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The Dutch Conductor Willem Mengelberg and the Opportunities of a »New« Dutch-German Music Scene, 1936–1945

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RICK S. TAZELAAR

THE DUTCH CONDUCTOR WILLEM MENGELBERG
AND THE OPPORTUNITIES OF A »NEW« DUTCH–GERMAN
MUSIC SCENE, 1936–1945

Optimism coloured Willem Mengelberg's response to the German occupation of the Netherlands¹. On 10th of May 1940 German troops unexpectedly attacked the Netherlands. Five days later the Dutch capitulation followed. In the aftermath of these events, large parts of the agitated Dutch population waited impatiently for a response from their most famous conductor, who was in Frankfurt at the time. The demand »Willem, return!« echoed through the Dutch press only days after the capitulation². After another two months, on 11th July 1940, Mengelberg finally spoke to the public. The Dutch populist newspaper »De Telegraaf« published several fragments of an interview between Mengelberg and the German reporter Hans Erman in Berlin. The interview was originally published in the German national socialist paper »Völkischer Beobachter«³. Confronted with questions on the current political and cultural situation in the Netherlands, Mengelberg explained:

»Of course there were certain people and groups in the Netherlands with a different orientation, but, as I have heard, it can be ascertained they have already learned a lot. Certainly, our life was connected to the West in many ways, this contact has been disrupted, the influence of Western culture has been cut off as well – however [...] I do not mind this at all. Imagine it had been different. That would have been a lot worse for the Dutch cultural scene. After all, we have always been closely connected to the German intellectual sphere of influence. And when the West retreats, Germany will be even more at the forefront. [...] As soon as I have fulfilled my already planned obligations in Germany, I will stay in Holland. Holland needs its children now, it also needs me. We want to work and believe in the future⁴.«

According to Mengelberg, the German occupation of the Netherlands was not disadvantageous for the Dutch musical scene. This idea was supported by the Dutch journalist Johan Luger – the author of the »Willem, return!« article – and »De Telegraaf«. Being a close friend of Mengelberg, he wrote in a personal letter to »uncle Willem«: »You must understand that everybody and everything in Holland is waiting for you – finally you can harvest what you have

1 I derived the central arguments in this article from my Master's thesis (University of Amsterdam, 2014). The thesis was published online by Jonge Historici. See: Rick S. TAZELAAR, Prof. dr. Willem Mengelberg. Het tragische Heldenleven van een dirigent 1871–1951, URL: <http://www.jhsg.nl/rick-tazelaar-prof-dr-willem-mengelberg-het-tragische-heldenleven-van-een-dirigent-1871-1951/> (accessed 6 January 2017), 2015.

2 Pasquino [Johan LUGER], Willem, keer terug!, in: De Telegraaf, 18.5.1940, p. 5.

3 Mengelberg was interviewed by Erman on the occasion of his concerts in Berlin. The entire interview had originally been published in: Völkischer Beobachter, 5.7.1940.

4 Author unknown, Mengelberg heeft vertrouwen in onze culturele toekomst, in: De Telegraaf, 11.7.1940, p. 5.

been sowing all these years⁵. « After many years of promoting German music, Mengelberg was finally able to prove to his critics that he had been correctly observing the political and cultural events taking place in Germany since 1933. As it turned out in 1940, Mengelberg was not the only Dutch musician who considered the occupation to be an opportunity for change and reformation within the Dutch music scene.

In this article, I focus on the factors that may explain Mengelberg's response to the occupation of the Netherlands between 1940 and 1945. What were the expectations Mengelberg had of the German occupation? And how did he experience the cultural policy that was implemented by the Nazi regime? I argue that Mengelberg considered the German occupation of the Netherlands to be an opportunity to improve his position as the conductor of the Concertgebouw Orchestra in Amsterdam. Furthermore, Mengelberg was hoping to play the role of intermediary between Dutch musical institutions and the German political authorities.

In order to shed light on Mengelberg's response to the German occupation, I use two connected concepts that were originally put forward by the German historian Alf Lüdtke: »domination as a social practice«⁶ and »Eigen-Sinn«⁷. Instead of analysing the Nazi regime and its cultural policy in terms of an authoritarian, dichotomized perception of power, I argue, following Lüdtke, that domination cannot simply be reduced to the categories of »rulers« and »ruled«⁸. Here, the ruler's ability to implement his will depends on the willingness of the ruled to go along with it. In other words, the ruled are more than passive recipients of the ruler's will. Therefore, none of the actors within the field of forces (*Kräftefeld*) holds an autonomous status, leading to domination as a social practice⁹.

The fact that the Nazis were in control of the scope and boundaries of the cultural domain did not automatically place their policy in opposition to the interests of the Dutch music scene. Many musicians adapted to the conditions of the occupation without being forced to do so, or without necessarily identifying themselves with the new regime. In many ways, there remained scope for musicians to (re)interpret the new cultural policy following their own ideas and convictions. In this context, Thomas Lindenberger speaks of the concept of *Eigen-Sinn*, which he defines as »the ability and the need of an individual in a relationship of domination to perceive and appropriate reality as well as to act«¹⁰. The concept describes the »interpretive and meaning-producing effect«¹¹ of this ability. As the case of Willem Mengelberg demonstrates, a musician could attribute his own meaning to National Socialism and function under the new regime without necessarily considering himself a Nazi.

5 Letter from Johan Luger to Willem Mengelberg, dated 29th of June 1940, Nederlands Muziek Instituut/Haags Gemeente Archief (NMI/HGA), 184 Willem Mengelberg.

6 Alf LÜDTKE, Einleitung: Herrschaft als soziale Praxis, in: Alf LÜDTKE (ed.), *Herrschaft als soziale Praxis. Historische und sozial-anthropologische Studien*, Göttingen 1991, p. 9–66.

7 ID., *The History of Everyday Life. Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life*, Princeton 1995; Thomas LINDENBERGER (ed.), *Herrschaft und Eigen-Sinn in der Diktatur. Studien zur Gesellschaftsgeschichte der DDR*, Berlin 1999; ID., *Eigen-Sinn, Domination and No Resistance*, Version 1.0, in: *Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte* (accessed 3 August 2015), URL: https://docupedia.de/zg/Eigensinn_english_version.

8 LÜDTKE, Einleitung: Herrschaft als soziale Praxis (as in n. 6), p. 9–12.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 9–10.

10 LINDENBERGER, *Eigen-Sinn, Domination and No Resistance* (as in n. 7).

11 *Eigen-Sinn* as defined here covers a broad self-contradictory spectrum of stances, ranging from fanatic idealism on the one side to open resistance against government claims on the other side. See: *ibid.*

1936–1940: »Those days are over now«¹²

On 28th of March 1871 Mengelberg was born into a family of German emigrants that had been living in the Dutch city of Utrecht since 1869¹³. Having attended the local music school, Mengelberg continued and completed his music studies at the famous German conservatory of Cologne, as did many Dutch musicians at the end of the nineteenth century¹⁴. In 1895, at the age of 24, Mengelberg became the second conductor to be appointed chief of the Concertgebouw Orchestra, an ensemble that had been founded only seven years earlier. The young conductor used an authoritarian style, and achieved a position for himself and his orchestra among the most famous conductors and ensembles of their time. The Concertgebouw Orchestra, and Mengelberg in particular, were acknowledged to embody the Dutch music scene during the first half of the twentieth century.

Furthermore, Mengelberg established friendships with well-known composers and conductors such as the German Richard Strauss and the Jewish–Austrian Gustav Mahler. An outright highlight of Mengelberg's career was the so-called »Mahler-Festival«. The festival was organized in Amsterdam in 1920 to honour Mahler and to celebrate Mengelberg's 25th anniversary conducting the Concertgebouw Orchestra¹⁵. Members of the socio-cultural elite from all over Europe, including Mahler's widow Alma, travelled to Amsterdam to see Mengelberg conduct. It was an enormous triumph for Mengelberg and certainly the most important token of appreciation he would receive during his active career. The Austrian musicologist Paul Stefan described Mengelberg's greatest achievement as having rapidly transformed Amsterdam into »Mahler's Bayreuth«¹⁶. In the early 1930s, at the peak of his popularity, Mengelberg had become a »national treasure« in the Netherlands, and he was as celebrated by his audience as today's pop stars¹⁷.

In order to understand Mengelberg's response to the German occupation and his extensive guest appearances in Germany after 1936, historians have come up with two explanations. First, some have argued that Mengelberg had been influenced by German culture throughout his life¹⁸. He was born into an emigrant German family and educated at the conservatory of Cologne, so Germany had always been part of his personal and musical identity. In an inter-

12 Willem Mengelberg quoted in: Carl F. FLESCHE, »...und spielst Du auch Geige?« Der Sohn eines berühmten Musikers erzählt und blickt hinter die Kulissen, Zürich 1990, p. 297.

13 The Mengelberg family was not Jewish. Its emigration to the Netherlands was artistically and especially financially motivated. See: Frits ZWART, Willem Mengelberg. Een biografie 1871–1920, vol. 1, Amsterdam 1999, p. 19–26.

14 Ibid., p. 30.

15 On Mahler's relationship with Amsterdam and the »Mahler-Festival« see: Johan GISKES (ed.), Mahler in Amsterdam van Mengelberg tot Chailly, Bussum 1995; Paul CRONHEIM (ed.), Willem Mengelberg. Gedenkboek 1895–1920, Den Haag 1920; ZWART, Willem Mengelberg (as in n. 13), p. 195–216, 314–330.

16 Paul Stefan quoted in: Johan GISKES, Ada KLARENBEEK, Het Mahler Feest 1920, in: GISKES (ed.), Mahler in Amsterdam (as in n. 15), p. 56.

17 Regarding the social role of conductors during the first half of the twentieth century see: Jürgen OSTERHAMMEL, Kühle Meisterschaft. Dirigenten des frühen 20. Jahrhunderts zwischen Selbstdarstellung und Metierbeschreibung, in: Sven Oliver MÜLLER, Jürgen OSTERHAMMEL, Martin REMPE (ed.), Kommunikation im Musikleben. Harmonien und Dissonanzen im 20. Jahrhundert, Göttingen 2015, p. 154–178.

18 Pauline MICHEELS, Het Concertgebouw gedurende de Tweede Wereldoorlog (1940–1945), in: H. J. van ROYEN (ed.), Historie en kroniek van het Concertgebouw en het Concertgebouworkest: 1888–1988, vol. 1, Zutphen 1988, p. 253; ID., Muziek in de schaduw van het Derde Rijk. De Nederlandse symfonie-orkesten 1933–1945, Zutphen 1993, p. 88–96, 113–115.

view, he even referred to himself as being a »German Dutchman«¹⁹. Second, it has been asserted that Mengelberg was an undoubtedly gifted musician who did not care for political affairs and that, in fact, he even lacked an accurate understanding of the political situation in Germany after 1933²⁰.

Indeed, Mengelberg was a product of German culture and had always been a supporter of Germany. However, as the musicologist Frits Zwart recently argued, in private Mengelberg was actually interested in politics and aware of the political shift in Germany. By sporadically reading the »Völkischer Beobachter« and »De Telegraaf« during 1933 and 1934, he informed himself about Hitler and the programme of the Nationalsozialistische Arbeiterpartei (NSDAP)²¹. However, his interest in National Socialism, as reflected in his personal notes, was rather biased and selective. On the one hand, Mengelberg was deeply impressed by Hitler's attempt to build a new German empire and to unite and strengthen the German nation. Mengelberg hoped for the restoration of Germany's authority and dominance in the world after the failure of the Weimar Republic. On the other hand, Mengelberg hardly paid attention to the racist side of the »Third Reich« and its consequences for the Jewish people. Blinded by Hitler's role, Zwart states, it seemed that in a somewhat careless manner Mengelberg naively accepted anti-Semitism as an unavoidable »side-effect« without reflecting on its consequences²².

Despite his interest in German culture, Hitler and National Socialism, Mengelberg's conducting in Germany after 1933 was not motivated by this. At the most, it did not keep him from conducting. Before 1933, during the Kaiserreich and the Weimar Republic, Mengelberg had already conducted orchestras in Germany on a regular basis. Moreover, instead of publicly supporting the Führer, Mengelberg kept his enthusiasm about Hitler private. As an artist – he believed – he had nothing to do with politics²³. Mengelberg's motivation in essence came from a different source. To a large extent, historiography has taken Mengelberg's position as the conductor of the Concertgebouw Orchestra for granted. However, the relationship between Mengelberg and the Concertgebouw Orchestra and its board (NV Het Concertgebouw) became increasingly tense during the 1930s. Mengelberg's conducting in Germany from 1936 onwards, followed by his optimistic response in 1940, should mainly be understood against this background. In my view, it was an attempt to regain new social and financial appreciation as a conductor.

As early as 1930, Rudolf Mengelberg, the great-nephew of Willem Mengelberg and the artistic manager of the Concertgebouw Orchestra, noticed that Willem's energy, as well as his authority, was decreasing²⁴. During a meeting with the orchestra's board he explained that: »[w]ithout Willem Mengelberg, Holland without a doubt would have never been able to join the music scene as energetically as it has. However, the spirits he created are turning against him

19 Author unknown, *Feestelijke bijeenkomst van Nederlanders te Berlijn*, in: *Algemeen Handelsblad* (22 March 1938), p. 5.

20 MICHEELS, *Het Concertgebouw* (as in n. 18), p. 253; Jan BANK, *Willem Mengelberg. Een Rijnlants hoogleraar in Utrecht*, in: Ed JONKER, Maarten VAN ROSSEM (ed.), *Geschiedenis & Cultuur. Achttien opstellen*, Den Haag 1990, p. 223.

21 Frits ZWART, *Willem Mengelberg. Een biografie 1920–1951*, vol. 2, Amsterdam 2016, p. 245–256.

22 Mengelberg did not hold a coherent set of anti-Semitic beliefs. But, as the result of his negative experiences with Jewish bankers in New York during the 1920s, he occasionally implied a few negative prejudices (that were commonly shared within society) about the financial dealings of Jews. However, Mengelberg's attention to Hitler and National Socialism was hardly motivated by these prejudices. At best, Zwart argues, they perhaps helped him to accept the anti-Semitic side of the »Third Reich« without being bothered by it. See: *ibid.*, p. 248–250.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 251–253, 553.

24 Rudolf Mengelberg quoted in: Truus DE LEUR, *Eduard van Beinum. Musicus tussen musici. 1900–1959*, Bussum 2004, p. 94–95.

and our own organization²⁵.« Mengelberg achieved a worldwide reputation for his orchestra, but his authoritarian way of working was progressively challenged by its members. It seems that Mengelberg had given the musicians a self-confidence that now turned against him.

These developments are captured in a letter by the orchestra member Maurits van den Berg (violinist) to the famous Hungarian violinist Carl Flesch in 1937²⁶. The extensive letter contains, among other things, the following description of the daily business under Mengelberg's baton in the Concertgebouw: »What happens here in the [*Concert*]gebouw is some kind of a joke. The rehearsals are planned for 9 a. m.; Mister M.[engelberg], however, arrives at 9.30, letting us tune and when we want to start tuning, he says: ›That's enough, quit now.‹ The strings are completely mistuned and people are sitting frantically at their desks²⁷.« For many years, Flesch performed concerts accompanied by Mengelberg and became a good friend of the conductor²⁸. Therefore, it is unlikely that the orchestra member – who was aware of this friendship – in essence would lie about the situation in Amsterdam, risking the chance that Flesch would find out about it²⁹.

The orchestra member continues his letter by quoting how Mengelberg criticized their last concert: »Well, I already knew you were tenth class, but yesterday? That was 5 %, a disaster! It's the fault of the guest conductors (Br.[uno] W.[alter] and v.[an] B.[einum]). They are the so-called *Durchspieldirigenten* with a smile³⁰.« The offended orchestra members started yelling and whistling. Mengelberg responded: »Well, how about that? I'm being yelled at for telling these 20 % musicians the truth³¹.« The trumpeter Marinus Komst tried to end the »nonsense« by shouting »start making music« to Mengelberg³². Mengelberg felt provoked and tried to respond: »Ten years ago I would have said you or me, but I can no longer do that, those days are over now³³.«

Further indications of the tense work environment may be seen from another example. During another rehearsal, the orchestra member Van Leeuwen was punished for shouting out »are you out of your mind!?« to Mengelberg³⁴. Mengelberg's increasing age was not helping him. During a performance of Shakespeare's »Midsummer Night's Dream« in the season 1935–1936, Mengelberg, then 65 years old, was to simultaneously conduct the orchestra and the soloists on stage. However, he was not able to divide his attention as needed. In order to solve the problem, the second principal conductor of the orchestra, Eduard van Beinum, had to stay at

25 Ibid.

26 From the beginning of Mengelberg's career, quarrels between him and members of the Concertgebouw Orchestra took place during rehearsals. Yet, what is interesting is that they got more intense over time, as described in this letter, progressively showing more disrespect on both sides. On early quarrels see: ZWART, Willem Mengelberg (as in n. 13), p. 81–84.

27 FLESCH, »...und spielst Du auch Geige?« (as in n. 12), p. 296.

28 Ibid.

29 Zwart supports the idea that Van den Berg's description in general is correct. However, Van den Berg more likely based it on several rehearsals during the autumn of 1936 and lightly exaggerated and changed the events at some points. See: *ibid.*; ZWART, Willem Mengelberg (as in n. 21), p. 309.

30 FLESCH, »...und spielst Du auch Geige?« (as in n. 12), p. 296–297.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 297.

32 *Ibid.*

33 *Ibid.*

34 Agendapunt 4 vergadering 9 November 1938, Stadsarchief Amsterdam (SAA), archief 1089, NV het Concertgebouw (CGA), Inv.nr. 62, Stukken betreffende de vergaderingen van het Bestuur, bijeengebracht door R. Mengelberg, 1937–1938.

Mengelberg's side deep down in the orchestra pit, to pull »the boss's« leg when he had to start conducting³⁵.

In addition to the changing conductor–musician relationship, the relationship between Mengelberg and the board of the orchestra grew strained during the 1930s. Without informing Mengelberg beforehand, they appointed Van Beinum »second principal conductor« of the Concertgebouw Orchestra in 1938³⁶. Mengelberg felt that the board had betrayed him by giving Van Beinum a position equal to his own. A remark of Mengelberg's during a rehearsal, as described in the 1937 letter to Carl Flesch, indicates the existence of earlier tensions: »The members of the board of the orchestra don't do as I say as well, causing the audience to increasingly stay away³⁷.«

Furthermore, Mengelberg disliked the fact that the Concertgebouw still cooperated with the concert management of his former Jewish personal secretary Samuel Bottenheim³⁸. Owing to Bottenheim's speculations with Mengelberg's savings on the stock market in New York, the conductor had lost almost all of his fortune – around 480 000 guilders³⁹. Bottenheim had also tried to hide his and Mengelberg's foreign income from the Dutch tax authorities. For this legal violation, Bottenheim was sentenced to six weeks in prison. Thereafter, Mengelberg once and for all lost confidence in his secretary⁴⁰. Moreover, he felt deeply offended by the Dutch tax authorities' methods of proceeding, and had to give up his home in Amsterdam⁴¹. Conducting in Germany, therefore, was also motivated by Mengelberg's attempt to regain new financial appreciation and to quickly rebuild his savings for his retirement⁴². The board of the orchestra apologized to Mengelberg, but their relationship would never recover.

Against this background, it is hardly surprising that Mengelberg enthusiastically accepted invitations to conduct orchestras in Germany starting in 1936. Conducting German orchestras on a significantly larger scale than before 1933 was Mengelberg's answer to his problems in Amsterdam. Mengelberg successfully returned to Berlin, Dresden, Frankfurt/Main and Hamburg. For the Nazi regime, inviting famous international artists was a cultural instrument to promote its politics. Already in 1935, Rudolf (Bob) Boissevain, a very close friend of Mengelberg's, warned him about this: »Willem Mengelberg should stay outside politics [...] I ask myself: Is it possible to stay neutral in Germany? The ›directors‹ of the Propaganda Ministry take politics everywhere with them to use it [...] They make conductors their political football⁴³.«

- 35 Many orchestra members and members of the orchestra's board referred to Mengelberg as »the boss«. On Mengelberg's performance of Shakespeare's play see: DE LEUR, Eduard van Beinum (as in n. 24), p. 143.
- 36 Letter from Concertgebouwbestuur to Willem Mengelberg, dated 19th of March 1938, SAA, CGA, Inv. Nr. 1470, W. Mengelberg, zakelijke correspondentie, 1937–1939.
- 37 FLESCHE, »...und spielst Du auch Geige?« (as in n. 12), p. 297.
- 38 Bestuursnotulen dated 19th of March 1938, SAA, CGA, Inv. Nr. 62, Stukken betreffende de vergaderingen van het bestuur, bijeengebracht door R. Mengelberg, 1937–1938; Letter from NV Concertbureau S. Bottenheim, SAA, CGA, Inv.nr. 2723, N.V. Concertbureau S. Bottenheim, 1935–1937; Letter from Concertgebouwbestuur to Willem Mengelberg, dated 19 March 1938, SAA, CGA, Inv. Nr. 1470, W. Mengelberg, zakelijke correspondentie, 1937–1939.
- 39 In 2016, this would have been ca. 4.8 million Euros. Mengelberg's conflict with his Jewish secretary probably confirmed his prejudices about Jews and their financial dealings. See: ZWART, Willem Mengelberg (as in n. 21), p. 296.
- 40 Ibid., p. 294–301.
- 41 Mengelberg's conflict with the tax authorities about his foreign income had already started during the 1920s. See: *ibid.*, p. 143–147.
- 42 Ibid., p. 286.
- 43 Letter from R. L. Boissevain to Willem Mengelberg, dated 28 September 1935, NMI/HGA, 184 Willem Mengelberg.

Mengelberg, though slightly worried at the beginning, ignored Boissevain's opinion as well as other advice he received from his social network⁴⁴. Neither was he impressed when the communist and social democratic Dutch newspapers picked up on his conducting in Germany and started criticizing him for it. Several journalists, especially from the socialist newspaper »Het Volk«, criticized Mengelberg for ignoring the political situation in Germany and its consequences for Jewish citizens. They accused him of betraying his old »Jewish« friend Gustav Mahler⁴⁵. A public debate began and the case was discussed in the city council of Amsterdam⁴⁶. The board of the Concertgebouw was worried that Mengelberg's triumph in Germany could damage the orchestra's reputation⁴⁷.

Mengelberg was not willing to give up his success in Germany. He defended his position by publicly explaining that »true art is like the sun that shines for everyone« and therefore had nothing to do with race and politics⁴⁸. Aware of the political sensibilities, he strategically used his status as an artist to defend his German concerts⁴⁹. If the Concertgebouw Orchestra had been his main focus, the public discussion about him and the possible consequences for his orchestra could have been used as an argument to avoid conducting in Nazi Germany. Yet, the difficulties with his orchestra lay at the heart of his motivation to keep conducting in Germany on a larger scale than before – despite all the criticism. Mengelberg had always seen himself as a mediator between Germany and the Netherlands. After 1936 he was actively trying to take up this role once again.

1940–1945: »I have always strived for something like this⁵⁰«

After his last concert with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra in July 1940, Mengelberg returned to Amsterdam at the beginning of August. His interview in »De Telegraaf« from two months before had frustrated his audience and the conductor was now trying to get the situation back under control. The board of the Concertgebouw received several letters from angry visitors, stating: »By your cheering after the capitulation, you [Mengelberg] have deeply aggrieved the Dutch nation⁵¹.« Not everyone shared this view. In his personal letter to him, Johan Luger perhaps best described what Mengelberg himself was hoping for: »Dear uncle Willem, I have never dreamed of this fortune to come your way, yet you are able to model the Dutch music scene after your insights. We need you – different things have to be built up and everything will take place in the way that always has been your way – that is order, dis-

44 Before giving his own opinion, Boissevain had asked different people – including the Dutch minister for foreign affairs De Graeff – how they felt about Mengelberg's conducting in Germany. See: Letter from R. L. Boissevain to Willem Mengelberg, dated 28 September 1935; Telegram from minister Jhr.mr. A. C. de Graeff to Willem Mengelberg, dated 10 January 1936, NMI/HGA, 184 Willem Mengelberg.

45 Author unknown, Prof. Mengelberg teruggekeerd, in: De Gooi- en Eemlander: nieuws- en advertentieblad (18 November 1936), p. 3.

46 Author unknown, Kunstsubsidies, in: De Tribune, soc. dem. Weekblad, 11.10.1935, p. 3.

47 Letter from Rudolf Mengelberg to Willem Mengelberg, dated 24th of September 1935, NMI/HGA, 184 Willem Mengelberg.

48 Author unknown, Kort onderhoud met prof. Willem Mengelberg op zijn doorreis naar Berlijn, in: Het Vaderland: staat- en letterkundig nieuwsblad, 6.11.1936, p. 1.

49 ZWART, Willem Mengelberg (as in n. 21), p. 553.

50 Mengelberg quoted in: Author unknown, Prof. Mengelberg over zijn concerten voor Vreugde en Arbeid, in: Algemeen Handelsblad, 26.10.1940, p. 2.

51 Letters from concert visitors to the Concertgebouw 1940–1943, SAA, archief, 1089, CGA, Inv. nr. 1478: W. Mengelberg, persoonlijke correspondentie, 1940–1943.

cipline, devotion⁵².« In Luger's opinion Mengelberg would be the »musical saviour« of the Netherlands⁵³.

During his short visit to Amsterdam, Mengelberg proclaimed that »he was still the same person as when he had left« the Netherlands earlier that year⁵⁴. Judging from his behaviour and statements towards the press, Mengelberg was able to uphold most of his personal beliefs during the occupation. Even though the regime presented its policy of culture as »radical« and »new«, it showed many continuities with the years before 1940. German composers remained the foundation of the programmes played by the orchestras; a »Germanization«, if even possible, was not necessary⁵⁵. The »new« politics of culture of the Nazis were, as the historian Moritz Föllmer states, the result of a combination of »ideological directives, bureaucratic procedures, and arbitrary interferences« without programmatic uniqueness⁵⁶. In this context historian Norbert Frei similarly speaks of »strategy, necessity, and invariability«⁵⁷.

Mengelberg, like many musicians, could easily adapt to the new policy. It was not necessary to identify oneself with the Nazis in order to perform music composed by, for example, Beethoven, since Beethoven's music was already one of the foundations of the German musical tradition. A certain level of identification, as in the case of Mengelberg, of course, may have been helpful. Concerning Mahler's compositions, Mengelberg naively hoped that the National Socialist measures would only be temporary, and still strove for the general acceptance of Mahler's music⁵⁸. Mengelberg had supported German music for his whole life and now hoped that he could use this sentiment to strengthen his position as conductor of the Concertgebouw Orchestra. From a musical point of view, Mengelberg shared the obsession for »German music« with the Nazis, rooted in the nineteenth century. Furthermore, Mengelberg had always sought to develop and strengthen the Dutch music scene primarily by promoting German composers.

He argued similarly at the end of 1940, when he conducted two concerts for the Joy and Labour (*Vreugde en Arbeid*) organization (the Dutch version of *Kraft durch Freude*) as well as one concert for the *Winterhilfswerk* (Winter Help Service) in 1942. Mengelberg regarded these concerts as part of the »people's concerts« (*volksconcerten*) he had been conducting for more than 40 years. »I have always strived for something like this [Joy and Labour]«, he told the press, »the arts [...] are like the sun that shines for everyone⁵⁹.« This illustrates how the Nazi regime used and integrated already well-known phenomena and presented them as being revolutionary and new. For Mengelberg, these concerts perfectly fitted in his *Eigen-Sinn*; everything came together during these performances. He conducted his Concertgebouw Orchestra supported by the German-ruled political institutions, to strengthen the bonds between Germany and the Netherlands in order to serve the Dutch musical scene. This was what he had striven

52 Letter from Johan Luger to Willem Mengelberg, dated 29th of June 1940, NMI/HGA, 184 Willem Mengelberg.

53 MICHEELS, Muziek in de schaduw (as in n. 18), p. 120.

54 Author unknown, Prof. dr. Mengelberg over het glas champagne: »Er is geen woord van waar«, in: Nieuwsblad van het Noorden, 3.8.1940, p. 2.

55 Leo SAMAMA, Nederlandse muziek in de 20ste eeuw. Voorspel tot een nieuwe dag, Amsterdam 2006, p. 183–188. On the scientific difficulties with the »Germanness in music«, see: Michael H. KATER, *The Twisted Muse. Musicians and their Music in the Third Reich*, New York 1997, p. 75–78.

56 Moritz FÖLLMER, »Ein Leben wie im Traum«. Kultur im Dritten Reich, Munich 2016, p. 67.

57 Norbert FREI, *Der Führerstaat. Nationalsozialistische Herrschaft 1933 bis 1945*, Munich 2013, p. 124.

58 ZWART, Willem Mengelberg (as in n. 21), p. 346–349.

59 Author unknown, Prof. Mengelberg over zijn concerten (as in n. 49), p. 2.

for⁶⁰. Yet, Mengelberg's ambitions did not correlate with what was at stake for the Dutch musical scene in general.

Mengelberg was not the only member of the Dutch musical scene who was seeking to use the German occupation of the Netherlands for his own purposes. Almost directly after the capitulation the music scene, and many other fields of Dutch cultural life as well, agreed upon the premise that their activities should continue as soon as possible. Possibly, now the time had even come to fundamentally reshape the organization of the Dutch music scene⁶¹. In the eyes of many orchestra members, musicologists, critics and composers the Dutch musical landscape was in chaos. Therefore, the Dutch composer Willem Pijper gained general support when he argued in favour of paying more attention to contemporary Dutch composers. Furthermore, the low and unstable salaries of orchestra musicians caused serious problems, not to mention the disproportionately high unemployment rate of Dutch professional musicians⁶².

On the 28th of May 1940, less than two weeks after the Dutch capitulation, the Dutch Association of Artists (Nederlandse Organisatie van Kunstenaars, NOK) was founded. All official musicians' organizations were united, in order to fundamentally restructure the organization of the Dutch music scene. One of the NOK's main goals was to strengthen and confirm a »Dutch« musical life that would serve the Dutch »fatherland«⁶³. Furthermore, it promoted cultural cooperation with other nations for the creation of a »new Europe«⁶⁴. This was an attempt to make use of the new political situation in the Netherlands in order to protect and build up a typically Dutch music scene before the Germans could take over.

The NOK was, as the musicologist Leo Samama called it, the musical version of the Dutch Union (Nederlandse Unie)⁶⁵. Ironically, the NOK and the Dutch Union sought to strengthen the Dutch fatherland by accepting the dominant position of Germany. During the first months of the occupation, the new regime tolerated these initiatives coming from inside the music scene. However, from the beginning, the Nazis had planned to integrate these new organizations within their cultural politics⁶⁶. Showing their – feigned – goodwill to the artists was just a strategy. They knew that the success of the National Socialist cultural policy depended on the willingness of the Dutch cultural elite to cooperate. Nevertheless, the new policy came with a high price, which was paid by Jewish musicians. The »aryanization« of the musical scene led to a policy of systematic exclusion of what the regime considered to be *entartet* (degenerate) elements. Jewish musicians were dismissed and »Jewish« music was banned⁶⁷.

The German authorities made three organizations responsible for the new music scene. First, the new Department of Public Enlightenment and Arts (Volksvoorlichting en Kunsten, DVK), the Dutch version of Goebbels' Ministry, was made responsible for the reform of the arts. However, basically only its music section functioned properly, owing to its capable leader, the former music critic Jan Govers⁶⁸. As was typical for the Nazi administration, the music section of the Public Enlightenment and Arts department at the same time was controlled by the Abtei-

60 He thereby ignored the fact that the Nazis actually used these kinds of concerts in order to build their race-based *Volksgemeinschaft*.

61 MICHEELS, *Muziek in de schaduw* (as in n. 18), p. 123–138; SAMAMA, *Nederlandse muziek* (as in n. 55), p. 165–167.

62 *Ibid.*, p. 166.

63 *Ibid.*, p. 166–168; MICHEELS, *Muziek in de schaduw* (as in n. 18), p. 117–138.

64 SAMAMA, *Nederlandse muziek* (as in n. 55), p. 166–167.

65 Founded on 24th of July 1940, this Dutch nationalist political movement would become the largest political party in Dutch history. See: *ibid.*, p. 166; Wichert TEN HAVE, *De Nederlandse Unie. Aanpassing, vernieuwing en confrontatie in bezettingstijd 1940–1941*, Amsterdam 1999.

66 MICHEELS, *Muziek in de schaduw* (as in n. 18), p. 128–133.

67 *Ibid.*, 163–197; SAMAMA, *Nederlandse muziek* (as in n. 55), p. 169–172.

68 *Ibid.*, p. 142–146.

lung Kultur, led by Dr Joachim Bergfeld of the Reichskommissariat⁶⁹. Additionally, the Dutch Chamber of Culture (Nederlandsche Kultuurkamer) and its sub-section for music (Muziek-gilde) were officially founded in 1942⁷⁰. The NOK had already been prohibited and banned by the Germans in May 1941. In order to control the cultural scene, the Germans required every artist in the Netherlands to register at the Chamber of Culture. Due to the fragmented character of the Chamber, its incompetent staff and the presence of inter-institutional rivalry within overlapping fields, the overall organization of the new Dutch musical scene did not function as planned and was therefore not under »total« control⁷¹.

Jan Goverts and his music section of the DVK were enabled by the new government to implement important reforms to the advantage of the Dutch musical scene. Inspired by the reorganizations in Germany, orchestra members' salaries were raised, orchestras received additional funding, and proposals were made to implement a health, unemployment and pension security system for the arts scene, which partly succeeded⁷². After decades of financial insecurity and high unemployment rates, these reforms substantially improved the overall living standard of many professional musicians in the Netherlands.

The orchestras could only benefit from these financial reforms by adopting the new guidelines for music production. Although German music shaped the ideological musical foundation of the »Third Reich«, Goverts was able to substantially promote Dutch composers. As prescribed by the DVK, between 20 % and 30 % of contemporary concerts had to contain music composed by Dutch composers. Paradoxically, as a consequence Dutch music was performed more than ever before in the history of the Dutch musical scene during the German occupation⁷³. However, this was not what Mengelberg had in mind. The new regime knew that it could secure the cooperation of the Dutch musicians by supporting their pre-war ambitions.

If conflicts occurred, the regime made concessions – at least at first. When Mengelberg returned to Amsterdam in September 1940, the new authorities for one last time allowed him to conduct the First Symphony of Mahler, in order to keep the prominent conductor compliant. In this phase of the occupation, famous musicians such as Mengelberg were needed in order to promote and implement the new cultural system. Mengelberg, though disappointed about this prohibition, showed his pragmatic side and accepted the situation. Accordingly, the authorities later permitted him to perform less Dutch music than he was supposed to according to the new standards; they knew his stance towards Dutch composers. Furthermore, Mengelberg was allowed to conduct Tchaikovsky in 1944, even though Russian music was forbidden after 1941.

These exceptions show the practical implications of »domination as a social practice«. Instead of forcing the conductor to comply with the new rules, which would only have turned out to be ineffective, the new authorities listened to Mengelberg's requests and took some steps in his direction. Mengelberg, at least to a certain extent, got what he wanted and so did the regime. Moreover, Mengelberg never attended the meetings of the newly formed cultural organizations and was not impressed by the obligation to become a member of the Chamber of Cul-

69 This »Generalkommissariat« was one of the four political institutions forming the German government during the occupation. For an overview of the German occupation, its institutions, and consequences see: Frits BOTERMAN, *Duitse daders. Nederland onder Duitse bezetting (1940–1945)*, Amsterdam 2015.

70 MICHEELS, *Muziek in de schaduw* (as in n. 18), p. 151–161.

71 On this characterization see: Martin BROZAT, *Der Staat Hitlers. Grundlegung und Entwicklung seiner inneren Verfassung*, Munich 2007; Reinhard BOLLMUS, *Das Amt Rosenberg und seine Gegner. Studien zum Machtkampf im nationalsozialistischen Herrschaftssystem*, Munich 2006.

72 MICHEELS, *Muziek in de schaduw* (as in n. 18), p. 249–270.

73 *Ibid.*, p. 183–189.

ture⁷⁴. At the end of the occupation he still had not applied for its membership. At Mengelberg's request, Seyss-Inquart, the *Reichskommissar* of the Netherlands, personally granted three (out of the seventeen) Jewish musicians permission to remain longer in the Concertgebouw Orchestra than was officially allowed after 1941⁷⁵. Mengelberg, as well as Seyss-Inquart, knew that despite the official policy against Jews, keeping these musicians was of vital importance for the quality of the orchestra and the continuation of the concerts⁷⁶.

Goverts was aware of the fact that Mengelberg was not useful in building a »Dutch« musical scene. »A contribution is not to be expected from him«, another functionary remarked⁷⁷. In the end, Mengelberg's most vital contribution to the Nazi regime was his conducting all over Europe during the war, including Germany, Sweden, Austria, Hungary, Romania, Italy, Belgium, France, Spain and Portugal. These cultural exchanges were officially part of the cultural politics of the Nazis⁷⁸. For Mengelberg, these travels were a means of being honoured and celebrated, without being confronted with the difficult and tense situation in Amsterdam.

Mengelberg's authoritarian behaviour, against the background of the already strained political situation, caused further strains between him and his orchestra and led to new incidents. The board of the orchestra even advised him to stay away, in order to avoid damage to the orchestra's reputation. It did not want to get involved in Mengelberg's ambitions. As soon as pictures of Mengelberg and Seyss-Inquart appeared in the newspapers, a storm of criticism broke forth. In many ways, the difficult situation of the 1930s continued and would only become more extreme during Mengelberg's absence from Amsterdam. The bassoonist De Klerk formulated this very clearly, when he said »we don't like you any more« to Mengelberg's face at a rehearsal⁷⁹. During the war, Mengelberg performed only 96 concerts with the Concertgebouw Orchestra in comparison to the other principal conductor, Eduard van Beinum, who conducted 205⁸⁰. Van Beinum's democratic way of performing music – as »musician among musicians« – had become highly appreciated⁸¹. Thus, it was no coincidence that Van Beinum succeeded Mengelberg after the war.

Despite his optimism in 1940, Mengelberg in the end never gained the central position as mediator between Dutch and German culture that he had hoped for. Many people both inside and outside the Dutch music scene considered Mengelberg to be a collaborator who had betrayed his country during the occupation. His conducting in Germany after 1936 did not help the situation either. Mengelberg considered the new regime to be a reflection of his ideas of »order, discipline, devotion« and his interest in German music. Yet, in the end, these were not the issues that were at stake for Dutch functionaries such as Goverts. They used the occupation for their long-awaited opportunity to promote Dutch – rather than German – music. If Mengel-

74 Letter from Prof. G. A. S. Snijder to Willem Mengelberg, dated 7th of May 1942, NMI/HGA, 184 Willem Mengelberg; MICHEELS, *Muziek in de schaduw* (as in n. 18), p. 147.

75 The seventeen Jewish members formed about 20% of the Concertgebouw Orchestra. See: MICHEELS, *Muziek in de schaduw* (as in n. 18), p. 179.

76 Mengelberg's personal involvement proves that, despite his prejudices, he was not a supporter of anti-Semitism. On his involvement see: ZWART, *Willem Mengelberg* (as in n. 21), p. 451–456.

77 MICHEELS, *Het Concertgebouw* (as in n. 18), p. 219.

78 ID., *Muziek in de schaduw* (as in n. 18), p. 222.

79 De Klerk quoted in the documentary: Pieter VAREKAMP, *Close-Up. Afscheid, een verhaal over Willem Mengelberg* (AVRO 1995).

80 These numbers are taken from the online database of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra Amsterdam. See: RCO, *Concert Archive*, URL: <http://archieff.concertgebouworkest.nl/en/archive/search/> (accessed 22.12.2016). For further statistics on Mengelberg's career see: TAZELAAR, Prof. dr. Willem Mengelberg (as in n. 1), p. 117–128.

81 Quote after De Leur's title of her biography on Eduard van Beinum. See: DE LEUR, *Eduard van Beinum* (as in n. 24).

berg was disappointed, it was about this circumstance, not about the German occupation itself. What started as hope and optimism for Mengelberg ended as disillusionment and loneliness. Mengelberg paid a high price for his actions and was never to take up his baton again after the war⁸². Between May 1944 and his death on 22 March 1951, he lived in the completely isolated atmosphere of his Swiss chalet in the hamlet Zuort. He would never visit the Netherlands again. On 31 March 1951 the Concertgebouw Orchestra performed a memorial concert in his honour. The orchestra was conducted by the Jewish conductor Otto Klemperer.

82 On the post-war trials against Mengelberg see: Frederik HEEMSKERK, Dossier Willem Mengelberg. De geschiedenis van een zuiveringszaak, Amsterdam 2015.