

1984 Wheelock: 30–31, color repro.
1985 NGA: 387, repro.
1987 Smith: 423–424, repro.
1991 Ydema: 188, no. 860.

1991 Roodenburg: 152–189, fig. 7.1.
1992 NGA: 133, color repro.
1993 Kettering: 97, repro.

Studio of Gerard ter Borch II

1960.6.10 (1562)

The Music Lesson

c. 1670
Oil on canvas, 69 x 55.1 (27 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 21 $\frac{3}{4}$)
Timken Collection

Technical Notes: The support, a fine-weight, tightly and plain-woven fabric, has been lined with the tacking margins trimmed. Three moderately sized complex tears in the background to the left and right of the man's head have become visible again due to the cleaving and lifting of paint along the tear edges. Thin fluid paint is applied over a thin, smooth white ground with little layering and no appreciable impasto or brushmarking. Losses are few and abrasion is moderate overall. Reglazing over parts of the man's costume may be covering local abrasion. The varnish layer is matte and discolored.

Provenance: (Van Diemen, Berlin and New York, in 1929)¹. William R. Timken [1866–1949], New York; by inheritance to his wife, Lillian S. Timken [d. 1959], New York.

WHILE SHE INTENTLY STARES at her music book, an elegantly attired young lady strums on her bent-necked theorbo to the beat established by her music instructor. The scene is one that must have been familiar in the homes of well-to-do Dutch burghers, for the playing of music was a popular and socially acceptable activity among unmarried young people, particularly women. Numerous depictions of music lessons exist in Dutch art, and, in particular, it was a theme favored by Gerard ter Borch. Not only did the subject provide an opportunity to depict a leisure activity within a domestic setting, but it also was one in which the many symbolic allusions of music, from harmony to love and seduction, could be thematically exploited. It is not by accident, for example, that an ace of hearts lies on the floor in a painting of a similar scene by Ter Borch in the National Gallery, London (fig. 1). Since no card is present in *The Music Lesson*, nor are there other motifs that provide a romantic subtheme to the London



Fig. 1. Gerard ter Borch II, *A Woman Playing a Theorbo to Two Men*, 1667–1668, oil on canvas, London, National Gallery

painting such as the bed, the dog, or the young suiter, it would seem that the artist's intent here was to focus solely upon the woman's intent concentration as she strives to learn the complexities of the music and her instrument.

If the comparison with the London painting suggests that there exists here a different pictorial intent, it also demonstrates that this work contains fewer psychological nuances. More importantly, in terms of its attribution, the comparison points out that elements of the painting, particularly the woman, but also the general disposition of the room and still-life elements on the table, have been taken over entirely from the London composition. While



Studio of Gerard ter Borch II, *The Music Lesson*, 1660.6.10

Ter Borch did occasionally repeat compositions and readapt figures in his paintings, stylistic comparisons between the woman in the London and Washington paintings demonstrate that, while the images are very similar in character, different hands were at work. The modeling of the woman's face and hands in the London painting is slightly fuller than that in the Washington version, which gives the forms a greater sense of three-dimensionality. The sense of sheen on the satin dress and the soft textural qualities of the fur on the jacket are also more convincingly rendered in the London painting than in *The Music Lesson*. Similar comparisons can be made with the outstretched hand of the music master, and with the candlestick and cloth on the table.

Connections between *The Music Lesson* and other paintings, however, also exist. As Gudlaugsson has pointed out, the music master replicates in reverse a figure in another depiction of a music lesson, in the Roach Collection.² The present painting is rightly considered by him a pastiche, a joining together of motifs from the London and Roach paintings. Just when such a pastiche would have been made is difficult to determine. Since Gudlaugsson brings into his discussion a later mezzotint by Jan Stolker (1724–1785) that reproduces the Roach painting in reverse, he seems to imply that *The Music Lesson* must have been produced long after Ter Borch's lifetime.³ The quality of the painting, however, is certainly sufficient to assume that it was created by an artist working under Ter Borch's supervision.

While little is known about Ter Borch's studio, the large number of replicas and versions of his paintings suggests that a widespread demand existed for his works. It is known that Caspar Netscher (c. 1639–1684), who studied with Ter Borch before

going to Italy in 1658 or 1659, made copies of his master's paintings.⁴ Presumably Ter Borch continued to use assistants and students for such work, even to the extent of encouraging them to create new compositions by combining elements from a variety of his images. In this regard it could well be that Ter Borch's assistant derived his reversed image of the music master from a counterproof of one of Ter Borch's preliminary drawings.⁵

Notes

1. While no earlier provenance is known for certain, Gudlaugsson 1959–1960, 2: 206, proposed that this painting might be the one that was sold at auction in Rotterdam on 3 August 1811, no. 48 (HdG 1907–1927, 5: 55, no. 146). The dimensions (63.5 x 49.5 cm) of this depiction of a music lesson, however, were somewhat smaller than 1960.6.10, so it may well have been yet another variant of the composition.

2. Reproduced by Gudlaugsson 1959–1960, 1: 355, no. 221, as being in the collection of Mrs. W. J. Roach. This same figure is also found in at least three other paintings once attributed to Ter Borch (see Gudlaugsson 1959–1960, 2: 203–206, for discussion of these and other paintings).

3. Gudlaugsson 1959–1960, 2: 203. In addition to his prints after Ter Borch, Stolker also executed mezzotints and drawings after paintings by other Dutch artists, including Rembrandt, Dou, Steen, and Adriaen van Ostade.

4. Gudlaugsson 1959–1960, 2: 288–289, identifies a number of signed copies Netscher made of Ter Borch compositions. As indicated in note 9 in the entry on 1937.1.58, Netscher made a signed copy of *The Suitor's Visit*.

5. Amsterdam 1981a, 28–29, discusses the use of counterproof drawings by Gerrit Berckheyde and Adriaen van de Velde.

References

- 1959–1960 Gudlaugsson, 2 (1960): 206, no. 221f.
 1965 NGA: 126, no. 1562.
 1968 NGA: 113, repro.
 1975 NGA: 336–337, repro.
 1985 NGA: 387, repro.

Aelbert Cuyp (Cuijp)

1620–1691

AELBERT CUYP, one of the foremost Dutch landscape painters of the seventeenth century, was born in Dordrecht in October of 1620. His father, Jacob Gerritsz. Cuyp (1594–c. 1650) was a successful portrait painter in the city, and from him Aelbert received his earliest training as a painter, assisting his father by supplying landscape backgrounds for portrait commissions. It is uncertain whether Cuyp had

apprenticed with a landscape painter, but he soon abandoned his father's style and subject matter and turned almost exclusively to landscapes and riverscapes, painting only an occasional portrait in his mature period. Arnold Houbraken, a native of Dordrecht, noted that Cuyp was a man of "*onbesproken leven*" [irreproachable character], and the surviving documents concern his active involvement in the