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Nicolaes Lauwers, after Gerard Seghers
St Cecilia with Three Angels Making Music

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NICOLAS LAUWERS (1600-1652), after GERARD SEGHERS (1591-1651)

ST CECILIA with THREE ANGELS MAKING MUSIC

Engraving on laid paper.

Plate: 317 x 371 mm. 12 1/4 x 14 5/8 in.

Sheet: 338 x 385 mm. 13 1/4 x 15 1/8 in.

Signed in the plate "Nicol. Lauwers sculp." lower right; "Gerardus Seghers inven." lower left.

Inscribed in the plate "Cæcilis alterno luditque canitque susurro. Respondet parili picta Juuenta choro. En ut tacta fides, melos ut dent ora puella; Angelicum ut resones, viue etiam angelicè."

Unidentified letter B watermark.

Provenance

H.F. de la Motte-Fouquet (1795-1874, Germany), Lugt 778;

Private collection, New York, 1980;

With David Tunick, Inc.

References

Wurzbach 8, first state of two, before the address of Meyssens; Hollstein 13.

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*CÆCILIS alterno ludique canitque susurro.
Respondet parili picta juventa choro.*

*En vt tacta fides, melos vt dent ora puellæ:
Angelicum vt resones, viue etiam angelicæ.*

Gerardus Sphers invenit.

Cum privilegio.

Nicoll. Lauerer sculp.

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The present engraving is by the Flemish print-maker Nicolas Lauwers (Antwerp 1600 - 1652). Lauwers was admitted to the Guild of Saint Luke in Antwerp in 1619, and shortly thereafter established his workshop on the Lombardenvest under the name *In de scryvende Hand (In the writing hand)*. He became deacon of the guild in 1635.¹ He is well-known as a reproductive engraver and publisher of designs by leading Flemish painters such as Peter Paul Rubens and Jacob Jordaens. The source design of the present etching is a painting by Gerard Seghers (1591-1651), a key figure of the early Flemish Baroque and one of the Antwerp Caravaggisti (fig. 1).

St Cecilia, martyr and patroness of music, became increasingly popular in post-Tridentine Catholic Europe, aligned with the Jesuit-inspired arts of music-devotion and the new prominence of musical iconography in Counter-Reformation imagery.

Here, St Cecilia is depicted seated at a table, her head haloed, gazing upward, while three angels accompany her musically: one plays a flute and another a lute. The table also holds a violin and bow. Through the dramatic projected lighting the scene evokes a heavenly concert. The Latin couplets underline the theme: Cecilia alternately plays and sings (“*luditque canitque*”), the youthful chorus respond, and the faithful girl’s voice gives melody, so that the angelic chorus may resound and the saint live even angelically. The upward glance of the saint, the halo, the flying drapery, the candle (or light source) at the table’s edge, and the strong modelling of form in dark and light all reflect Seghers’ indebtedness to Caravaggist compositional devices.

Impressions of this engraving are held in several major public collections, including the National Gallery of Art, Washington, the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, and Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam.

¹ See H. Hymans, ‘Lauwers (Nicolas)’, in *Biographie nationale de Belgique*, vol. XXI, Académie royale des sciences, des lettres et des beaux-arts de Belgique, Brussels, 1911 - 1913.

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Fig. 1. Gerard Seghers, *St Cecilia with Three Angels Making Music*, c. 1610-1620, oil on canvas, 121.9 × 152.4 cm. Recorded in the Scheidwimmer Collection, Munich.

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