

1964- Prelude Solennel- in memoriam John F. Kennedy

A composition by Leen't Hart

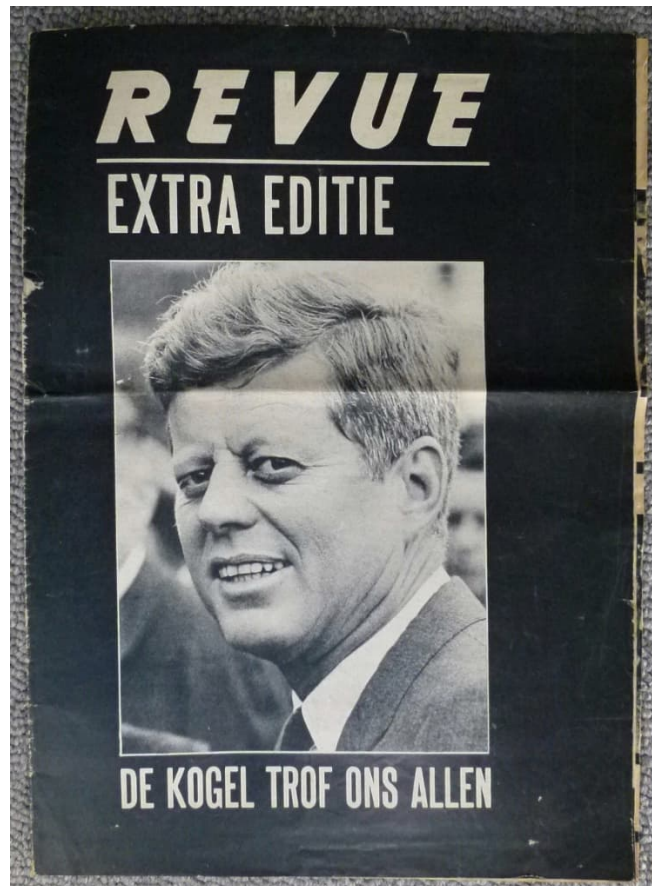


John Fitzgerald Kennedy (1917-1963)
photographed in the Oval Office on July 11, 1963
Source: Wikipedia

From the archive of Leen 't Hart
By L.J. Meilink-Hoedemaker

Feelings of respect and compassion

The assassination of John F. Kennedy, President of the United States, on November 22, 1963 in Houston, Texas caused a shock to the world. Remarkable was the reaction of carillonneur Leen 't Hart (1920-1991), a generational fellow of Kennedy. He kept a special edition of the weekly Newspaper Revue, entirely devoted to Kennedy and his violent death.



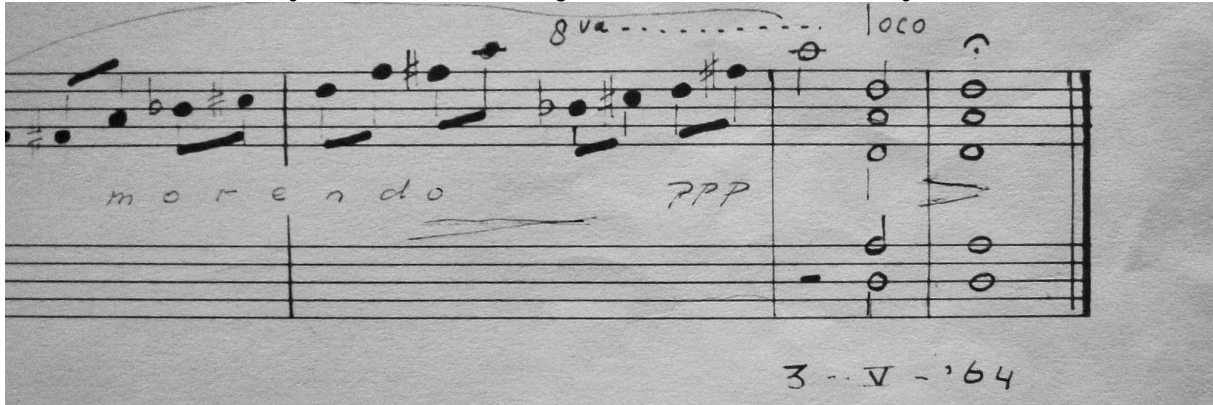
Additional edition of Revue 25 November 1963
Archives Leen 't Hart

Prelude Solennel

In 1964, 't Hart composed a Prelude Solennel [solemn prelude] in memory of Kennedy and dedicated the work to Kennedy's widow Jacqueline Kennedy Bouvier.



The score is dated May 3, 1964. The closing measures are indicated by *morendo* = extinction.



Première in Arlington

In an interview, 't Hart said: ¹ "As a shock came the news of the inhuman assassination of America's great statesman John Fitzgerald Kennedy. This has not let go of me anymore, despite my over-busy work. Then the Guild of Carilloneurs of North America made the invitation during the coming Congress in Washington, D.C. to play the carillon of Arlington National Cemetery, where Kennedy is buried, I found myself to be the first Dutchman to play this carillon after the death of this great statesman. I felt that I was given the opportunity here to express my deep feelings of respect and sympathy for the president who had been murdered so cruelly. All this has inspired me to write a composition in his memory: 'Prelude Solennel' which I completed a few weeks ago. On June 14 (1964) it will have her premiere in Arlington, Washington. "

't Hart did indeed play at the opening concert of the Annual Congress of the Guild of Carillonneurs in North America on June 16, 1964 at the Netherlands Carillon at the Military Cemetery in Arlington, Washington. In the following weeks, Leen 't Hart performed the work several more times during his concert tour of the United States.

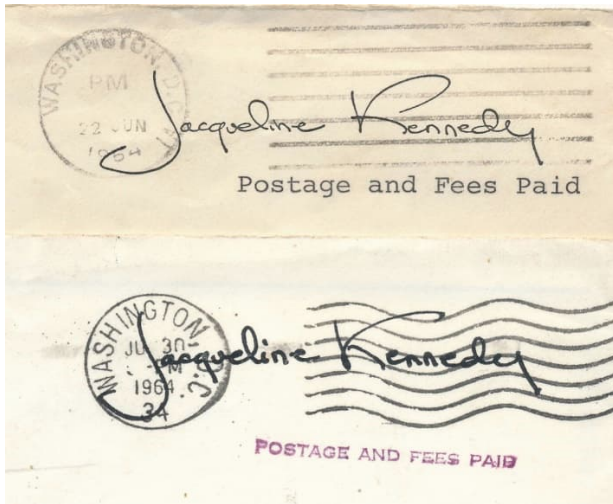
Comment by Jacqueline Kennedy

On May 29, 1964, 't Hart sent a copy of the Prelude Solennel with an accompanying letter to Mrs. Kennedy. He then received confirmation of receipt from her secretariat. Curiously, there are two such letters- the first from June 22 and the second from June 29 1964.

The letters are not franked with a postage stamp. Instead, in the upper right corner is Jacqueline Kennedy's signature. Both signatures are almost identical in terms of handwriting but somewhat different in terms of the pen used. Mrs Kennedy probably signed her outgoing post herself.

Striking is the black border on the stationery. The text of the two letters is very similar in content. The secretary's signature is reminiscent of two different manuscripts, and not comparable to the handwriting of the name Jacqueline Kennedy.

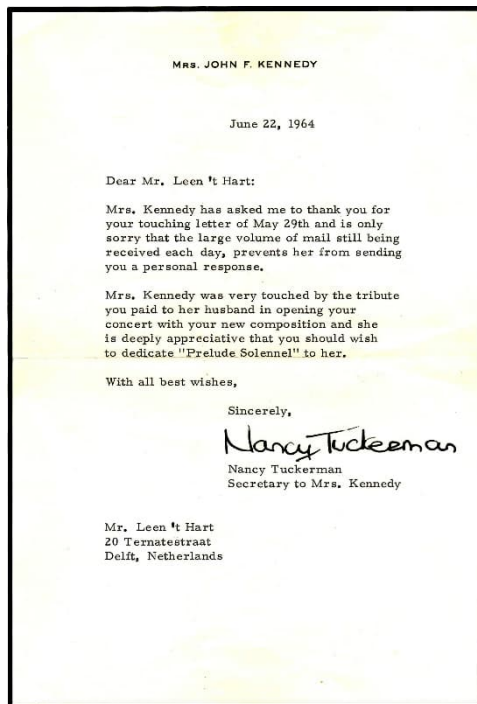
¹ Gone Eyl in Havenloods 11 june 1964



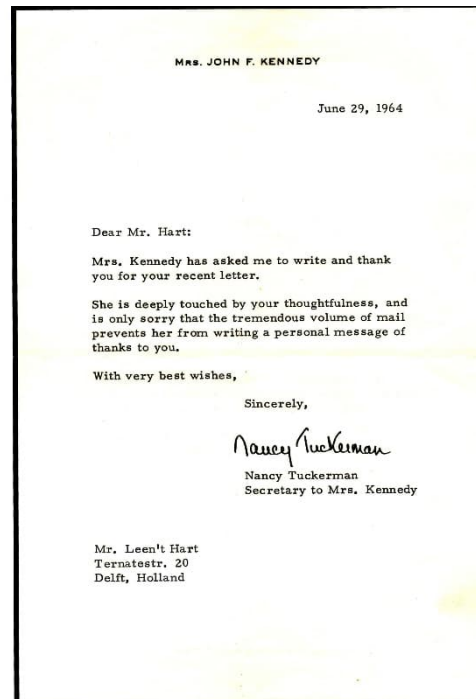
Two letters June 1964. Signature [?] of Jacqueline Kennedy on both envelopes



Jacqueline Kennedy Bouvier 22 november 1963. Wikipedia



Letter of 22 June 1964



Letter of 29 June 1964

Other versions of the Prelude

Was the official premiere in Arlington on June 16, already on June 2, 't Hart had performed the Prelude Solennel in his hometown Delft. After his return to the Netherlands - 6 July - 't Hart performed the prelude in Delft on 14 July. Then the Prelude Solennel disappears into the background. This may be related to the death of Staf Nees in January 1965, on which

occasion 't Hart composed another Prelude Solennel.² Since then, the preludes have been provided with serial numbers 1 and 2.

The last mention of a performance of the Prelude Solennel no 1 by 't Hart can be found in the America tour of August 1979, namely at concerts in Cranbrook, Ann Arbor, Springfield, all in Michigan, and in Germantown and Whitemarsh in Pennsylvania.

Publicity around the Prelude Solennel

In 1962, Leen 't Hart had made his first concert tour to the USA. For his 1964 trip, he generated a lot of publicity with the coming concert in Arlington and the premiere of the Prelude Solennel. Already in March newspapers were headlined, not only in the outskirts of Delft but as far as in the province of Limburg. In June, many reports appeared in all kinds of newspapers with almost identical content. That must have been based on a press release by 't Hart himself.³

The reviewer Go Dersjant was in his review of a carillonconcert in Rotterdam in August 1964 the only one who also considered the character and meaning of this composition.⁴ Under the headline "Leen 't Hart paid homage to the late President Kennedy" Dersjant wrote: "[...] The composer's other own work was the "Prelude Solennel in memory of John Fitzgerald Kennedy" which sounded tribute to the assassinated president for the first time from our town hall tower. The work starts with a funeral march, then becomes a little quicker, there comes a beautiful recitativo part and it ends again with the funeral march. It seemed to us to be a composition that is entirely worthy of its purpose and which is without a doubt a contribution to the carillon literature. [...]"

End of an exciting episode

A newspaper in Delft mentions on 9 July 1964.⁵ "Our travelling city carillonist Leen 't Hart has returned from the USA. [...] The most famous carillon of the three that Washington counts is that of Arlington Cemetery. Leen 't Hart made a special impression on this carillon by the American premiere of his "Prelude solennel", the work dedicated to the late President Kennedy. We already know it here from his performances on the New Church Tower. Our fellow city-mate was particularly affected by Mrs Kennedy's personal writing, which he found on the doormat when he returned home. The widow of the president expresses her gratitude for this composition dedicated to her husband. " [...]"

² Dedicated to Widow Of Staff Nees, Esther Van Stappen.

³ Can be found on the website Delpher.nl

⁴ Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad, 13 August 1964.

⁵ Newspaper clippings L'tH book 6, page 17.