Pickleherring:
An Early Modern Clown Persona and His Music

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The early modern German stage was dominated by a highly successful hybrid fool/ clown persona of English provenance known as 'Pickleherring', the sobriquet of an immigrant German beer brewer from the Duchy of Guelders named Peter van Duran(t) who was active in Southwark, London, from around 1531 until 1584 (Katritzky 2013: 162). The best-known depiction of this comic persona, depicted above, was known as 'Pickelhering' in the German-speaking areas and as 'Pekelharing' in the Netherlands. It was painted around 1628 by the Dutch portrait master Frans Hals and entitled 'Monsieur Peeckelhaering', the original now located in Kassel (Staatliche Museen, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister). The model for the painting may well have been Robert Reynolds, the English comic actor who is most often associated with this role and who had close ties to the Netherlands.

While it may come as no surprise that the comic prototypes for this persona were the much acclaimed singing, dancing and acrobatic stage clowns of the Elizabethan era, namely Dick Tarleton who was "largely responsible for setting the

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form of the jig and for making it fashionable on the London stage" (Dart 2014); Will Kemp, and, on the continent, Thomas Sacheville (Alexander 2007: 463–486), yet the music, along with visual works associated with this figure, has remained virtually unknown to literary and theatre historians and been touched upon briefly and then only within a larger context by a few music historians, in particular Werner Braun, John Wardand Ruth Baak Griffioen who have delved into archival materials, more of which are just now coming to light. None, however, it should be noted, appears to be more than vaguely aware of recent research on this important precursor of the modern circus clown carried out in other disciplines.

Another reason for the neglect is that most of these musical pieces, including those that exist only in manuscript form, contain numerous errors and other peculiarities, suggesting that the copyists/ creators, most of whom are still unknown, were struggling with their art and/ or that it was meant solely for their private enjoyment or that of their patron.Without such written evidence, however, we would possess even fewer pieces to the difficult puzzle that surrounds any attempt to reconstruct any ephemeral performances.

Such a phenomenon as the pickleherring can be better comprehended in the light of a more integrated approach that takes into consideration the fact that this stage clown first emerges on the German scene in connection with music, attesting to the very important role of this medium in the overall variety package offered by the multi-talented performers associated with this crucial role. In a rare comment on the pickleherring, Samuel Sturm points out that the performer of this comic role was often the leader of the troupe who was responsible for all aspects of production and performance (Sturm 1670: A3r-[A3v]). Clearly, the financial success or failure of any tour depended heavily on the acting and managerial skills of such leaders.

Perhaps the first musical piece that can be associated with the pickleherring in Germany may have been written down as early as 1603 and thus pre-dates the first mention of the comic persona. It is contained in a Heidelberg music manuscript compiled anonymously and known as the "Wirttembergischer uffzug p." (Pontius 1960: 11).Chambers conjectures that this was part of a November 1603 theatrical performance in Stuttgart to honor the conferring of the Knight of the Garter on Friedrich I. von Württemberg (Chambers 1923: 303 and 346), although some theatre historians disagree and place the date as late as 1620. If the ten others accompanying the four musicians in 1603 were indeed actors, this could be a reference to the Robert Browne troupe which had appeared earlier that year in Lille, along with John Green (1578 – ca. 1628) (Riewald 1984: 73–74).

The presence of this piece in Zweibrücken may be a result of the fact that Duke Johann of Zweibrücken functioned as regent in Heidelberg until 1610 when Friedrich V (1596–1632) came of age.Three years later Friederich V would marry Elisabeth, the daughter of James I of England. Given the close connections between the courts in London and Heidelberg and the excellent reputation of English musicians on the Continent since the reign of Elisabeth, attempts to imitate or use English music should come as no surprise. An even more likely date for the piece in my opinion, however, is the year 1609 when English Players from Kassel, almost certainly including Green, performed in Stuttgart (Sittard 1890: 217).

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Although this piece with its unvocal 1/7th leap down is an inexpert variation of Richard Farnaby's delightful dance jig which was first published as 'Nobodyes Gigge' in *The Fitzwilliam Virginal Book* (FVB: 162–165) and which shares a close connection with the stage play entitled *No-body and Some-body*, a work that may have been performed as early as 1592 but which was not published until 1606 (Archdeacon 2012: online). It was one that enjoyed considerable popularity in the German-speaking area, being a part of the repertoire of John Green whose company has been described as a "spin-off from the Queen's Servants at the Red Bull and the Curtain," two London playhouses (Griffith 2013: 189). In a German flyer from 1621, moreover, the pickleherring mentions that he had recently performed the role of 'Nobody' (Scheible 1850: 87).

The tune itself, known on the Continent long before Farnaby's version (Van der Merwe 2007: 232–233) and associated with the morris dance (Ward 1986: 294, 306), shares its opening measures with those of the English 'Pickelhering', as pointed out by Pontius (1960: 51): "Der Anfang des Würtembergischen Aufzugs entspricht dem des englischen Pickelhering."



Although Pontius does not give a source for this information, he is undoubtedly referring to one of the three tunes bearing the pickleherring label that are to be found in a Linz organ tablature manuscript dated to the years 1611/13 (Linzer Orgeltabulatur 2002: nr. 47, 67, 88) i.e. during a time span when an unidentified English troupe (probably that of John Greenwith which the stage figure is inextricably intertwined) was giving theatrical performances in Linz (Wessely 1951: 158).These instrumental pieces bear the titles 'Neuer Tanz Pickhelharing', nr. 67 (Petri 1998: 18, 32); 'Tantz Pückelhäring', nr. 88 (Schenk 1965: 256), and 'Neuer Pickhl-Häring', nr. 43 (Schächer 1998: 17) and, if not actually written by a member of the troupe, were undoubtedly inspired by a stage performance or may have been intended as private consumption for a local patron. They are simple street melodies written for a dance with many leaps and composed for the organ, a small, portable version of which could easily have been employed by the English Players. According to the music historian Steven Plank they would, by their very nature, permit a comic actor almost complete artistic freedom when performing his role (e.g. improvisation, miming, parodying, clowning around, innuendo by gesture and so on) (Huff 2013: e-mail).

The acrobatic jump and particularly the repeated stomping action associated with the initial appearance on the Pickelhering on the stage is indicated by the sets of three repeated notes that also occur in 'Tantz Pückelhäring' which Schenk

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describes as a “musikalische Ballade” and the “Kernmelodie des Pickelhering-Zwischenspiels” based on ‘Nobodyes Jigg’ (Schenk 1965: 257). After the fifth measure, however, this anonymous variation shares with Farnaby’s excellent piece only the general direction and the melodious ending:



An expanded version (nr. 43) in which a variation of the above tune constitutes the second half is also contained in this same collection under the name ‘Neuer Pickhl-Häring’:



It is, however, the first, unexpanded version (nr. 88) based on Farnaby that was most closely identified with the pickleherring in the first decade of his appearances in Germany, i.e. from around 1611 until 1620, as is attested to by lute pieces from the student milieu that were written down in re-discovered manuscripts that are now attracting the scrutiny of musical historians. The following incomplete piece entitled ‘Pieckel Hering’ is from the Lüneburg lute manuscript of Wolff Christian von Harling (1594–1639) and was first published by John Robinson who pointed out that it was also used in a cittern solo entitled ‘Sir haringtons god night 10’ (ca. 1650) as well as the piece entitled ‘Fleet Street’ (Robinson 1999: vi). It has been dated by Lüdtke to the period 1618-1620 (2001: 45) and published in its original form (Lüdtke 2005: 72):



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This same piece is found in other lute manuscripts written down during the same period. In 1619 an anonymous student in Leipzig included in his collection two versions of an 'Englischer Tantz oder Pickelharing', a piece that has since been published many times (Braun 1977: 278). Both the title and the music are very similar to the 'Tantz Pückelhäring' in the Linz manuscript, and this harmonious piece, like 'Nobodyes Gigge' and the 'Württembergischer Aufzug', contains a coarse movement which could well reflect the bawdy language of the pickleherring (Lautenbuch 1619: 376):



The Anton Schermar (1604–1681) manuscript collection in the Ulm Stadtbibliothek, dated 1620, contains two similar pieces, the first of which is written for the fiddle, an instrument heavily favoured by such English players on the continent as George Vincent, the first known musician-actor to perform the role of 'Pickelhering' in May 1615 (Niedecken-Gebhard 1914: 85), almost certainly in conjunction with the John Green-troupe which was in Wolfenbüttel during the same summer. As a musician and an actor, Vincent could then well be responsible for the stage jigs in the 1620 collection with which the name of 'Pickelhering' is invariably associated. And it is also possible that he is the redhead who played the role of 'Nobody' in Green's 1608 production and who may be identical with Archduchess Maria Magdalena's description in a letter from Graz from the same year in which she praises the "[…] mensch im langen rotten hare, der alleweil das khlein geigell geigt" (Meissner 1884: 80).The Schermar jig pieces are simple and sprightly before tailing off at the end:



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The corresponding bass is provided by the second instrument:



The scant evidence provided thus far suggests that this first melody was no longer in fashion after 1620 or a little later. The reason may simply have been that the stomping action, perhaps associated with the military, no longer found resonance after the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War.

The third Pickelhering tune, listed as nr. 67 in the Linz collection, proved to be the most enduring. It is based on the melody 'Walking in a country towne' which was written for one or two lutes by the well-known composer, Thomas Robinson, and published in his collection entitled *The Schoole of Musick* (Robinson 1603: M2). It has an English cognate from around 1610 entitled 'The Ladies Daughter' (Baak Griffioen 1991: 190) and is a delightful piece which provided the catalyst for numerous Dutch variations from 1615 on, being still familiar to the public as late as 1720 (Dekeverkooper 1720: broadside).

In 1615 the well-known Leiden lutenist, Joachim van der Hove (1567–1620) was in the midst of his peregrinations through France, Germany and Italy (Robinson 2006: Web), during which time he recorded in the Ernst Schele Lute Book this simple manuscript piece based on Robinson's melody and entitled 'Pekelharings Masquarade. Bouffons':



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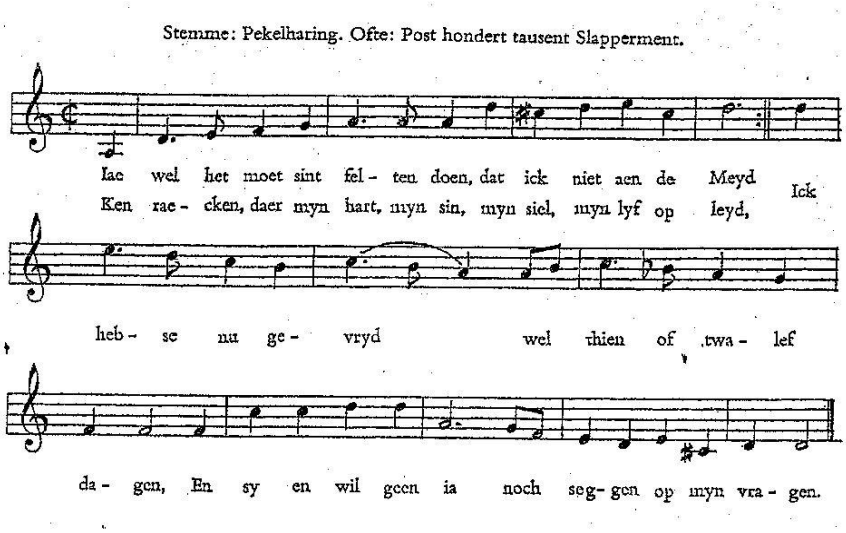
The association of the pickleherring with a masquerade dance is one of the few indications we have that he could actually don a mask, another sign of the influence of the Italian *commedia dell'arte*. It is also worthy of note that Hove was born in Antwerp, a city which has many connections with the early history of the pickleherring. During the carnival period, for example, the fool ran around with a pickled herring on a stick (Vercoullie 1925: 259). Antwerp also appears to have been the home base of John Green's troupe in 1613, i.e. at about the same time that the pickleherring appears as a stage figure (Katritzky 2005: 118).

In the same year, i.e. 1615, the prolific Dutch writer Gerbrand Adriaenszoon Bredero, noted particularly for his popular farces, published a collection of songs, including a text about a father who has summoned a doctor to cure his love-sick daughter, a common motif in Dutch paintings of the period such as Jan Steen's 'Het doctersbezoek' (Wheelock 1996: 150–153). Bredero includes a set of dialogues which is accompanied by an English melody entitled 'Potz tausent slappermenten' (Bredero 1985: 87), the trademark oath of the pickleherring (Baak Griffioen 2007: 6), with whom it seems to have been almost exclusively associated in numerous Dutch songs of the seventeenth century (*Zeevsche Nachtigael* 1623: 333), starting in 1615, if not earlier.

Another song entitled 'Een oudt Bestevaertje, met een iong Meysen' uses the same melody in conjunction with a text about a lecherous old man named Lammert chasing after a young girl named Jannetje (Bredero 1679: 58), a comic stock situation found in the *commedia dell'arte*.The editor, Matter, has combined the text plausibly with Adriaan Valerius's version of the melody which is referred to with three different titles: 'Pekelharing, Of/Pots hondert', 'Pots hondert duysent, of: Almande Pekelharing' and 'Pots hondert duysent slapperment' (Valerius 1974: 222). Valerius, it should be noted, may well have copied this melody from a French keyboard piece of the same title that is mentioned in a lost manuscript from 1625 (Van den Borren 1933: 93).

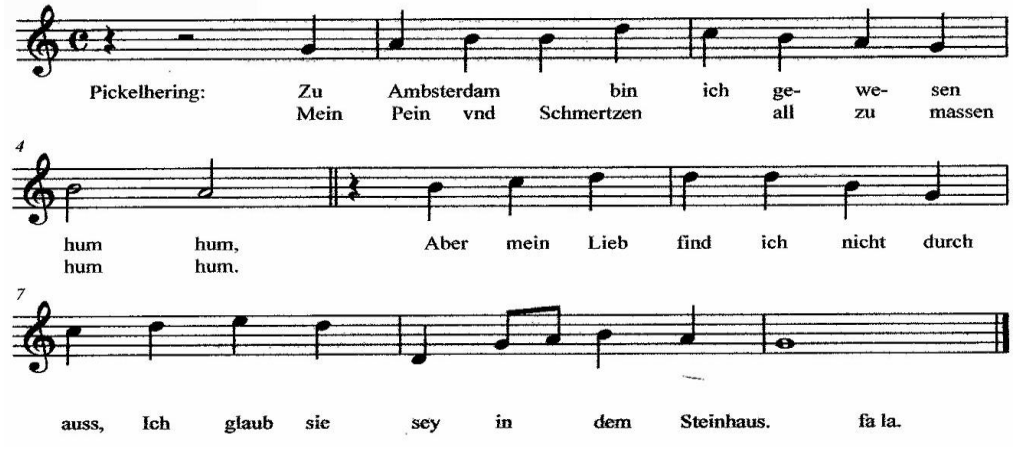
A further and perhaps even more interesting use of this tune can be found in a farce published in 1621 by Jan Starter (1593/1594–1626) who was born in Amsterdam, in all likelihood to English parents. It is entitled *Kluchtigh t'samengesang van dry personagien* (Starter 1967: 264–278) and is the first known stage piece which combines this melody, here entitled 'Pekeharings. Ofte, Pots hondert tausent Slapferment'which can be translated as 'Pickleherring's melody. Or Gads-a million-zooks' (Baak Griffioen 2007: 11), with an actual text, presumably a collaborative effort by the author with Jacob Vredeman de Vries (1563–1621), Music Director of the city of Leeuwarden (Veldhuyzen 1967: 8). The farce centers around Knelis Joosen, a most inept suitor who uses questionable methods and coarse innuendo in his attempt to seduce a young woman, Lijsje Flepkous, who however teaches the would-be deceiver an unforgettable lesson by placing raw eggs in his pants and a rocket in his anus. Using the Robinson melody, it opens with a song in which Knelis expresses his frustrations (Veldhuyzen 1967: 74):

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It is clear that Knelis's language and methods align him with the figure of the natural fool, yet it is Lijsje who exhibits the cunning and ability to turn the table quickly that one usually associates with the German 'Pickelhering'.

Starter was also familiar with the music in the well-known collection of prose plays performed by the English Comedians (probably by the John Greentroupe) and published under the title *Englische Comedien und Tragedien* (1620) since there are references in the farce (Baak Griffioen 1991: 269) to Giovanni Giacomo Gastoldi's popular 'Falala'-refrain which is used, most commonly in connection with love-making, in countless English songs of the period. It is also employed by the pickleherring in the German text, along with a song alluded to in Starter's farce and entitled 'Zu Ambsterdam bin ich gewesen'(*Englische Comedien* 1970: 593):



Braun's suggestion that the tune 'Pickelhering, kom geschwind' may have been intended as the second voice for the 'Almande Peckelharing' published in 1626 by Valerius is not without merit as the latter is based on Robinson's melody (Braun 1977: 74). There is in addition a third song in the 1620 German collection with

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motivic resemblances to both the Farnaby and the Robinson pieces: It now bears the title 'Der Pferdekauf des Edelmannes' (Baskerville 1929: 536–549).

But I digress. Let us return to the Dutch and the German stage jigs where the situation and language are similar, but the object of the ardent desire of the young males is different: Lijse is a respectable young girl whereas Catharina is the favorite prostitute of the pickleherring and, in addition, she seems to have been languishing in a prison. The music is also quite different: Starter used a melody associated with the pickleherring which was already very popular in The Netherlands, whereas the music in the German version contains false notes and the text an irregular number of syllables (Braun 1977: 82). There are many other errors in the German collection which may well be the result of the copyist, believed to be Friedrich Menius, writing from memory (Fredén 1939: 4).

A further example of this melody entitled 'Ein Soldat ist vorhanden'(Charteris 2006: 16, 25) was recorded as a solo lute version in Strasbourg in 1619 by Wolfgang Hoffmann von Grünbühel und Stechau. Interestingly enough, in the summer of 1618, and perhaps later, Robert Browne was in Strasbourg with his acting troupe. This included his son-in-law Robert Reynolds who had been with John Green in Nuremberg earlier in the year and who was to achieve his greatest success in the comic role of the pickleherring (Crüger 1887: 120–121).

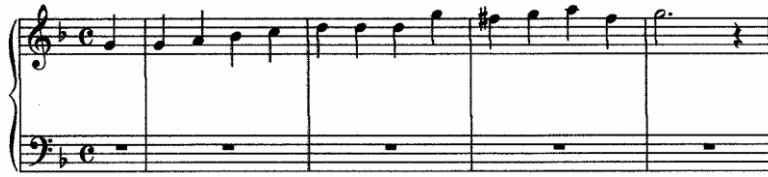
The title itself mirrors a line from one of the most popular German stage jigs of the seventeenth century, namely *Pickelhering in der Kiste*, which is largely a translation of an English original referred to in 1595 as 'Kemps newe Jygge betwixt, a souldiour and a Miser and Sym the Clown' and in 1656 as 'Singing Simpkin' (Baskervill 1929: 108, 123). In the extant English text from 1656 the stage instructions call for a change in tune right before the servant announces that a soldier is at the door (Baskervill 1929: 445).The German text from 1620 reads as follows: 'Ein Soldat ist vorhanden / allhier in unsern Hauß' (*Englische Comedien* 1970: 584).

Based on this textual evidence, it seems almost certain that a variation of Robinson's melody was used in connection with the German translation of this English stage jig. And since it is the second melody indicated, this playlet must have been introduced with a different air, which allows for the possibility that the first tune was that of Farnaby. Whatever the case, this finding is significant because it represents for the first time a link connecting the pickleherring music from 1611–1613 with a text in the 1620 German collection. It also opens up the possibility that variants of the Robinson tune, although not indicated, were employed during performances of Isaac Voss's Dutch rendition entitled *De singende klucht van Pekelharing in de Kist* (1648), an immensely popular jig that was staged multiple times at the Schouburgh in Amsterdam in the seventeenth century and that is still performed by Dutch student troupes today (Oey-De Vita 1983: 187–188).

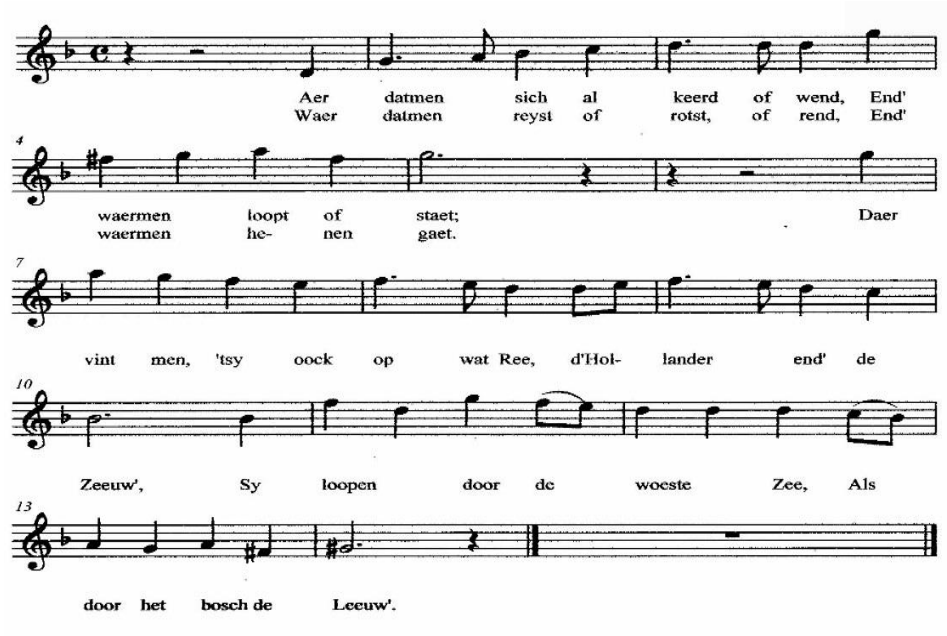
The pickleherring tune, it should be noted, was also known as the 'Janneman' melody. A Dutch collection from 1643 indicates a particular air as being 'Ianneman, of Pekelharingh' (*Sparens Vreughen-Bron* 1643: 199).This is a reference to a Dutch farce from the earlier years of the seventeenth century known as *Janneman en Alemoer.* While the original text has apparently been lost, references to the tune 'Als Janneman en Alemoer' occur as early as 1622 (*Venus Minne-gifjens* 1622: f. 34r). This title reappears three times in Jan van Arp's farce *Singende klucht, van droncke*

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*Goosen*from 1639 (Bolte 1893: 30-31) and is given as the tune in numerous other works that were published between 1643 and 1700, including a particularly charming piece of art music by the flutenist Jacob van Eyck in 1644 entitled ‘Janneman en Aelemoer’ which opens with the following bars (Eyck 1644: 57b):



In 1626 a variation on Robinson’s melody, written for a lute, was published as an allemande dance. It is clearly classified as a ‘Dutch’ tune rather than an ‘English’ one, which would suggest that the original connection had been lost by this date. While the melody remains essentially the same, the text has changed from a love song to one reflecting a soldier’s war experiences. According to van Duyze it was originally sung by the English soldiers who departed Briel and Vlissingen in June, 1616 (Duyze 1965: 1783), returning these English garrisons to the Provinces. The first strophe of the text, along with the melody reads as follows (Valerius 1974: 222):



This same melody is indicated for a large number of Dutch drinking and dancing songs, including ‘Den Droogen Haring’ which has been identified as a round dance not intended for the stage (Coussemaker 1856: 333–334); Pieter Elsevier’s ‘Rursus ad diversorium’ (1647); ‘Lof van Rutjes Kroeg’ (1654); and ‘Drink-Liedt, Om met twee Roemers in ‘t Rondt te zingen’ (1659). It is called ‘Pekel-Haring’ in a French collection of dances for which the music is still extant (Pointel 1700: 21, nr. 6) and ‘De Koninginne dans’ in a Dutch collection from around 1710 (Mortier 1710: 13, nr. 297). The apparently final mention of this

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melody occurs around 1720 in the afore mentioned text ‘De Dekeverkooper zingt in ‘t voorbygaan, op de Wysvan pekelharing’ (Dekeverkooper 1720: broadside).

There are, however, completely different melodies with which the pickleheringis also associated and which were probably performed on the street when the pickleherring combined his barker role with that of a charlatan or a charlatan’s assistant. They may also have been appropriated from drinking songs popular with students. This is certainly the case with the‘Runda Dinella’ refrain (Gudewill 1956: v) which is indicated in the 1620 German collection and has been combined by Braun with the following text (Braun 1977: 111):



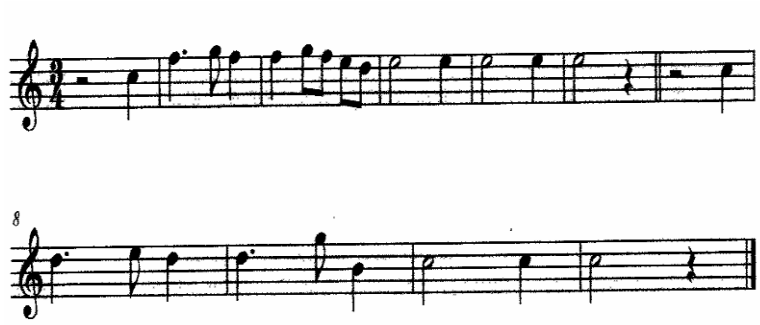
Other melodies from the early eighteenth century include the dance tune in the Mortier collection listed as ‘Gailjaart de Pekelharing’(Mortier 1710: Deel 11, nr. 290):



Like the ‘Galiarde pekel harinck in the Faille manuscript (Van den Borren 1933: 93) it too has no musical connection with either the Farnaby or the Robinson melody.

A further example, this time from Roger’s collection, contains the title ‘Pots hondert duÿsent’ (Roger 1710: Deel 7, nr.2), but this is not based on Robinson, while yet another new tune involves the rope-walking ability of a pickleherring. It is short and very simple (Mortier 1710: Deel 5, 17, nr. 379):

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The rope-walking associated with the pickleherring in the 18th century can also be combined with a reference to his or her traditional leaping ability: "She mounteth with a pickle-herring spring, Without th'assistance of a rope" (Pindar 1824: 246). Jumping from a standing position requires great athletic dexterity, an acrobatic quality associated with many of the actors who assumed the role of the pickleherring.

The combination of music, dance, leaping and drama indicate that the pickleherring was not only part of a variety show, but in many instances its very centerpiece. It is, however, first in conjunction with music and athletic dances such as the jig and the galliardthat the pickleherring is mentioned, and it has been the goal of this paper to follow for the most part simple Continental versions of the two English melodies that are so intimately connected with this effervescent stage persona and, where possible, to connect these pieces to text. That the tunes are not always indicated in the written plays does not mean that they were not played, for example at the beginning or the end of a performance, or as intermezzi in the stage jigs and/ or comedies.

Reconstructing a comic persona from the past is like finding pieces to a jigsaw puzzle that can in reality never be completed. Yet hopefully the pieces provided here help broaden our knowledge of the pickleherring as an entertainer and important precursor of the modern circus clown and comedian. Based on the evidence presented above, we can say that variations of Farnaby's air 'Nobodyes Jigg' enjoyed a decade of popularity in the German-speaking areas, before falling into oblivion after 1620, whereas Dutch versions of Robinson's 'Walking in a Country Town' were to last for another hundred years.

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Abstract

Attempting to reconstruct a stage persona from the past is a daunting task and not one that can be accomplished to any level of satisfaction by a single scholar or discipline. In the past three decades, as more and more archival records have been published, theatre and music historians, along with philologists, have been able to shed more light on the early modern figure of the pickleherring who enjoyed immense popularity both in street performances as well as on the German and Dutch stages of the seventeenth century. The integration of insights from the various disciplines will show not only how significant music was in the variety show offered by this multi-talented persona, but also the distinctive English origins of the airs themselves. Most of the pieces written and/or performed in the German and Dutch-speaking areas throughout the seventeenth century reveal themselves to be variations of Richard Farnaby's 'Nobodyes Gigue', itself a variant of the Morris tune; and Thomas Robinson's 'Walking in a countrie town', a melody that retained its popularity in the Netherlands until at least 1720. The music has, whenever possible, been linked to an extant dramatic text with the intention of further promoting our understanding of this complex clown figure.

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