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EST. 1817

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Karel du Jardin (Amsterdam 1626-1678 Venice)

The Wandering Musician

Indistinctly signed (lower left, on the door): 'K·
DV· IARDIN· fe'

Oil on panel

12 1/8 x 14 3/8 in. (30.7 x 36.5 cm.)

Executed c.1658



Provenance

(Possibly) with Lebrun, Paris, *circa* 1790.

(Possibly) Walsh Porter (d. 1809).

George Byng (1764-1847), Wrotham Park, Hertfordshire, by 1819, and by inheritance to his brother, John Byng, 1st Earl of Strafford (1772-1860), and by descent at Wrotham Park until 1918, and subsequently by inheritance to the previous owner.

Literature

G. Waagen, *Galleries and Cabinets of Art in Great Britain*, London, 1857, IV, p. 320.

C. Hofstede de Groot, *A catalogue raisonne' of the works of the most eminent Dutch painters of the seventeenth century*, London, 1926, IX, p. 390, no. 344.

E. Brochhagen, *Karel du Jardin. Ein Betrag zum Italianismus in Holland im 17. Jahrhundert*, Doctoral Thesis, University of Cologne, 1958, p. 104.

G. Luijten and E. de Jongh, *Mirror on Everyday Life: Genre Prints in the Netherlands 1550-1700*, exhibition catalogue, Amsterdam, 1997, p. 327, note 6, fig. 3.

J.M. Kilian, *The Paintings of Karel du Jardin*, Amsterdam and Philadelphia, 2005, pp. 203-204 and 376, no. 107, pl. 86.

Exhibited

London, Royal Academy, *Winter Exhibition*, 1952-53, no. 49.

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Supposedly trained by Nicolaes Berchem, the young Karel Dujardin travelled to Italy where he joined the Bentveughels group of painters in Rome, under the pseudonym *Barba di Becco* or *Bokkebaart* on account of his goatee beard. In 1650, probably on his return from Italy, he is recorded in Lyon and then Paris, before arriving back in Amsterdam in 1651. He was a versatile artist who turned his hand to portraiture and history paintings, but it is his Italianate genre scenes and landscapes that secured his lasting fame. Dujardin's ability to evoke the languid mood and southern light of Italy is beautifully evinced by his treatment of the humble *Wandering Musician*. A young boy plays the violin with a dog as his sidekick, standing bolt upright on its hind legs, its front paws outstretched and tail between its legs, clearly performing to the music as part of the boy's repertoire. This central motif recurs in an etching of 1658. Most of Dujardin's etchings are unrelated to his paintings, but in this case, as Ger Luijten remarks, 'It is not clear whether the print preceded the painting or whether Dujardin was so taken with the motif that he later repeated it' (*op. cit.*, p. 327). Either way, 1658 seems a likely date for the painting too, a few years earlier than that suggested by Kilian.

The Wandering Musician was first recorded in the collection of George Byng in 1819 at the great neo-Palladian house Wrotham Park (fig. 1), which he had inherited from his father and namesake in 1789. He also followed his father as MP for Middlesex, a seat he was to hold in the Whig interest for 56 years. His main architectural contribution to Wrotham was the enlargement of the wings in 1811. Byng inherited a number of important pictures, but became a serious collector in his own right. At Lord Radstock's sale in 1826, for instance, he bought Giulio Romano's Spinola *Holy Family* for 890 guineas and Parmigianino's *Portrait of a Collector* (London, National Gallery) for 840 guineas. The high calibre of the small group of Dutch pictures that he acquired is testament to the range of Byng's taste. These included De Hooch's 1658 *Figures in a Courtyard* (private collection), a masterpiece by David Teniers, and works by Ruisdael, van de Velde and van de Cappelle. At the time of Waagen's visit to Wrotham, when the house had been inherited by Byng's nephew Lord Enfield, the Dujardin hung together with the De Hooch in the 'First Drawing Room'.

The Byng provenance for the Dujardin has in the past incorrectly been connected to another work by the artist of a similar subject – *Travelling Musicians* (Kilian, *op. cit.*, no. 96), sold at Sotheby's, New York, 24 January 2008, lot 22 (\$457,000).

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Fig. 1: Wrotham Park, a substantial neo-Palladian English country house in the parish of South Mimms, Hertfordshire.