

# Dirck Scholl - a biographical sketch

Author: Laura J. Meilink-Hoedemaker

English translation: Andrew Clark

Dirck Scholl, the eldest of six children, two of which died at an early age, was born in Brielle, the Netherlands, in 1641. His father, Jan Scholl, was an innkeeper and played a primitive carillon.

Jan, together with the local organist, taught music to his sons Dirck and the nine years younger Cornelis. Brielle was growing in prosperity and in 1660 was able to purchase a new carillon from François Hemony's bell foundry in Amsterdam. The 19 year old Dirck could therefore witness all the work from close by when it was installed at the Catherijnetoren at Brielle.

A year later, Dirck was adequately equipped to accept the combined position of organist and carillonneur in Arnhem, after taking an exam in competition with other candidates. There he found an older carillon by the same maker, Hemony. Scholl was offered a six year contract which included a clause stipulating that a fine would be incurred in the case of premature departure.

In 1660 François Hemony also delivered carillons to Delft and Rotterdam, employing Jan Scholl as his inspector. Jan took his son, Dirck, with him on such occasions. This is most likely how contact with Delft was established where Dirck in 1664, without any form of selection, was approached to replace the ailing organist of the Nieuwe Kerk. It so happened that Delft's second carillonneur died in the same period and Dirck Scholl rolled into taking over both functions even though he could only do so from 1st February 1665, after he had bought himself out of the Arnhem contract.

It was inevitable that the Scholls would also visit Amsterdam, where Hemony's foundry had supplied new bells to the most important towers. And it was there that Dirck met his bride-to-be, Johanna van Noordt, the 17 year old daughter of the Amsterdam Oude Kerk organist. They married in the summer of 1665. There were to be no children, however, as Johanna died of the plague in 1666. An inventory had to be made up. The couple had run up debts in order to start a house in Delft and set out building a career. The list comprised of several valuable musical instruments including a practice keyboard for the carillon and other keyboard and wind instruments. Together, the debts amounted to a whole year's salary.

Work in Delft carried on for the young widower and, next to organ and carillon playing, teaching and making music with others, Dirck found time to compose. His first collection of pieces, which had already existed in manuscript in Arnhem, he had printed in Delft in 1669. One can speak of self-publishing as Dirck Scholl did his own type-setting and managed sales and distribution. He advertised in the national newspaper the 'Oprechte Haerlemse Courant' and had access to a country-wide network of sales outlets, most of which involved fellow organists. In this way he was able to produce ten collections of chamber music compositions in the period between 1669 and the 1680s.

Dirck's brother, Cornelis, had become, in the meantime, an all-round musician and had gained employment as organist in The Hague. The brothers met there regularly and made the acquaintance of two of the van der Heck sisters whom they married on the same day in 1678 in The Hague. Fortune seemed to have turned more in their favour this time: Dirck and Jacoba had four children together. Eleven years later, however, Jacoba passed away and there were

only two toddlers alive. Only the youngest of them, Hubertus, managed to reach maturity. In 1687 Cornelis Scholl was able to take over the post of organist at the Oude Kerk in Delft and became second carillonneur to Dirck. There is little doubt that Dirck had a hand in this appointment as there is no evidence of any kind of selection procedure or audition.

In 1709 Hubertus Scholl, who had been taught by Dirck and Cornelis, was made reserve organist and carillonneur at the initiative of the town council. This was an unsalaried post but carried the right to succeed his father and uncle when the time came. In 1726 it looked like that time had come. Climbing the tower of the Nieuwe Kerk had become difficult for both Dirck, who was now 85 years old, and Cornelis, 76 years old. Hubertus, however, had no desire to replace them while holding an unsalaried position, and as long as his father lived that would be the case. This was a situation none had envisaged. The ageing Dirck persevered playing the carillon three times every two weeks but passed away six months later, 86 years old. Cornelis took things a little calmer and died in 1733. He was 83.

Dirck Scholl had an impetuous disposition and was not always diplomatic. In Arnhem he availed himself of the slogan: *Is liefde dronkenschap, so ben ik selde nuchter*: 'if love is being drunk then I am seldom sober'. The musical abilities of a colleague in The Hague drew this comment from him in the late 1680s: 'this is akin to murdering bells'. And in an advert placed in the *Haerlemse Courant*, 25th October 1718, he let the world know he thought the musical work of his colleague in The Hague was shoddy. On the other hand, one can see that the Scholl family had close ties. The sisters from Brielle also lived in Delft, as uncles and aunties the Scholls acted as baptism witnesses, and it is clear from all the inspections of organs and carillons Dirck Scholl attended that he maintained a large professional network.



Dirck Scholl in 1699 –58 years of age

His first name is randomly spelt Dirk or Dirck in various documents