service.⁴ In light of this, it is not insignificant that the Roman Catholic playwright and publisher Herman van den Eerenbeemt ironically used religious language in referring to Rutter's musical activities, when he stated: ‘Bach is great and Herman Rutters is his prophet’.⁵

Indeed, Rutters had many minarets from which to call the Protestant faithful to the music of Bach: besides the various activities already mentioned, he also was employed by the Dutch radio, wrote books and gave public lectures. But perhaps most important for the dissemination of his thought was his work from 1916-1945 as the music editor of the Amsterdam newspaper, the *Algemeen Handelsblad*. Here I will be examining the aesthetic and spiritual points of view that Rutters established in print during the first five years of his tenure at the *Handelsblad*. I propose that the relentless reiteration of these aesthetic and spiritual criteria in often thunderous, always colourful language in reviews published over a thirty year period in one of Holland's leading newspapers, laid an important intellectual foundation for the HIP offensive undertaken by Gustav Leonhardt in the 1950s. Rutters had by then created a school of followers armed and ready to defend original instruments and historically-informed performance practice. At least that is what one writer suggested in an article

2 As a reviewer of *J. S. Bach en onze tijd* put it: ‘De schrijver schijnt overtuigd Protestant te zijn en ziet Luthers reformatie als een evolutionair streven, dat de Katholiek als revolutionair beschouwt.’ Lohman 1941, derde blad, pagina 1.

3 Is een zangdienst, een “service of song”, gelijk die in de Haagsche gemeente van tijd tot tijd in de week gehouden wordt, waar de gemeente beurtelings stichtelijke kerkmuziek hoort, de meesterwerken van Händel, Bach de Lange e. a., en dan weer bekende psalmen en gezangen mede aanheft, met een enkel, goedgekozen woord van een of meer voorgangers tot inleiding en slot, is zoo iets werkelijk zoo verkeerd?’ Gunning 1890, 152.

4 See, for instance: Sibmacher-Zijnen 1910, 6. For the *Neue Bachgesellschaft's* quest to return Bach's music to the Protestant service, see my forthcoming article: ‘Faith, Volk and “Bach-trunkenen Theologen”’: ideologies of performance and the *Neue Bachgesellschaft*, 1900-1910’.

5 Cited in: Anonymous, ‘75’, *De Telegraaf* (22-12-1954), 7.

that appeared on the occasion of his retirement from the *Algemeen Handelsblad* in 1945:

[Rutters] was the first one to systematically defend that Early Music must be performed with stylistic purity [...]. He took to the battlefield, fighting against the caprices of the musical virtuoso, while defending the rights of the composer, [and] respect for the score. He introduced these as objective, reasonable norms and they gave his judgments great stability and value. And with them, he established a school of followers.⁶

Rutters, befitting a man of the new, objective, anti-Romantic generation, was adverse to performative freedoms of all kinds.⁷ He disliked overtly personal, overly subtle and detailed performances, as well as any outward show of feeling, which he associated with virtuosos. He railed against massive music performed by massed forces. He warmly praised transparency, inner feeling and technical perfection. He repudiated any tampering with the composer's score, be that score by Bach or by Bruckner, and scorned interpretation on the part of the performer. It is not surprising, therefore, that Rutters would, throughout his long career, repeatedly criticize the performances of the renowned Dutch conductor Willem Mengelberg.

Willem Mengelberg and Bach Criticism

Mengelberg became principal conductor of the Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra in 1895. He was a Roman Catholic, was famous for his highly Romantic, idiosyncratic performance style. Indeed, some Dutch music-lovers were uncomfortable with his extravagant, and for them too Catholic, approach. Writing in 1916, H. L. Berckenhoff compared the musical style of Mengelberg's conducting to that of his predecessor at the Concertgebouw, Willem Kes:

Mengelberg has not been any more able than was Kes to "contenter tout le monde et son père". That is something that no single artist, and certainly no single conductor, will ever manage to do. If some people found Kes too timid — for them Mengelberg is too exuberant. It is possible that his Catholicism has contributed its essence towards the development of his musical nature in the direction of the lyric-dramatic, which so permeates his conceptions that, according to the opinions of some, he overly relaxes the epic of Beethoven and overly dramatizes the mature spirit of Bach.⁸

6 Hij was de eerste, die stelselmatig verdedigde, dat oude muziek stijlzuiver moet worden uitgevoerd, en onvermoeid op zoek ging naar de normen, die althans een zoveel mogelijk stijlgetrouwe uitvoering waarborgen. Hij trok te velde tegen de coupure-wellust, tegen de 'Pultvirtuosen'-willekeur, hij verdedigde de rechten van de componist, de eerbiediging van de partituren, de integrale uitvoering van kunstwerken. Dat waren objectieve, verstandelijke normen, die hij stelde en die zijn oordeel zo stabiel en zo waardevol maakten. En hij maakte er school mee.' L. H., 'Herman Rutters gaat rusten: criticus, die school heeft gemaakt', *De Tijd: godsdienstig-staatkundig dagblad* (22-01-1945), 3.

7 As H. J. M. Muller put it: 'Omdat Herman Rutters was geplaatst in een periode die men de nadagen van de Romantiek zou willen noemen met parallel daaraan de uitloeisels van die stroming, was zijn inzicht herhaaldelijk met conflictstof geladen. Menigeen zal zich dan ook nog de contrverse Mengelberg-Rutters herinneren, tegenstelling die een tegenstelling was naar de tijd: de een Mengelberg die de traditie van de grote romantische dirigent voortsette, de ander Herman Rutters die zich verzette tegen de eigenmachtigheden van dat type. Een strijd van ideeën.' Muller 1961, 9.

8 'Zoomin als aan Kes vergund was, is het Mengelberg gelukt "de contenter tout le monde et son père". Dat zal ook wel nimmer eenig kunstenaar en zeker nooit eenig dirigent overkomen. Achtten

During the fifty years that he conducted the orchestra, Mengelberg programmed a varied repertoire including a good deal of 18th-century music, but he was particularly well known as a champion of the works of Gustav Mahler and Richard Strauss. Rutters both admired and castigated Mengelberg. Indeed, sometimes his censure was disguised as praise, as in the following review of a performance of Strauss' *Ein Heldenleben*, a piece that was dedicated to the Concertgebouw orchestra and its conductor:

I feel that Mengelberg allows the brass to shine a bit too intensely, makes the lyricism a bit too sentimental and stretches the tempo a bit too much, so that he more or less inhibits the flow. Nevertheless, his interpretation of *Heldenleben* is a virtuoso master-interpretation, an unforgettable showpiece of conducting and ensemble playing [...].⁹

It might seem that such concepts as 'virtuoso master-interpretation' or 'show piece' were meant to be positive, but in Rutter's critical language, any mention of 'virtuosity', even when encountered in a passage of seeming musical-technical praise, implied at least some degree of *moral* condemnation. Although he often admitted that it *sounded* good, Rutters associated virtuosity with outward display, with ego, with the personal. Such vanities might have been appropriate to the ego-driven music of Strauss, but to give them free reign in Bach's music, especially in sacred works like the *Matthew Passion* as Mengelberg did, was to wave a red flag before the pious and bull-headed Rutters.

Mengelberg was particularly famous for his performances of a cut and re-orchestrated version of the *Matthew Passion* that took place every year, with massed forces, in the Concertgebouw on Palm Sunday. These much-beloved annual performances had begun in 1899 and continued until Mengelberg stopped conducting the orchestra after WWII. Mengelberg's interpretation underscored the passion's pathos, and, his critics believed, downplayed its liturgical significance. Rutters felt such a performance style more resembled a Romantic oratorio than a Protestant work written for communal worship. In reviewing Mengelberg's 1916 performance he pointed out that the *Matthew Passion* had been 'written for two choirs of a maximum of 16 voices each and two instrumental groups proportional in size'. In 1917 he wrote an extensive review in the form of an essay entitled 'Bach Problems', in which he summed up his main criticisms thus:

The displacement of [Bach's religious music] from the very special atmosphere and acoustic of the church, to a space that came into being exclusively in the spirit of the modern, profane, massive music-practice, with its unsanctified, business-like commitment to facilitating virtuosic vanity; the presentation by an ensemble that not only turns the proportions

sommigen Kes te terughoudend — Mengelberg is hun te uitbundig. Mogelijk heeft zijn katholicisme het zijne bijgedragen tot een ontwikkeling zijner muzikale natuur in de lyrisch-dramatische richting, welke zijn opvattingen dermate doordringt, dat hij, naar sommiger oordeel bijv. de muzikale epiek van Beethoven te veel versoepelt en de bezonken geest van een Bach te zeer dramatiseert.' Berckenhoff 1916, 10.

⁹ 'Mengelberg laat naar mijn gevoelen het koper wat te fel glansen, maakt de lyriek wat te zoetelijk en rekt het tempo wat te veel, waardoor hij de gang min of meer remt. Maar een virtueuze meesterprestatie is zijn *Heldenleben*-vertolking steeds, een onvergetelijk bravourstuk van directie en samenspel [...] Nooit kan een opdracht beter verdiend zijn dan die van Strauss' werk aan ons ongeëvenaard ensemble'. Rutters 1916, ochtendblad, 2.

upside down, but that also crushes the intimate spirit of the music through massive sound-production and mercilessly rips the fine polyphonic textures to shreds, that distorts the relationship between tutti and soli just like a funhouse mirror distorts the image of man, that turns the simple obligato-parts into virtuoso solo-flights — such a performance is, after all that modern research into Bach's aesthetics has revealed and taught us, impossible to sustain. And I have not even mentioned the fact that Bach's choral works were, as far as the upper voices are concerned, [...] conceived for, and performed by, boys.

Rutters, however, was aware that he could only expect the most basic reforms in performance practice, if, indeed, he could expect any at all. One year later, in 1918, he again wrote an extensive essay, entitled 'J. S. Bach's Matthew Passion and our Time', in which he repeated many of his arguments from previous years, but added, soberly:

I am not asking for a theoretical-historical reconstruction to the letter, I am not asking to maintain the Passion's practical liturgical significance. But I demand respect for the precepts which grew together organically with the spirit of the work. Without following these precepts the *spirit* of the work cannot penetrate our consciousness.¹⁰

Morbid Virtuosity

Rutters' reference to the spirit of the work is significant. For him, the spirit of Bach's music, like that of all great music, was a religious one.¹¹ Therefore, it needed no virtuosic additions to embellish its divine beauties. Rutters applied such criteria not only to Mengelberg, but to all performers. For instance, in 1918 he reviewed a concert of lieder by the German soprano Gertrude Förstel:

Gertrude Förstel's singing is, from the point of view of pure vocal technique, a delight. Everything is easy for her, the sound glows and shines, the most refined pianissimo has great carrying power and expression, her virtuoso breath technique facilitated the subtlest nuances and most comprehensive legatos; her diction was unusually good [...].¹²

10 'Ik vraag geen theoretisch-historisch reconstructie nade de letter, ik vraag geen handhaving van de Passion in haar liturgische gebruiksbeteekenis. Maar ik eisch eerbiediging van de voorschriften, die met den geest van het werk organisch saamgegroeid zijn en zonder welker navolging die geest niet tot ons bewustzijn kan doordringen'. Rutters 1918-2, 5.

11 This precept, implicit in Rutters' writings and essential to understanding his thought, was explicitly stated by his colleague J. H. Gunning, Wzn in a work about Bach. Gunning and Rutters were both among the co-founders of the *Nederlandse Bachvereniging*, of which Gunning was president from 1921-1948. In 1926 the *Bachvereniging* published an extensive pamphlet from Gunning's pen that shares sentiments (and even its title!) with work by Rutters: *Bach's muziek in onzen tijd*. Here Gunning writes (italics editorial): 'De kunst is altijd dienares en dat is haar hoogste eeretitel, want wat zij dient is het allerhoogste wat er bestaat. Zij is voor den mensch de adelaarswiek, die hem uit het aardsche moeras opvoert tot de lichte hoogten der eeuwige schoonheid, klaarheid en reinheid. *Daarom is alle echte kunst religieus*, maar de meest religieuze kunst is ongetwijfeld muziek en de meest religieuze muziek is ongetwijfeld die van Bach, alleen die van Palestrina wellicht uitgezonderd [...]'. This was surely Rutters' point of view as well. See: Gunning 1926, 27.

12 Gertude Förstel's zingen is zuiver vocaal-technisch beschouwd een verrukking; alles ligt haar bijzonder gemakkelijk, het geluid glanst en straalt, heeft tot in het fijnste pianissimo grote draagkracht en

But again, one must beware of interpreting this as praise. The review is resoundingly negative. Rutters scoffs at 'a [...] tasteless little *fioratura* [...]' that the singer made in a Mozart aria, and castigated her because

she tricked out the beautiful music of Schubert and Schumann in all kinds of tasteless nuances, which often rendered the spirit of the songs entirely unrecognizable. She did not restrain herself from performing vivisection on Hugo Wolf by cutting the exuberant play out of Er ist's [...] she allows herself to make the most inappropriate messa di voce's, ritenuti and fermati as if the composer had forgotten them because he was thinking of something much more important [...].

All of this Rutters labeled 'fake virtuoso finery'.¹³

Such criticisms should not surprise, for in 1919 Rutters wrote another extensive essay in which he explained how 18th-century virtuoso Italian opera singers had ruined musical taste:

With the dissemination of *opera Italiana* over all of Europe, virtuosity spread like an epidemic and soon infected instrumentalists as well. [...] In the late 18th century, pleasing [the audience] through exclusively virtuoso performances became a mania that to our eyes looks decidedly morbid.¹⁴

Original Instruments

According to Rutters, the thrill of this diseased virtuosity filled ever-larger concert halls with audiences eager for outward display. As the 19th century progressed, this in turn led to an evolution in the sound of musical instruments, which grew ever louder and more opaque. Musical techniques had to change in order to accommodate these new instruments, and so the beauties of the past were lost. Rutters underscored this in 1917 when he wrote:

Although the concert grand piano gradually developed from the clavichord and harpsichord, and the violoncello steadily displaced its near relation the viola da gamba — this does not make them the perfected examples of primitive predecessors. Those instruments were not less perfect in their kind than ours; they had their own construction and their own timbre, and, under the influence of different cultural trends underwent changes to their form; changes for which, however, they sacrificed their own beauty. But

expressiviteit, haar virtuoze adembeheersching maakte de fijnste schakaeringen en de omvangrijkste bindingen mogelijk; de uitspreak is zeldzaam duidelijk. Rutters 1918-1, 6.

13 'Zij dirkte de prachtige muziek van Schubert en Schumann op met allerlei stijlooze nuanceeringen, die den geest van de liederen vaak totaal onherkenbaar maakten. Zij ontzag zich niet, vivisectie te plegen op Hug Wolf door de coupure in het uitbundig naspel van Er ist's [...] zij veroorlooft zich de meest ongepaste messa di voce's, retenuti en fermati als de componist ze heeft vergeten, omdat hij aan iets veel belangrijkers dacht. [...]'. [...] valschen virtuozen-opsmuk'. Rutters 1918-1, 6.

14 'Met de verspreiding der opera italiana over geheel Europa waarde het virtuozenendom als een epidemie rond, die weldra ook op de instrumentalisten sloeg. [...] Het behagen in uitsluitend virtuoze prestaties wordt in het laatst der 18de eeuw tot een manie, welke in onze oogen bepaald ziekelijk lijkt'. Rutters 1919-2, 7.

that intrinsic sound of the old instruments is completely inherent to the spirit of the music, which was written for it [that sound] [...].¹⁵

Such thinking led Rutters to call for the reconstruction of a Baroque violin and bow a few months earlier in 1917, in reviewing a concert by violinist Alexander Schmuller. Rutters often treated Schmuller harshly, even in his most favourable review he complained that the violinist was 'not entirely unsullied by exaggerated sentiment'.¹⁶ When Schmuller undertook to play the solo violin works of Bach, Rutters pounced:

For me an evening like this had the character of an experiment, the outcome of which was mainly this: violinists should leave much of Bach alone, unless they look for a technique, for a construction of their materials, that makes them capable of performing that music as Bach himself indeed conceived it, and as the character of the music itself indicates. I have great respect and admiration for the capability, energy and memory of Alexander Schmuller, but what he gave us to hear in the first two movements of the C major sonata was not Bach and often not even music, and the rough and out-of-tune tone, and forced phrasing, were also disturbing in other pieces. I will admit it is not possible to be otherwise, but in admitting this is there not an implicit condemnation of the experiment itself? In the end, the artist's ideal here must be a pure representation in sound of Bach's intentions, and if one cannot approach those intentions, then it simply is better that one not experiment with 'more or less'. This music is immortal, is awesome, but still one must first strive for a better performance medium, as Wanda Landowska did when she reconstructed her harpsichord.¹⁷

15 'Moge de concert vleugel gaandeweg zijn ontstaan uit clavichord en clavicimbel. de violoncel haar familielid de viola da gamba meer en meer hebben verdrongen — zij zijn daarom hog niet de volmaakte edities van primitieve voorgangers. In hun soort waren die instrumenten niet minder volmaakt dan de onze; ze hadden een eigen constructie en een eigen klankkleur, welke onder den invloed van andere cultuurstromingen in andere vormen een wijzingen hebben ondergaan, een wijzing, die echter ook veel eigen schoon heeft opgeofferd. Maar dat eigen klank der oude instrumenten is volstrekt inherent aan den geest der muziek, welke daarvoor is geschreven.' Rutters 1917-2, 9.

16 See Rutters 1918-3, 7.

17 'En voor mij had een avond als deze ook in menig opzicht het karakter van een experiment, waarvan het resultaat grootendeels dit was: dat onze violisten veel van Bach moeten laten rusten, tenzij ze naar een techniek, naar een constructie van hun material zoeken, dat hen in staat stelt, die muziek te vertolken, zooals Bach zich inderdaad heeft gedacht, zooals het karakter der muziek zelf aangeeft. Ik heb alle respect en bewondering voor de vaardigheid, de energie en het geheugen van Alexander Schmuller, maar wat hij ons met de eerste twee deelen der C-dur-sonate gaf te hooren, was toch geen Bach en dikwijls ook geen muziek en ook in andere stukken hinderde het ruwe en onzuivere van den toon, het geforceerde van de phraseering. Het kan weinig anders, ik erken het, maar ligt in die erkenning ook niet een zekere veroordeeling van het experiment? Ten slotte moet het ideaal van den kunstenaar hier toch zijn een zuivere verklanking van bach's intenties, en als men die intenties niet kan benaderen, is het toch beter, niet met een 'à peu près' te experimenteeren. Deze muziek is onsterfelijk, is ontzaglijk, doch laat men eerst streven naar een betere vertolkingsmogelijkheid, zooals Wanda Landowska deed, toen zij het clavecimbel reconstrueerde'. Rutters 1917-1, 6.

Cosmic Consciousness

I have concentrated so far on reviews written by Rutters in the first five years of his tenure at the *Handelsblad*. It is clear that he embraced a number of ideas that later would become firmly associated with Early Music: respect for the score, conformity to the composer's intentions and the necessity of using original instruments. More surprising are the moral overtones, particularly the religious connotations of the concept of the 'spirit' of the work. However, it is this very spirituality that illuminates the standpoint taken by Rutters, who from time to time spoke the language of a true musical mystic. Take, for instance, this extraordinary passage from a 1920 review of a performance of music by Saint-Saëns:

The great, like Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Wagner and Franck, specifically because of their cosmic consciousness and their receptivity for the tremendous, for the internal, are initially strongly influenced by their great predecessors, in order to struggle out from underneath them into independence; thus they spin forth the mysterious threads of metaphysical existence; they must perish in order to rise to glory. And therefore there is no genius that does not build on the past, who has not passed through the internal-ness of the past.¹⁸

Rutters depicts the musical genius as a Christ-like figure, one that submerges his identity in the art of the past in order to pass through it and 'rise to glory'. The implications, though not mentioned explicitly, are clear: if composers are redemptive figures, their scores resemble God's own Word. They therefore must not be tampered with: not cut, not 'tricked out' in virtuosic nuances and cadenzas, not interpreted or used in any way for personal glory or outward display. *Sola scripta*, the Protestant approach to God's word, was thus applied by him to musical texts. And just as geniuses themselves must pass through the 'internal-ness of the past' in order to be transformed, so the audience needed to experience the innerness, the spirit of the work as purely as possible in order to reach the eternal, the awesome, the tremendous.

This means that rather than being motivated exclusively by the desire to honour Bach's intentions, Rutters advocated performative authenticity as part of a larger spiritual-cultural reformation. Bach's legacy would ultimately profit from this trend, as he prophesied in a review of the *Matthew Passion* in 1918:

Those who can properly read the signs of the times have long noticed the symptoms of massive music's bankruptcy. It drives everything again

18 "Grooten als Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Wagner en Franck verkeeren juist door hun kosmisch aanvoelen en hun ontvankelijkheid voor het geweldige, het innerlijke, aanvankelijk sterk onder den invloed van hun groote voorgangers, om zich dan daarboven uit te worstelen tot zelfstandigheid: zóó spinnen zij de geheimzinnige draden van het metaphysisch gebeuren voort; zij moeten ondergaan om tot heerlijkheid te verrijzen. En daarom is er geen genie, die niet op het verleden voortbouwt, die door het innerlijk van het verleden heengaat." Herman Rutters, 'Historische cyclus XIX: Saint-Saëns; Paul Dukas.', *Algemeen Handelsblad* (02-21-1920), avondblad, [1]. Rutters began his review by stating: 'We hebben den zeer belangrijken invloed nagegaan, dien César Franck op de ontwikkeling der Fransche muziek heeft uirgeoefend; wij hebben aangetoond, dat hij de krachtigste elementen in de muziek van Bach, Beethoven en Wagner aan die van Frankrijk dienstbaar maakt'.

towards intimacy, towards internalization. And I am convinced that at some point Bach too will profit from this reaction, that a technique will come, one that approaches the spirit, that with *its sober* internalized technique is in closer agreement than our technique of massive display and virtuoso allure.¹⁹

Rutters maintained this viewpoint to the end of his days, particularly in relationship to the music of Bach. In 1941 he published a book entitled *J. S. Bach and Our Time*, in which he reiterated many of his opinions from twenty years earlier published in his review entitled 'Bach's Matthew Passion and our time'. In the book he gave a very clear explication of exactly what the *spirit* of the musical work is:

The Romantic ideal was the expression of the individual, the 'I' [...] With Bach, on the contrary, the individual is perfectly dissolved in the universal, everything is the surrender of 'I' to God [...] Thus Bach's music sings not of the personal, the mortal, the temporary, but of the über-personal, the immortal, the eternal. It makes conscious that which in us too is eternal, connects us to the eternal. It is conviction and surrender. It fixes its gaze not forward but upwards; it comes from God and leads to God. That is its spirit [...].²⁰

It is clear that much of what historically-informed performance practice holds dear today had already energetically been promoted by Rutters before the 1920s, and that he prepared the way for the Dutch Early Music revolution of the 1950s and 60s with his repeated criticisms of Romantic performative freedoms. But how many current practitioners of Early Music would feel comfortable knowing that the cherished austerity and objectivity of the HIP style was born, at least in its Dutch manifestation, from a mystical Protestant spirituality, one which sought to sublimate the personality of the performer to the divine, to the eternal, by means of the innate spirit of the artwork as represented by the score?

Be that as it may, by 1919 Rutters already knew that the progress of music's evolution was unstoppable. In full prophetic mode, he expressed his firm conviction that the diseased Romantic tradition must topple at last:

I myself am convinced that massiveness in music is in the last stages of degeneration. The best of modern music manifests a need for refinement, an urge towards the intimate. [...] However — we need not preach revolution. The symptoms of a reaction are unmistakable. We are living in

19 'Wie de teekenen des tijds goed verstaat, merkt al sedert lang de symptomen van een failliet der massale muziek. Het dringt alles weer naar intimiteit, naar verinnerlijking. En ik ben er zeker van, dat ook eens een Bach van die reactie zal profiteeren, dat er een techniek zal komen, die nadert tot den geest, die met zijn sobere, verinnerlijkte techniek meer in overeenstemming is dan de onze van massa-vertoon en virtuoze allure'. Herman Rutters, 'Bach's muziek in onze tijd', in: Algemeen Handelsblad (31-03-1918), ochtendblad, 5.

20 'Het ideaal der romantiek was de uitdrukking van het individueele, van het ik; [...] Bij Bach daarentegen is het individueele volmaakt opgelost in het universeele, is alles overgaven van het 'ik' aan God. [...] Zoo zingt Bachs muziek niet van het persoonlijke, het vergankelijke, het tijdelijke, maar van het bovenpersoonlijke, het onvergankelijke, het eeuwige. Zij maakt bewust, wat ook in ons eeuwig is, ons met het eeuwige verbindt. Zij is overtuiging and overgave. Zij richt den blik niet voorwaarts, doch omhoog; zij komt uit God en voert tot God. Dat is haar geest, die haar steeds tot en levend bezit, tot een krachtigen steun maakt'. Herman Rutters, *J. S. Bach en onze tijd* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Ploegsma, 1941), 119-121.

a stage of transition; a struggle continues between the desire for the massive and the longing for intimacy. A symptom of the latter tendency is the steadily growing appreciation for Bach's art. Longing for Bach means longing for intimate, internal values. With this, the desire for massive effects still comes into conflict: a natural phenomenon of spiritual inertia. But, in the long run, Bach must be the winner in this conflict.²¹

I believe we can all agree that H. R.'s prophecy has come true.

References

Anonymous 1954. Anonymous, "75", in: De Telegraaf (1954).

Berckenhoff 1916. H. L. Berckenhoff, Kunstwerken en kunstenaars (muziek) (Amsterdam: Den Degel, [1916]).

Dukas 1920. Paul Dukas, in: Algemeen Handelsblad (1920), [1].

Gunning Wzn 1927, J. H. Gunning Wzn, Bach's muziek in onzen tijd (s.l.: Nederlandse Bachvereniging, 1927).

L. H. 1945. L. H., "Herman Rutters gaat rusten: criticus, die school heeft gemaakt", in: De Tijd: godsdienstig-staatkundig dagblad (1949).

Muller 1959. H. J. M. Muller, "H.R. Tachtig Jaar", in: De Telegraaf (1959).

Muller 1961. H. J. M. Muller, 'Herman Rutters overleden: bekend musicoloog, journalist en pedagoog', in: De Telegraaf (18-04-1961).

Gunning 1890. J. H. Gunning, Onze eeredienst: opmerkingen over het liturgische element in den Gereformeerden cultus door Dr. J. H. Gunning JHz., predikant te Gouda (Groningen: J. B. Wolters, 1890).

Gunning 1926. J. H. Gunning Wzn, Bach's muziek in onzen tijd (s.l.: Nederlandse Bachvereniging, [1926]).

Lohman 1941. E. Lohman, "Heden en Barokmuziek", in: Dagblad van het Zuiden (1941).

Muller 1961. H. J. M. Muller, "Herman Rutters overleden: bekend musicoloog, journalist en pedagoog", in: De Telegraaf (1961).

21 'Ik voor mij ben er stellig van overtuigd, dat de massaliteit in de toonkunst in haar laatste stadium van verwording verkeert. Het beste in de moderne muziek manifesteert een zin naar verfijning, een drang naar het intieme. [...] Evenwel — wij hoeven geen revolutie te prediken. Symptomen eener reactie zijn reeds onmiskenbaar. Wij leven in een overgangsstadium; er volstrekt zich een strijd tusschen den zin voor het massale en het verlangen naar intimiteit. Een gestadig groeiende waardeering voor Bach's kunst — ziedaar een symptoom van laatstgenoemde neiging. Verlangen naar Bach, dat wil zegen verlangen naar intieme, innerlijke waarden. Daarmee komt de zin voor massale effecten vooralsnog in conflict. Een natuurlijk verschijnsel van geestelijke inertie. Maar in dit conflict moet Bach het op den duur toch winnen'. H. R. ' Historische cyclus II', Algemeen Handelsblad (03-11-1919), avondblad, 6.

Rutters 1916. Herman Rutters, “Concertgebouw”, in: Algemeen Handelsblad (1916), ochtendblad, 2.

Rutters 1917-1. Herman Rutters, “Bachcyclus”, in: Algemeen Handelsblad (01-24-1917), avondblad, 6.

Rutters 1917-2. Herman Rutters, “Schmuller’s Bachcyclus. De waarde van Bach-tradities voor de Bachvertolking”, in: Algemeen Handelsblad (07-04-1917), avondblad, 9.

Rutters 1918-1. Herman Rutters, “Gertrude Förstel”, in: Algemeen Handelsblad (1918), avondblad, 6.

Rutters 1918-2. Herman Rutters, “Bach’s Mattheus-Passion en onze tijd”, in: Algemeen Handelsblad (31-03-1918), ochtendblad, 5.

Rutters 1918-3. Herman Rutters, “Concertgebouw”, in: Algemeen Handelsblad (20-12-1918), avondblad, 7.

Rutters 1919-1. Herman Rutters, “Historische cyclus II”, in: Algemeen Handelsblad (1919).

Rutters 1919-2. Herman Rutters, “Concertgebouw: Historische cyclus IV”, in: Algemeen Handelsblad (10-11-1919), avondblad, 6-7.

Rutters1920. Herman Rutters, “Historische cyclus XIX: Saint-Saëns; Paul Dukas”, in: Algemeen Handelsblad (02-21-1920), avondblad, [1].

Rutters 1941. Herman Rutters, J. S. Bach en onze tijd (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Ploegsma (1941).

Sibmacher-Zijnen 1910. W. N. F. Sibmacher-Zijnen, “Reisherinneringen. VI. Het Bach-feest te Duisburg”, in: Algemeen Handelsblad (1910).

How to cite this article: Jed Wentz, “H.R. and the Formation of an Early Music Aesthetic in The Netherlands (1916–1921)”. Forschungsportal Schola Cantorum Basiliensis, 2016. URL: www.forschung.schola-cantorum-basiliensis.ch/de/forschung/ina-lohr-project/rutters-and-the-early-music-aesthetic.html (accessed DD.MM.YYYY)

Published: 5 September 2016

Copyright: © 2020 The Author

License: This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License ([CC-BY-NC-ND-4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/)), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.