

CORNELIUS CONRADUS

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Cornelius Conradus was born in Amersfoort in either 1557 or 1558. At the age of 14 he went to Edzard II, Count of West Friesland and lived in Emden. At the Grote Kerk he took organ lessons and probably became the organist at the Lutheran parish of Neue Munze. Around 1581 he went to Amsterdam where he stayed for three years. The suggestion that he had organ lessons from Sweelinck is unlikely for Sweelinck was 19 at the time and Conradus was much older.

Conradus became organist at the Grote Kerk in Emden at Michaelmas, 29 September in 1584 and the following Easter became the town fiddler. Then the momentous change in Holland from Lutheranism to Calvinism which meant a decline in church music and music written for the church. As a result, Conradus wrote a letter of resignation from his church post on 24 November 1596 and was succeeded by his pupil Johann von Loquard. Conradus was then appointed to give music lessons to the Count of Lippe, Simon VI, and his children. On 8 March the Count gave orders to the Hamburg organ builders, Hans Scherer, to build an organ for the chapel castle at Brake, near Lemgo. It is likely that Conradus was involved in this project but he died at Brake on 14 March 1605 and was succeeded by his pupil Johannes Grabbe.

Another of Conradus's pupils was Matthias Mercker who became well-known. Conradus taught many musicians and this was the theme of a sermon preached at his funeral. He was versatile, intelligent and gifted and noted for his piety. He was popular with many musicians both in Holland and further afield. He did compose some pieces and some canons survive. He left behind his wife, Dilia von Schnuel and a daughter, Elisabeth.

There is a work in a library in Kassel, the Landesbibliothek, thought for a time to be by Conradus and bearing the identification CC. But Conradus never worked in Kassel and it is now believed that this work, a Canzona for eight with bass continuo was written by Christoph Cornet. He was probably born in Kassel on 7 April 1580 where he worked at the Court school and, five years later, became a member of the court chapel. In 1605 Count Moritz sent him to Italy to further his studies and by 1607 he had two positions in Kassel that of chamberlain and of Hofoconomicus. In 1618 he became kapellmeister, a position he held until 1627. He was a friend of the composer Schutz who dedicated a piece to him. Cornet died in Kassel on 2 August 1635.

It would seem that other canzonas were ascribed to Conradus but whether they are his works is doubtful.

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