



Henk Dekker

Language

English

Nationality

Dutch

Country of Residence

Netherlands

Year of birth

1945

Year(s) in which you received lessons from Gustav Leonhardt

1974-75

The lessons were

Within a diploma course at the Conservatorium van Amsterdam (Amsterdamsch Conservatorium, Sweelinck Conservatorium)

In this area, you can describe your lessons with Gustav Leonhardt in any way you wish.

Around 1967 I was an enthusiastic pianist and besides Mozart and Chopin, Bach was my

favourite. I knew that his keyboard music was written for the harpsichord, but I did not like the tone of the factory-made instrument of that time and the mechanical way of playing of most harpsichordists. Then somebody advised me to listen to Gustav Leonhardt's recording of Bach's "Goldberg Variations". It was the famous 1965 recording played on his beautiful Skowronek harpsichord. This was the turning-point for me! His way of playing, his timing, and the wonderful sound of the harpsichord were so inspiring that I bought more records by him, stopped playing the piano and took private harpsichord lessons from Anneke Uittenbosch. After two years I did an entrance examination at the Conservatory of Amsterdam, where I studied for four years with Anneke Uittenbosch who taught me everything about harpsichord touch, performance practice and sense of style and prepared me in an excellent way for the lessons of Mr. Leonhardt. During these lessons he did not talk much, but he could reveal to you, with one or two important remarks, the secrets of a piece and put it in the cultural context of the time. All this was so inspiring that I, on arriving back home, wrote down and tried to bring into practice what he had told me. I played Sweelinck, the virginalists, Louis and François Couperin, Frescobaldi and Scarlatti. He put no emphasis on historical fingerings: "you should find out yourself and do what you like. One should not be too pedantic about this," he told me. There was always a certain distance between him and the student: he could become very enthusiastic about a piece or give you a compliment about the way you played it, but he never said "you", but always "one should" or "we should". Everyone knew this before the first lesson so we were all prepared! On a winter's morning (when I had forgotten my gloves and my hands were very cold) I played François Couperin's "La Muse Victorieuse" not very successfully and his only remark was "We should pay attention to our trills"!

Curriculum Vitae

After Henk Dekker's graduation as an *Uitvoerend Musicus* (Performing Artist) at the Sweelinck Conservatorium, now Conservatorium van Amsterdam, he taught at the conservatories of Leeuwarden, Den Haag and Groningen. As a harpsichordist he has been active both as a continuo-player and as a soloist. He is also an accomplished pianist, specializing in the performance practice and repertoire from about 1800.