There are interesting parallels between the lives and working styles of Rademaker and Sir William Herschel (1738–1822), the German-born English astronomer (see reproduction of the frontispiece of the French translation of his Treatise on Astronomy from the author’s collection).¹

Both Rademaker and Herschel showed unusual commitment to their work, both tried to study every aspect of their field, and both received indispensable assistance from a woman (in Herschel’s case, his sister Caroline). One major difference is that Caroline built up a reputation as an astronomer in her own right, especially after Herschel’s death.

¹ I am indebted to Dr. Ronald Bathgate PhD for drawing my attention to this topic.
Herschel was born Friedrich Wilhelm Herschel in Hanover, Germany. He is reputed to have been a musician in a military band in Hanover, but to have fled to England at the age of 19 to avoid compulsory military service. He initially worked as a music teacher and organist but devoted all his spare time to astronomy and mathematics. Unable to afford adequate instruments, he built his own telescopes and constantly improved them. In 1774, with the aid of his sister Caroline, he began a comprehensive and systematic survey of the heavens. He was 26 at the time—one year older than Rademaker was when he started his research career. For years, he spent every night in his observatory; Caroline brought him cups of tea and noted down his findings. In 1781 he discovered a new planet, which he named Georgium Sidus in honour of king George III but which is now universally called Uranus. A year later he was appointed private astronomer to the king, a position that enabled him to devote all his time to his astronomic pursuits. He erected a telescope at Slough with a 48-in (1.22-m) mirror and a focal length of 40 ft (12.2 m). Using this, he discovered two satellites of Uranus and the sixth and seventh satellites of Saturn. He studied the rotation period of many planets and the motion of double stars, and also catalogued more than 800 double stars. He studied nebulae, contributing new information on their constitution and increasing the number of observed nebulae from about 100 to 2500. Herschel was the first to propose that these nebulae were composed of stars. He was elected to the Royal Society in 1781 and knighted in 1816. He is considered the founder of sidereal astronomy. The BBC made an interesting TV programme about Herschel some years ago, in which his interest in the stars was linked with his love of music (‘the harmony of the spheres’). This is comparable with Rademaker’s love of movement and dance. The programme also mentioned Herschel’s close friendship with Haydn (1732–1908). Haydn was very popular in England at the time and visited London twice, in February 1791 and May 1794, on the occasion of the performance of two series of his concerts. While Rademaker was doing his research in Leiden, his wife developed into a well-known concert pianist. Her speciality was the accompaniment of soprano and alto singers. She was especially interested in the works of Schubert and Mahler [Personal communication Mrs. Ferwerda-Vogelsang, Wageningen]. The latter was very popular in the Netherlands at the time, mainly due to the performances of his Lied von der Erde—still relatively unknown in that period—by the Concertgebouw orchestra in Amsterdam and to his friendship with W. Mengelberg, the conductor of that orchestra.