

# Bernhard van den SIGTENHORST MEYER

PIANO MUSIC

**Albert BRUSSEE**

OF FLOWERS AND BIRDS – TO THE MEMORY  
OF BERNHARD VAN DEN SIGTENHORST MEYER

**Albert Brussee**

INCLUDES FIRST RECORDINGS

# THE EARLY, MODAL-IMPRESSIONIST PIANO MUSIC OF BERNHARD VAN DEN SIGTENHORST MEYER

by Albert Brussee

Bernhard van den Sigtenhorst Meyer was born in Amsterdam on 17 June 1888. He started to play the piano only during his high-school years, but soon acquired a real taste for it and, after graduating, he had just one real desire: to become a musician. To that end the nineteen-year-old took lessons with the prominent organist-pianist Jean Baptiste de Pauw and the aptly named music-theorist A. H. Tierie, who together, within three years, prepared him for the entrance exam of the Amsterdam Conservatoire, with piano and theory as his main subjects. There the piano lessons with De Pauw were continued; he also had classes in ensemble-playing from the famous pianist and composer Julius Röntgen and took lessons in theory and composition from, respectively, Daniël de Lange and Bernard Zweers.

In 1912 the young musician made his way to Paris, where he was strongly influenced both by the *Cours de composition musicale* by Vincent d'Indy (1903) and the Impressionism prevailing in the French capital at the time. From Paris he made study trips to Munich, Vienna and London to widen his musical horizons. In December 1914, however, the First World War prompted him to return to the relative safety of the Netherlands, where he established himself as a teacher of music theory and piano in Hilversum.

In the summer of 1915 he met the poet, singer and painter Rient van Santen, who lived in The Hague. Van den Sigtenhorst Meyer was increasingly seen in that city and eventually, in 1919, the two of them moved into a beautiful house

on the Prins Mauritslaan in Scheveningen, a fishing village on the coast, now a suburb of The Hague. In artistic circles in The Hague gay relationships were more or less accepted, and soon their home became an artistic meeting point for friends, students and colleagues.

Van Santen, a follower of Buddhism, was an admirer and collector of Chinese, Japanese and Javanese art, and Van den Sigtenhorst Meyer, too, had been fascinated by the Dutch colonial past since childhood – the reason that their home was decorated entirely in East Indian style; photographs testify to the rich, oriental interior. Obviously, this atmosphere influenced the compositions that were created in that ambience.

Van den Sigtenhorst Meyer's first creative phase, influenced by Impressionism and Orientalism, lasted until 1923. From then on, with the exception of two volumes of piano music for children, he no longer wrote character pieces and composed only works in traditional forms, such as fugues, sonatas and variations, all in a monumental, rather dissonant, but still tonal style. In the 1930s and 1940s, the atmospheric description of the early works and the Expressionist gravity of, for instance, the Second Piano Sonata (1926) gave way to a lighter sound, music in which polyphony and pointed articulation predominate. Indeed, he went through a whole range of styles: from Romantically tinted Impressionism to Neo-Classicism, and from atmospheric character pieces to a more abstract interplay of lines. Highlights from that last period are the *Two Capriccios*, Op. 42, and the Third Sonatina, Op. 43, from 1948. This stylistic development cannot be dissociated from Van den Sigtenhorst Meyer's growing interest in music from his own Dutch past, especially from the Golden Age of the Netherlands, culminating in two books about the life and music of Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck (1562–1621).<sup>1</sup>

His further output includes chamber music, works for organ and choral music, much of it liturgical (he was active in the Association for Protestant Church Music). He died in The Hague on 17 July 1953.

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<sup>1</sup> Jan P. Sweelinck en zijn instrumentale muziek (1934) and De vocale muziek van Jan P. Sweelinck (1948), both published by N. V. Servire in The Hague.



*Bernhard van den Sigtenhorst Meyer at the grand piano  
in his salon on the Prins Mauritslaan (1924)  
(Dutch Music Institute, The Hague, Archiv Bernhard van den Sigtenhorst Meyer)*

This album presents works from the first period only: nineteen keyboard pieces, taken from the nine piano suites which appeared between 1915 and 1922. They are followed by a composition of my own, a fantasy on motifs and themes from Van den Sigtenhorst Meyer's Opp. 1 and 4: *Of Flowers and Birds – To the memory of Bernhard van den Sigtenhorst Meyer*, a tribute to this forgotten Impressionist from The Hague, whose music is worth rescuing from oblivion.

The first work which Van den Sigtenhorst Meyer made public is the piano suite *Van de Bloemen* ('Of the Flowers'), Op. 1 (1915). Its four pieces, written in a vaguely Impressionist, modal style, were well received, as witnessed by the fact that a third edition was published by Alsbach & Co. as early as May 1916. The 68 bars of the first piece, 'Rozen' ('Roses') [1], bear a caption: '... and in the old-purple room it was as if they told a fairy tale.' These poetic words perfectly illustrate the tranquil, mysterious atmosphere prevailing in the music: the musical depiction of an interior in *fin-de-siècle* The Hague. Did Van den Sigtenhorst Meyer intend to reflect the mood he encountered on his first visit to Rient van Santen, to whom the cycle was dedicated? The suggestion becomes more plausible with the knowledge that on 10 July 1915, a few months before the publication of his Op. 1, the young musician had indeed paid his first visit to Van Santen's home on the Frankenslag, a broad and leafy residential street near the harbour in The Hague. He was deeply impressed by the poet-singer, who was a few years older, had travelled to the Far East, and at that time was writing a collection of poems, entitled *Van manen en zonnen, van tempels en vulkanen* ('Of Moons and Suns, of Temples and Volcanoes'), which would appear a year later.<sup>2</sup> On that day their lifelong relationship was sparked. After a few introductory bars, a dreamy melody can be heard in the left hand, accompanied by the right hand with lightly pendulating quavers that perhaps imitate the chimes of a gamelan. The second subject, an arpeggio which fans out (*con fantasia*), to be played with both hands, and the following bars with their softly repeating notes (*pp misterioso*) mark this composition as one of the most directly Impressionistic keyboard pieces ever written in the Netherlands.

<sup>2</sup> Van Kampen, Amsterdam, 1915.

The second piece of the four, 'Korenveld in de Zon' ('Cornfield in the Sun') [2], forms a strong contrast. Here is no mysterious atmosphere in gentle motion, but an energetic *Allegro molto in alla breve*. It is striking, though, that the harmonic spectrum is also now determined by fourths and fifths, which give this composition a rather 'modern' touch – a robust, fairly virtuoso piece in D flat major that would do well on the concert stage.

As already mentioned, Rient van Santen was an enthusiastic collector of the art of eastern Asia: his house was full of Chinese vases, Japanese lacquerware and East Indian art. The first piano composition of his future partner to testify to this influence is *Het oude China* ('Old China'), Op. 2, composed in the autumn of 1916. The monumental second movement, 'Het Wierookvat' ('The Censer') [3], is perhaps the most impressive of its four movements. 'Het Wierookvat' is in E Phrygian, of which the third (G) and the sixth (C) are generally avoided and the fifth is often lowered (B flat instead of B). The pentatonic scale thus created, with its minor seconds followed by a major third (E–F–A–B flat–D), lends the piece an unmistakable 'eastern' character, reinforced by the frequent use of parallel perfect fourths and fifths. 'The Censer' is in fact a single big climax, increasing to an impressive *fff* in bar 30. After that, the dynamics gradually decrease until the *pp* of the initial bars is reached again. Did the composer have a procession of Buddhist monks in mind, approaching as they made music, passing close by and disappearing over the horizon?

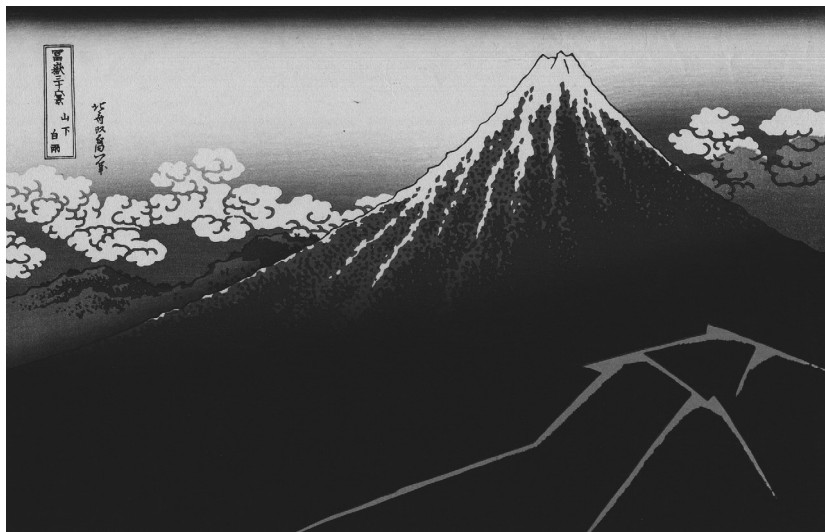
In May 1917 Van den Sigtenhorst Meyer completed a third suite of piano pieces: *Van de Vogels* ('Of the Birds'), Op. 4. With this work he continued the line of Impressionistic images of nature, which began with *Van de Bloemen*. The first of the three movements is 'De Zwaan' ('The Swan') [4]. Legend has it that a swan sings only once in its life, shortly before its death – a song so beautiful, so moving, that whoever hears it carries the memory of it throughout his life. Van den Sigtenhorst Meyer has tried to capture this moment of alluring perception, this 'swan song', in sound: a beautifully curved melody above two-by-two broken chords, which, whenever I play this keyboard piece, always evokes a Smyrna red colour in my mind's eye.

The second movement, ‘n Troepje meezen in’t bosch’ (‘A Flock of Tits in the Woods’) [5], is a striking characterisation of birds chirping loudly and hopping from branch to branch. Here is no beautiful melody or warm shade of red, but sharply punctuated triplets and brilliant runs in a bright yellow and green. Harmonically, Van den Sigtenhorst Meyer uses mainly augmented triads in this gem of a piece, an accumulation of major thirds that indeed evoke an open, sunny sound-picture. The same accumulation of major thirds is found in the short middle section in F major. On the last major third of each bar there is a little trill on the upper voice – a tit making its call heard?

Mount Fuji is a dormant volcano in Japan, 3,776m high. The mountain is considered sacred and has been depicted countless times by Japanese artists, most notably by Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849), who created *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*, a cycle of prints, in 1831. These prints, to which ten more were later added, were well known among lovers of east Asian art in Europe. Reproductions were owned by Van den Sigtenhorst Meyer,<sup>3</sup> and they inspired him, in 1919, to compose *Zes Gezichten op den Fuji* (‘Six Views of Fuji’), Op. 9 – his best-known piano work. In the first movement, ‘Het ontstaan van den Fuji’ (‘The Origin of Fuji’) [6], he depicts ‘the birth’ of the volcano: how the mountain, through the ages, eruption after eruption, grew and rose. With his conspicuous preference for the lower regions of the sound spectrum – he exploited the bass register of the piano like very few other composers – he imagined this sequence of events by expanding a soft, dark and mysterious melody (*pp*, *oscuro*, *misterioso e non legato*), ever louder, until at the end of the composition, in bar 30, a majestic, hymnic melody resounds *sempre ff*: the musical depiction of Fuji, crowned with eternal snow.

Among the Hokusai prints, not one deals with ‘The Origin of Fuji’. However, the source of inspiration of the fourth movement, ‘De Fuji in den regen’ (‘Fuji in the Rain’) [7], seems certain. The title of the third print by Hokusai is ‘Sanka hakuu’, which means something like ‘Heavy rain under the top (of the mountain)’. This beautiful picture is divided into two halves: the upper half shows the crown of the mountain in white and

<sup>3</sup> He owned a booklet *Fujijima – Der ewige Berg Japans. Holzschnitte von Hokusai*, which is now kept in the ‘Sigtenhorst Meyer’ archive in the Netherlands Music Institute in The Hague.



Hokusai, 'Sanka hakuu', the third of the Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji

reddish brown protruding above the clouds, while the bottom half is shrouded in black thunderclouds, pierced with bright orange bolts of lightning. Somewhat akin to 'Jardins sous la pluie', the third and last of Debussy's suite *Estampes* (1903), 'De Fuji in den regen' culminates when the Fuji theme, varied, resounds under gushing raindrops in long notes.

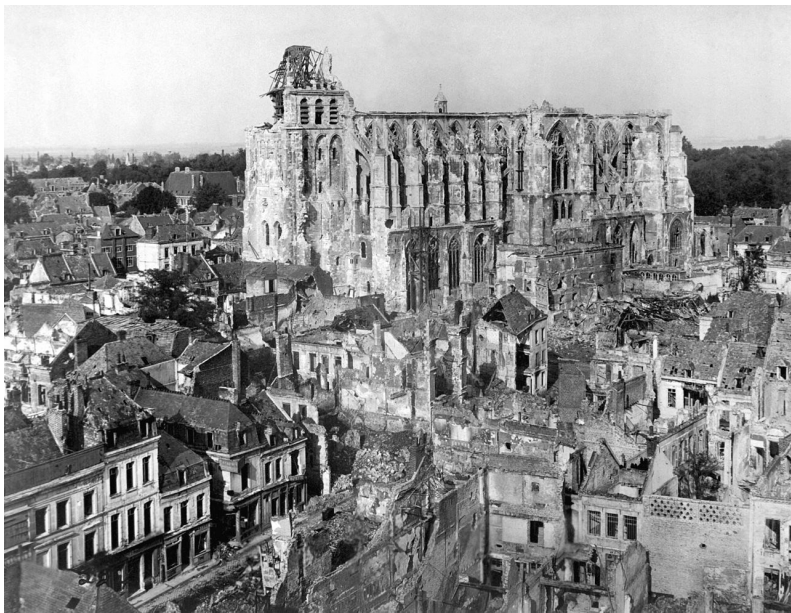
The northern French town of Saint-Quentin is strategically located, in Picardy, between Brussels and Paris, and was therefore immediately occupied by the Germans in 1914; as a result it was heavily bombed several times by the Allies during the First World



War. What was left behind was a desolate ruin. Photos of the shattered cathedral went around the world. Saint-Quentin was again in the news when it emerged from the ashes some years afterwards. It was this contrast – on the one hand, the stark image of the destroyed city and, on the other hand, the surprisingly fast reconstruction – that inspired Van den Sigtenhorst Meyer to write the diptych *Saint-Quentin*, his Op. 12, in 1920. The first movement, ‘Ruïnen’ (‘Ruins’) [8], is in G sharp minor. Under a bare melody the sombre chiming of funeral bells is heard (*pesante, molto oscuro*). The ominous, somewhat sinister Lombard rhythm<sup>4</sup> of those chimes is maintained throughout the composition. The work starts softly, and initially the tempo is slow; *mezzo forte* is already noted when the theme is repeated in octaves, and *forte* is found four bars later. After a slight *diminuendo*, a second section starts, in which the tempo and pianistic resources increase constantly. At the climax, *con tutta forza*, a mighty chorale in the Aeolian key of F sharp resounds, supported by wryly dissonant major sevenths. After this chorale the tempo is pushed up again, and in a cacophony of sharp dissonances the composition ends with two powerful chords low in the bass register. In these 57 bars, Van den Sigtenhorst Meyer paints an image of despair and horror more reminiscent of the Expressionism of Edvard Munch or of Picasso’s *Guernica* than of the Impressionism of Monet or Renoir.

*De Maas* (‘The Meuse’), Op. 11, is in three movements. The first, ‘De Rivier’ (‘The River’) [9], opens *molto leggiero* with rippling quintuplets which evoke the clear waters of the still virgin river, springing from a source on the Langres plateau, in the north-east of France. After eighteen bars, *Un poco meno mosso*, a stately melody in F sharp Aeolian rises over broken triads. When, after fourteen bars, this ‘theme of the Meuse’ fades away, the quintuplets from the beginning are resumed. The pianistic means and dynamics soon increase, whereupon the ‘theme of the Meuse’ resounds again, now *sempre fe ben marcato*. The now-mighty river flows onwards, with the beautiful melody sonorously supported by broad arpeggios. On the last page of this 69-bar piece, the music returns to the *molto leggiero* of the beginning, and to the soft murmur of the quintuplets, which fade away in the treble: the image of the river disappearing like a silver ribbon over the horizon.

<sup>4</sup> In the Lombard rhythm, also known as the ‘Scotch snap’, a short, accented first note is followed by a longer one.



*Saint-Quentin after the Allied bombardment (1918)*

The third movement, ‘De Mond der Maas’ (‘The Mouth of the Meuse’) <sup>[10]</sup>, is in G sharp minor. Where in the first movement the sun is reflected glistening in the clear waters, now the wide river flows under a grey, overcast Dutch sky into the sea. The surge of the splashing waves is depicted with a punctuated figure (*un poco oscuro*),

which, deep in the bass, dominates the entire composition. The dynamics constantly increase and after a *poco accelerando* the music leads into a brilliant passage reminiscent of Chopin's *Second Ballade* (also in  $\frac{6}{8}$ ), when, after a lyrical, idyllic start, broken chords suddenly crash down *fortissimo*, like a thunderclap, while the left-hand octaves turn upwards. More or less the same thing happens here. Bolts of lightning whizz down three times, the third time leading into a repetition of the 'theme of the Meuse' from the first movement, resounding broadly and majestically here. In the last bars, the storm gradually ebbs away. The motif of the surging waves comes into its own again until it dissolves into the sea, as it were. On the fifth G sharp–D sharp the music comes to a standstill – the fifth, in which something of eternity echoes as in no other interval.

The triptych *Oude Kasteelen* ('Old Castles'), Op. 14, opens with 'Brederode' [11]. In the late Middle Ages, Brederode Castle, near Santpoort-Zuid (in North Holland, north-west of Amsterdam), was besieged and destroyed several times. In the nineteenth century the ruin was restored in a rather romantic way and was registered as the first national monument in the Netherlands. The piano piece opens with the F of the contra-octave, a note which, repeated *pianissimo* and syncopated bar after bar, evokes a dark, somewhat mysterious atmosphere, comparable to the beginning of 'Ruins' from *Saint-Quentin*. So, too, do the archaic time-signature ( $\frac{4}{2}$ ) and the slow *crescendo*, ending in bar 20 in a grievous cry (*ff*), after which the atmosphere of the first bars returns. The middle section, with its firm chords and octaves (*alla marcia*), is somewhat reminiscent of the middle section of the *First Ballade* of Brahms, Op. 10, No. 1, also in D major and of robust pianism: Van den Sigtenhorst Meyer's vision of the heyday of the castle, of banners fluttering from the tower transept and knights riding out over the drawbridge. In the closing bars, the gloomy atmosphere of the initial part returns.

The second movement is entitled 'Twickel' [12]. Twickel Castle in Twente (in the east of the Netherlands, near the German border) is surrounded by a beautiful park, created by the German-born landscape-gardener Jan David Zocher (1763–1817), head of an important family of Dutch landscape-gardeners. It goes without saying that the musical painting of this undamaged castle is quite different from that of an old fortress destroyed by martial violence. Above rustling broken triads (*sempre dolce e leggiro*) rises a melody

in the Aeolian key of B flat, singing quietly but not without expression – the song of a grateful heart at the sight of so much beauty. An airy, playful second theme makes itself heard. The tempo is a bit faster here and the words *molto chiaro* indicate that these bars should be played as if interwoven with light. The middle section offers a strong contrast: the key becomes C minor; the tempo and the dynamics increase. But the atmosphere does not become really dramatic; rather, the mood is glorious, especially at the end



*The gardens of Twickel Castle (photograph by the author, spring 2018)*

of this section, when the music in an *allargando* flows back into the Aeolian B flat of the opening bars. Additionally, the second theme returns, after which, with a certain solemnity and a touch of melancholy, this beautiful piece ends *pianissimo*.

Most spectacular, though, is the third movement, ‘De Brittenburg’ [13], the ancient Roman fort built in the first century AD at the mouth of the Oude Rijn (Old Rhine) into the North Sea, where Katwijk aan Zee is now located. As early as the Middle Ages, the remains of the old fortress were flooded at high tide; and even in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the foundations of the Brittenburg, still visible, were visited by inquisitive tourists. But during one terrible, stormy night, in the year 1701, the last remains were swallowed by the sea. Van den Sigtenhorst Meyer paints how high waves come rushing up and crash against the weathered foundations of the once-proud fortress. He depicts the rolling of the waves with threatening trills, ebbing and swelling in the lower regions of the keyboard. After a violent *glissando*, the main theme resounds in broad chords (*tempestuoso e pesante*). This theme culminates in a third phrase, where chromatic scales enhance the dramatic atmosphere, but then fades away. By way of a middle section, mysteriously, as if under a dome of water, a hymn-like melody can be heard, perhaps evoking the glory of the once-mighty Roman empire. Van den Sigtenhorst Meyer accompanies this melody with an ostinato, faintly murmuring deep in the bass. At the end of this wonderful section, the mood of the first part returns. Again, more threatening than ever, the waves roll up mercilessly, with chromatic scales in the left hand – the music here closely resembles Liszt’s *Légende* No. 2, *Saint François de Paule marchant sur les flots* – and the violent trills in the bass are heard again. In a paroxysm of violence (*fff*) the swirling columns of water surge over the last remains of the ruin, after which the piece is abruptly cut off by a short chromatic pattern.

The *Eight Preludes for Piano* (1922) are all based on animals. The third part is one of the highlights of the cycle: ‘De Kat’ (‘The Cat’) [14], in G sharp minor. Several emotional aspects are intertwined in this little piece, even though it is only one page long. This gem of a piece suggests to me the Egyptian cat-goddess Bastet (also known as Ubaste), depicted by Egyptian artists in calm wisdom – and yet there is also something plaintive about the notes. A cat is a solitary animal and it seems that Van den Sigtenhorst Meyer

also wanted to express this emotional characteristic in the chromatically descending lines, which dominate the entire composition, in both the right and left hands. But the cat can also be suave; she can turn her head flatteringly along your hand and gently miaow. And that speaks from these notes, too, which have to be played *sempre rubato* and *lusingando* ('flattering', 'coaxing'). At the golden section, about two-thirds of the piece, however, Lady Cat becomes impatient (the score has *con insistenza*) and in a brief *crecendo* she reveals her other side for a moment. In short, from this brilliant characterisation of the animal, it should come as no surprise to learn that Van den Sigtenhorst Meyer was himself a cat enthusiast, as witness a number of photographs, kept in the Dutch Musical Institute, of him with a beautiful white cat on his lap. Indeed, in an autobiographical sketch written a few years before his death, he recalled his 'little white girlfriend, who for almost 18 years has been the joy of my life'.

Next, by way of contrast, the seventh prelude, 'De Muis' ('The Mouse') [15], presents the image of a mouse running back and forth excitedly. The scene unfolds in a whisper-soft tone (*sotto voce*, *pp*, *leggiero*) and requires light, fast fingerwork, but above all a good sense of *rubato*. The expression mark is *Capriccioso*; later, one finds the marking *poco a poco cresc. ed accelerando*. These are the ever-changing movements of the animal, its sudden twists and turns. Remarkably, this *rubato* is presented in a composition that is set up as a free canon in the fifth – which says a lot about the Neo-Baroque path Van den Sigtenhorst Meyer would follow in the years to come.

In African animal fables, the marabou stork often plays the role of the terrifying shaman, of the evil wizard, who tries to control people with conjured formulae. In the fifth part of the cycle, 'De Maraboe' ('The Marabou') [16], there is an evil, brooding atmosphere (the expression mark reads *malinconico*). The ominous, sinister-melancholic atmosphere is created from the start by the static melody with repeating notes on a', accompanied by chromatic descending thirds in the left hand. In the last bars, this downward trend, now at a distance of a fourth between bass and middle voice, continues to dark depths. The *poco sfz* on the tart final chord, C sharp–E flat–A, petrifies the composition in its slow pace – a chilling moment.

‘De Colibri’ (‘The Hummingbird’) [17] portrays that little bird with a wingbeat so fast that it is perceived by the naked eye as a haze of colourful stripes. These rapid wingbeats are presented with fine trills, which permeate the composition and, laid in the left hand, accompany an eastern-sounding tune. Indeed, Van den Sigtenhorst Meyer’s use of the trill as an accompanying element, not only here, is remarkable. In ‘De Brittenburg’, for example, he used it to depict threatening, swirling masses of water, whereas here the buzzing wingbeat of this smallest of birds which, like a large insect, extracts nectar from flowers.

The suite *Capri*, Op. 19, arose as a result of a holiday on that island in the Gulf of Naples in the summer of 1922. It opens with ‘I Faraglioni’ [18], the three weather-sculpted rocks standing in the sea just south of Capri. It must have been the desolation of these petrified colossi which Van den Sigtenhorst Meyer wanted to express in this short, tranquil piece of only 24 bars – in its simplicity, an extraordinarily beautiful piece of music. The relaxed, somewhat sensuously lumbering rhythm in the left hand seems to evoke an



*I Faraglioni (photograph by the author, summer 2006)*



Italian atmosphere of *dolce far niente*, while repeated downward octave leaps on G sharp create an atmosphere of static eternity.

The third movement of the suite, 'Anacapri' [19], bears the name of a village in the hills of Capri – a title, of course, immediately reminiscent of Debussy's 'Les collines d'Anacapri' (the fifth of his First Book of *Préludes*, from 1909–10), but the differences between the two compositions are striking. Debussy paints a rural scene of ringing goat bells and fragments of Italian folk-music. In Van den Sigtenhorst Meyer's 'Anacapri', by contrast, one is struck by its typically Moorish atmosphere. In the early Middle Ages Islam spread widely in the Mediterranean, and not only southern Spain but also Sicily and the south of the Italian peninsula were part of Islamic sub-empires for centuries. This Saracen influence is still evident in many architectural details of Anacapri churches and houses. In particular, in the nearby Villa San Michele, the former residence of the Swedish doctor Axel Munthe (1857–1949), which he rebuilt from an old Roman ruin, the twisted slender columns recall the days of Moorish rule. 'Anacapri' opens with a unison line that, with its



*A corner of the garden surrounding  
the Villa San Michele  
(photograph by the author, summer 2006)*



minor and augmented seconds and its grace-notes, is immediately reminiscent of, for example, 'Asturias' from the *Suite Espagnole* by Albéniz, or 'La puerta del Vino' by Debussy (the third of his Second Book of *Préludes*, from 1912–13). The apex of the composition is formed by the middle section, in which it is as if the sun slowly starts its way across the heavens. In broad chords a melody rises, supported by an organ point on the bass octave D'-D and an accompanying ascending line in the middle register: a vision of beauty, an enchanting evocation of an Arabic, sensual world. I know of nothing else like it in the Dutch keyboard literature.

In 2016, the Haagse Kunstkring ('The Hague Art Society') celebrated its 125th anniversary. Members were invited to write a composition that in one way or another was related to the musical legacy of a composer from The Hague. I decided upon Bernhard van den Sigtenhorst Meyer, and this is how *Van Bloemen en Vogels – Ter herinnering aan Bernhard van den Sigtenhorst Meyer* ('Of Flowers and Birds – To the memory of Bernhard van den Sigtenhorst Meyer') [20] came into being. The work opens with a recollection of 'Roses' [1]. The gently rocking fourths in the right hand soon take a completely different course and alternate with a characteristic motif from 'A Flock of Tits in the Woods' [5]. A few bars later, the main theme of 'Roses' is presented, but resounding warmly in chords and supported by a mysterious tremolo in the bass. The rocking fourths return, whereupon the transition to the second main section is realised with the help of a playful motif borrowed from 'Cornfield in the Sun' [2]. In this middle section 'The Swan' [4] is the main idea. Although the theme is presented so as to be easily recognised, the pianistic setting (at first in the left hand, later in octaves in the right) is completely different. The further development is also entirely of my own invention. In the final bars, motifs from the first section return: the jubilant sounds of the sunlit cornfields bring the composition to its climax, after which a recollection from 'Roses' concludes it.

**Albert Brussee** was born in Apeldoorn, the Netherlands, in 1946. As a student of Jaap Spaanderman, Danièle Dechenne and, for modern music, Ton Hartsuiker, he gained his diploma in solo performance in 1971 with distinction and concluded his studies at the Muzieklyceum in Amsterdam with the *Prix d'Excellence* (1974), the most prestigious music award in Holland at that time.

From 1971 to 1981 he performed regularly as a pianist, with several radio broadcasts to his name. In the 1980s, suffering from focal dystonia, he withdrew from the podium and turned more to teaching; he was a teacher of piano and of keyboard history at the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague for 35 years. In 2003 he was a jury member of 'Les Rencontres Internationales des jeunes pianistes' in Namur, and in 2005 of the Seventh International Franz Liszt Piano Competition in Utrecht.

As editor of both the *Piano Bulletin* of the European Piano Teachers Association (EPTA – the Netherlands) and the *Journal of the Dutch Liszt Circle*, he has written many articles on music-historical and piano-pedagogical subjects, also in British, German, Hungarian and American journals. In 2004 the method of the famous Dutch piano pedagogue Cornelius Berkhout, *De Kunst van het Pianospel*, edited and annotated by Ben Smits and Albert Brussee, saw the light of day. In 2014 there appeared *Mazeppa in de romantische kunst – een interdisciplinair cultuurhistorisch onderzoek*, an examination of more than 150 works of art (poems, novels, plays, paintings, drawings, operas, piano pieces, choral works, films), all inspired by the well-known Mazeppa story. An English version was published in 2017, followed by a specialised study entitled *The Mazeppa Music of Franz Liszt: Genesis, Analysis and Reception* (2019). All these titles appeared on his own imprint, AB Music Productions & Editions, in The Hague.



Following his reconstruction and editing of the early versions of Liszt's *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses*, Albert Brussee has an established name internationally as a Liszt expert. Additionally, he composes – in the past partly in collaboration with the late Max Prick van Wely – piano music in Romantic style, in which a certain influence of the 'light muse' is recognisable.

More recently, Albert Brussee has performed more frequently again, in recitals, lecture-recitals and lectures. An album of his own compositions, *Between Dream and Despair* (1994), was well received. Two years later, on the occasion of his 50th birthday, he released a CD, *Early Recordings* from the years 1974–1981. His recordings, in 1997 and 2001, of the early versions of Liszt's *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses* were favourably reviewed, both in the Netherlands and abroad. In 2007 his fifth CD appeared, with works by C. P. E. Bach, the Latvian pianist Dietrich Ewald von Grotthuss (1751–86), Chopin, Liszt and Debussy, followed two years later by a disc with Romantic piano music at the interface of salon and concert hall: *Salut d'amour*. On the occasion of his 70th birthday a CD was released with forgotten piano music of famous composers, ranging from Bach to Messiaen, nearly all first recordings: *En première*. All seven albums were released on his own label.

[www.albertbrussee.nl](http://www.albertbrussee.nl)



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# BERNHARD VAN DEN SIGTENHORST MEYER Piano Music

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## ***Van de Bloemen ('Of the Flowers'), Op. 1* (1915)**

- |  |      |
|--|------|
| [1] No. 1 Rozen ('Roses')                              | 3:07 |
| [2] No. 2 Korenveld in de Zon ('Cornfield in the Sun') | 1:47 |

## ***Het oude China ('Old China'), Op. 2* (1916)**

- |  |      |
|--|------|
| [3] No. 2 Het Wierookvat ('The Censer')* | 2:42 |
|--|------|

## ***Van de Vogels ('Of the Birds'), Op. 4* (1917)**

- |   |      |
|---|------|
| [4] No. 1 De Zwaan ('The Swan')   | 4:09 |
| [5] No. 2 'n Troepje meezen in't bosch ('A Flock of Tits in the Woods') | 1:31 |

## ***Zes Gezichten op den Fuji ('Six Views of Fuji'), Op. 9* (1919)**

- |  |      |
|--|------|
| [6] No. 1 Het ontstaan van den Fuji ('The Origin of Fuji') | 3:10 |
| [7] No. 4 De Fuji in den regen ('Fuji in the Rain')        | 1:31 |

## ***Saint-Quentin, Op. 12* (1920)**

- |                             |      |
|-----------------------------|------|
| [8] No. 1 Ruïnen ('Ruins')* | 2:42 |
|-----------------------------|------|

## ***De Maas ('The Meuse'), Op. 11* (1920)**

- |   |      |
|---|------|
| [9] No. 1 De Rivier ('The River')*                      | 3:52 |
| [10] No. 3 De Mond der Maas ('The Mouth of the Meuse')* | 4:28 |

## ***Oude Kasteelen ('Old Castles'), Op. 14* (1920)**

- |                            |      |
|----------------------------|------|
| [11] No. 1 Brederode*      | 4:46 |
| [12] No. 2 Twickel*        | 3:50 |
| [13] No. 3 De Brittenburg* | 4:38 |

## ***Acht Preludes, Op. 17* (1922)**

- |   |      |
|---|------|
| [14] No. 3 De Kat ('The Cat')             | 1:27 |
| [15] No. 7 De Muis ('The Mouse')          | 1:05 |
| [16] No. 5 De Maraboe ('The Marabou')     | 1:44 |
| [17] No. 6 De Colibri ('The Hummingbird') | 1:32 |

## ***Capri, Op. 19* (1922)**

- |                          |      |
|--------------------------|------|
| [18] No. 1 I Faraglioni* | 1:47 |
| [19] No. 3 Anacapri*     | 4:11 |

- |  |      |
|--|------|
| [20] <b>Albert Brussee</b> <i>Van Bloemen en Vogels – ter herinnering aan Bernhard van den Sigtenhorst Meyer</i> ('Of Flowers and Birds – To the memory of Bernhard van den Sigtenhorst Meyer'; 2016)* | 7:03 |
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**Albert Brussee, piano**

**TT 60:50**

\*FIRST RECORDINGS