

Synopsis

NB: The songs shall be sung in Dutch, as the special sounds and witticisms of the poems do not come across in other languages.

1. The Rabble

"Just as children irrationally beat their drums and blow their whistles, the rabble meaninglessly raises hell, and nobody has the guts to shout: stop it!"

Trivial themes and oversimplified motifs illustrate the coarseness of the tumult created by the low class people. The purport of the (18th-century) text no doubt had the support of the then ruling class of Regents.

2. The Spring

"Welcome, dear Spring: mankind, flora and fauna rejoice about your coming."

The oboe plays a pastoral melody, choir and the other instruments follow, but are interrupted by an iccold springtime rainshower, fortunately just for a while.

3. Annemieke

Miniature family tragedy with a fatal end, accompanied by a merry "everyody happy?" tune.

4. Dipping canon

On a schoolyard, children assemble in small groups of initiated who exactly know how their dipping rhymes shall end at the one and only uninitiated child with the fatal outcome "you're out!" The threatening atmosphere of the process is intensified by a constant beating on a jungle-like tom-tom.

5. Chanson

The text, from 1488, warn the people for undecent behaviour for the interest of the salvation of their souls in the next world. Polyphonic 15th-century religious techniques, such as cantus firmus, canon and melodic variation, alternate with profane dance tunes, just as Church and State in that time formed a monolithic, solid unity.

6. Cat

An ultrashort poem summarizes the essentials of a cat in a few words. The cat itself has other business to bother about, such as defencing its territory against intruding cats, grooming the fur and sleeping.

7. Procession

As in a medieval Dance of Death, Death is made ridiculous with absurdic texts and grotesque marches. But men's end is inescapable: in a coffin.

8. Mending the kettle

An anonymic text and canon tune on the mending of a kettle sounds, transposed into the Istric mode, strangely exotic, despite the Dutch text.

9. Blowing bubbles

The soap bubble as the metaphore of the unpredictable fate of mankind: hardly formed, cheered by the admiring crowd of children, it already collapses, just as quickly as "the world abandones her lovers".

10-11. Courtship I and II

Two poems of the same name, written only a few years apart, describe the doubts and surprises which can overpower teenagers when they throw themselves into Love's arms, homo or hetero alike.

12. Can-can Finale

In this mirrorpiece to the first song, a merry, carnivalesque crowd mangles well-known Dutch Santaclaus songs to an absurdistic mishmash of words above a pounding can-can tune.

Santaclaus mixes with the crowd, which hypocritically sings words of praise to him (in 7/8, as the saint originates from Smyrna). But the Good Children are gradually chased away by the Naughty Children who, helped by the Rabble of the first song, take over the feast, ridicule the texts of the Well-behaved Ones, and eventually Santaclaus, the iconised symbol of Good Behaviour, is thrown into the water by the cheering crowd. The cymbal has the last word: "Splash!"