PREFACE

‘The image of musical culture in the Renaissance, which we have obtained in the course of two centuries of historical research, is composed of a great number of elements. Only a specific part of these elements is formed from data that we, to a certain extent, regard as established facts’. With these words Willem Elders opened his valedictory lecture as Professor of Musicology at Utrecht University, Department of Musicology, on 10 June 1992. Before turning to the dedicatee’s own contribution to the image of musical culture in the Renaissance, let us briefly sketch his scholarly career.

Willem (Wilhelmus Ignatius Maria) Elders was born on 29 December 1934 in Enkhuizen, North Holland. He received his musical education at the Nederlands Instituut voor Katholieke Kerkmuziek [Dutch Institute of Catholic Church Music] from 1953 to 1956 and continued his studies with Albert de Klerk (organ) and Wolfgang Wijdeveld (piano). In addition, he studied musicology at Utrecht University, where Albert Smijers, Hendrik Eduard Reeser, René Bernard Lenaerts and Hélène Wagenaar-Nolthenius were his professors. While still studying, he taught at a secondary school in Eindhoven from 1960 to 1964. Having passed the Dutch Doctoraalexamen with the highest possible distinction, he was appointed research assistant at the Institute of Musicology of the University of Utrecht in 1964. Four years later he was appointed lecturer at this Institute. In the same year he received his doctorate — similarly with the highest possible distinction — under Lenaerts with the dissertation Studien zur Symbolik in der Musik der alten Niederländer (Bilthoven 1968). This work, which demonstrates a critical attitude to a subject still very much prone to speculation, treats of the symbolic correlation between the content of the text on the one hand, and the notation and other aspects of composition on the other. In 1969, Elders’ dissertation was awarded the Dent medal of the International Musicological Society. Willem Elders was appointed professor at Utrecht University in 1972, where he taught the history of music before 1600 until his retirement in 1992.

In the course of the years, Willem Elders gained much respect internationally as a distinguished Renaissance specialist. From 1968 to 1988 he was the editor of the Tijdschrift van de Vereniging voor Nederlandse Muziekgeschiedenis. When one realizes that the total number of printed pages during this period amounts to more than two and a half thousand, and that he edited the Tijdschrift all by himself, the quantity of work which Willem Elders accomplished speaks for itself. Moreover, he maintained the high quality of this Dutch journal and even succeeded in strengthening its international reputation by giving critical attention to all aspects of its publication. Being a Renaissance scholar, Willem Elders has always devoted a special amount of time and study to Josquin des
Prez. He continued the Josquin research initiated by Smijers and — together with Myroslaw Antonowycz — edited the last volumes of Smijers' famous Josquin edition. Later he became chairman of the Editorial Board of the New Josquin Edition.

Among the various institutions that benefitted from the organizational talents of Willem Elders, foremost is the University of Utrecht. Over a period of many years he determined in a large measure the prestige of the Institute of Musicology and the Department of Musicology respectively. As it was well-known that one did not often make an appeal to Willem Elders without result, the scale of his work — with its committees, student affairs etc. — was much larger than in fact could reasonably be expected of him. Furthermore, he was a board member of the Vereniging voor Nederlandse Muziekgeschiedenis (VNM) from 1971 to 1981, the last three years of which he served as president. Finally, the organisation of the Josquin Symposium in Cologne (1984) and the Second Josquin Symposium in Utrecht (1986) deserves to be remembered here. These symposia reflect his endeavour to promote the exchange of ideas and to make musicological knowledge available to a larger public. Combining in himself the fruits of both musical scholarship and practice, Willem Elders also often advised musicians on their choice of repertoire, their programmes and their performances. In acknowledgement of his great merits in the domain of the music history of the Netherlands, he was awarded the VNM-medal in 1989.

Apart from these activities, Willem Elders contributed to musicological literature with, among other things, discerning articles and the publication of several important editions. The combination of his ability on the one hand to combine the data mentioned above, which 'we, to a certain extent, regard as established facts', and his highly critical approach on the other, led to such an erudite article as 'Guillaume Dufay's Concept of Faux-Bourdon' (1989) and the publication of his most recent book, Symbolic Scores. Studies in the Music of the Renaissance (Leiden 1994).

Above all, Willem Elders has always readily won the respect of his students. Being an excellent teacher, he encouraged many young musicologists to publish in the journal of the VNM. No wonder that the relationship between master and pupil took a central place in his valedictory lecture about intermusical relations in the Renaissance, in which he stated: 'It may seem a bit difficult to believe nowadays, but nothing indicates that composers considered one another as each other’s rivals in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries'. If this attitude was typical of the relationship between masters, pupils and colleagues in the musical world of the Renaissance, Willem Elders himself indeed typifies — and knows how to transmit — this same interpersonal disposition. Exchanges of opinion with his students were highly important to him. Significantly, many of his former students have become close friends.

The contributions which make up this volume were written within this cir-
circle of colleagues, pupils and friends. It goes without saying that the circle of those who are grateful to Willem Elders for his great interest both in their professional achievements as well as in their personal lives, is much broader than could be represented here. We consider it our privilege to have been his pupils. It has been a labour of love and respect to plan and compile this donum natalicium on the occasion of the sixtieth birthday of Willem Elders on 29 December 1994. We hope that it may worthily represent the gratitude and good wishes of all of his colleagues and friends.

Albert Clement

Eric Jas