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Ulrike Hascher-Burger (14 June 1955 – 21 April 2020) in memoriam

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Karl Kügle

Ulrike Hascher-Burger (14 June 1955 – 21 April 2020) in memoriam

Musicologist and former President of the Royal Society for Music History of the Netherlands (KVMN), Dr Ulrike Hascher-Burger, died on 21 April 2020, aged 64. She was an expert in the music culture of the Modern Devotion, the fifteenth-century spiritual movement active in the Low Countries and northern Germany. The first female President of the KVMN (2014–2019), she contributed decisively to the highly successful celebration of the Society's 150th anniversary (2018), and helped establish the H el ene Nolthenius Prize; this prize is awarded annually to an outstanding master's thesis in music history produced at a university in the Low Countries. She regularly collaborated with fellow medievalists in the United Kingdom, Germany, and other European countries, and was deeply involved in Dutch musical life, reaching out to performers and the general public alike. She was the driving force behind many concerts and CDs featuring the music of the Modern Devotion.

Ulrike was born in Nagold (W urtemberg) and studied musicology and medieval history at the universities of T ubingen (Germany) and Basel (Switzerland). During the 1980s, she worked as a cataloguer of Latin manuscript fragments at the Universit atsbibliothek T ubingen. In 1990, she moved to the Netherlands with her husband, church historian Christoph Burger, and their two sons, Stephan and Andreas. Having settled in her new country, she took up doctoral studies at Utrecht University (1994–2001) under the supervision of Kees Vellekoop, earning her degree with a study of a central source for the music of the Modern Devotion. This study was published by Brill as a monograph in 2002 under the title *Gesungene Innigkeit: Studien zu einer Musikhandschrift der Devotio Moderna (Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek. MS. 16 H 34, olim B 113)*.

Exploring the role of music in the spirituality of the Modern Devotion remained the focus of Ulrike's research interests. From 2002 she created the database *Musica devota*, a vital tool for any scholar interested in the musical sources of the movement.¹ Her exploration of another key music manuscript of the Modern Devotion – Zwolle, Historisch Centrum Overijssel, coll. Emmanuelshuizen, cat. VI – led to a second monograph, again published by Brill.² Appointment as an affiliate researcher within the Research Group Musicology at Utrecht University (2007) gave her an institutional base that fit her needs as an independent scholar. Conscious, and proud, of her status, she took as her role models the likes of Maria Sibylla Merian (1647–1717), Marie Curie (1867–1934) and Jane Goodall (1934–).

¹ <https://easy.dans.knaw.nl/ui/datasets/id/easy-dataset:116182/tab/2>

² *Singen f ur die Seligkeit. Studien zu einer Liedersammlung der Devotio moderna. Zwolle, Historisch Centrum Overijssel, coll. Emmanuelshuizen, cat. VI. Mit Edition und Faksimile* (Leiden 2007).

Ulrike regularly pursued collaborative international research projects. With Ulrike Volkhardt, she explored the sources of late medieval music surviving from a group of nunneries near Lüneburg, Lower Saxony.³ The effects of church reform stood at the centre of a study of the provost's manual (dated ca. 1479) from the Cistercian nunnery of Medingen conducted jointly with Henrike Lähnemann.⁴ In many more publications, Ulrike explored the complex interaction between liturgy, female monasticism, gender, fifteenth-century church reform, and late medieval manuscript culture. Examples are her contributions (with Britta-Juliane Kruse) to the catalogue of the exhibition *Rosenkränze und Seelengärten. Bildung und Frömmigkeit in niedersächsischen Frauenklöstern* at the Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel (2013), or her essay on 'Religious Song and Devotional Culture in Northern Germany'.⁵ She also understood that church reform was not an easy undertaking for those undergoing reform, and by no means a welcome proposition to each and every community; reformers could be met with fierce resistance in the form of forceful singing, as shown in her essay 'Zwischen Liturgie und Magie: Apotropäischer Zaubergesang in niedersächsischen Frauenklöstern im späten Mittelalter'.⁶

From 2016–2019, she was co-principal investigator of the Utrecht-based research team in the HERA-funded transnational research project Sound Memories: The Musical Past in Late-Medieval and Early-Modern Europe (soundme.eu). Her focus in this project was the music of the Amsterdam beguines during the seventeenth century. Geographically at the very heart of the Reformed Dutch Republic, the Amsterdam beguines tenaciously clung to their Catholic heritage. In 2019, Ulrike's association with the Henri Pirenne Institute (Ghent) further acknowledged her international reputation as a cultural historian of the Low Countries. Sadly, her article on the music of the Amsterdam beguines planned for the HERA project's collective essay volume could no longer be completed.⁷

Ulrike's enthusiasm for her subject matter was catching, and evident to all who knew her. She liberally shared her knowledge, accumulated over a lifetime, with colleagues, students, and the general public. An active musician in her own right, she was passionate about bringing the music that she studied and loved to all those who wanted to hear it. This resulted in sustained collaborations with early-music groups specialized in the music of the Modern Devotion, including Cercamon, Ensemble devotio moderna, Schola Gregoriana Pragensis, and Trigon Ensemble.

³ *Verborgene Klänge. Inventar der handschriftlich überlieferten Musik aus den Lüneburger Frauenklöstern bis ca. 1550* (Hildesheim 2008).

⁴ *Liturgie und Reform im Kloster Medingen. Edition und Untersuchung des Propst-Handbuchs Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Lat. liturg. e. 18* (Tübingen 2013).

⁵ *Companion to mysticism in Northern Germany in the Late Middle Ages*, edd. E. Andersen, H. Lähnemann & A. Simon (Leiden-Boston 2014), 261–283.

⁶ *Journal of the Alamire Foundation* 3 (2011), 127–143.

⁷ *Sounding the past. Music as history and memory*, ed. K. Kügler (Turnhout 2020).

All who worked with Ulrike will fondly remember her warm and outgoing personality, her professionalism, and the clarity with which she parsed out her commitments. She was a true pioneer in her field, drawn to areas that many might, at first sight, have deemed unexciting. She went on to show how wrong they were. She helped open up research areas that today are central concerns of late medieval and early modern studies, such as the role of female spirituality, and – most importantly – the part played by music and singing in such spiritual practices. In the wake of her untimely death, much of the material she wanted to turn to next may remain unexplored for some time. When the time is ripe, her scholarship will provide a solid foundation for the next generation of scholars to tread in her footsteps. Following her lead, they will be assured of many exciting discoveries.⁸

⁸ Much of Ulrike Hascher-Burger's work remains readily accessible via her website www.ulrikehascher-burger.com/nl/Home.