

# Biography

Willem Jeths was born on August 31, 1959, in Amersfoort, The Netherlands.

Education: Jeths started his musical career as a child with piano and music-theory lessons at the Music School of Amersfoort with Paul Seelig. From 1980 to 1982 he studied Music Education at the Sweelinck Conservatory in Amsterdam.

Then he majored in Composition at the Conservatory of Utrecht with Hans Kox and Tristan Keuris. He graduated in 1988 with the Composition Prize (Prijs voor Compositie).

In addition to composition, Jeths also studied Musicology at the University of Amsterdam (1983-1991). He completed his studies with a doctoral dissertation about Elisabeth Kuyper (1877-1953), a composer and conductor, which was later published in the book, 'Zes Vrouwelijke Componisten' (Walburg Pers, Zutphen.)

Jeths has composed chamber and orchestral music (including solo concertos), songs and three operas ('Hôtel de Pékin' (2007), 'The Tell-Tale Heart' (2018), 'Ritratto' (2019), initially in an atonal idiom, but later flirting with tonality.

He draws on the past and attempts to enrich it through experimentation. "My music is about extremes: strict purity versus distortion, loud against soft." While his music is rich in tone colour, Jeths is frugal with his musical material.

He meticulously works out timbral effects, often calling for playing techniques unused in the West – or anywhere – and creatively incorporating uncommon sound sources: toy instruments, breaking glass, dripping water.



*"For me, intuition and associations are the keywords while composing, together with striving towards a clarity and economy of musical material. Life/Death and*

*Nature are the main sources of my inspiration. ...It is not surprising that people say  
orchestral colours and timbres are my 'trademark'."*



Willem Jeths has been commissioned to write 'Flugelhorn Concerto' (2002) and 'Scale -le tombeau de Mahler' (2010) for the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, 'Intus trepidare' for the American Kronos Quartet, 9 works for the 'Zaterdag Matinee'-concert series (among them 'Symphony nr. 1', 'Requiem', 'The Tell-Tale Heart'), 3 works for the Rotterdam Philharmonic, 2nd piano concerto 'Fas/Nefas' for the Osaka Symphoniker (Japan), cello concerto 'Falsa/Ficta' for the Nederlands Philharmonisch Orkest, 'Harp Concerto' for the Residentie Orkest, 'Seanchai' for Het Gelders Orkest, clarinet concerto 'Yellow Darkness' for Het Brabants Orkest, 'Quale Coniugium!' and 'Suite Hôtel de Pékin' for Philharmonie Zuid-Nederland etc.

Nederland (WP 2021) and 'Ishq' for Calefax reed-quintet.

Currently he is composing his 2nd Celloconcerto for the Cello Biënnale of 2022 in Amsterdam.

## Other Professional Experiences

Jeths has been professor of composition at the Conservatory of Amsterdam since 2007. He was also senior composition teacher at the Fontys Conservatory in Tilburg from 2002 to 2007.

In the 2004–2005 season, Jeths was composer-in-residence with Het Gelders Orkest and The Brabant Orchestra, in 2005-2006 with De Doelen in Rotterdam and during the 2006–2007 season with the Orkest van het Oosten. In the year 2000 there was a three-day Willem Jeths Festival in Rotterdam. In 2019 Jeths was composer in residence at the Staunton Music Festival (USA).

Jeths won the Composition Prize from the Conservatory of Utrecht in 1988. His composition, 'Novelette' for violin and piano (1986) was selected for the ISCM World Music Days in 1990 in Oslo.

Jeths received a distinction award for his string quartet, 'Arcate' (1990). The following year, he received another distinction for the same work as a string orchestra version. In 1996, Jeths received second and third prize in the Internationaler Wiener Kompositionswettbewerb for his violin concerto, 'Glenz' (1993) and his 'Piano Concerto' (1994).

In 2008, Jeths' work 'Meme' was selected for the Toonzetters Prize.

In November 2014 he was appointed by copyright organization BUMA/STEMRA as the first "Componist des Vaderlands" of The Netherlands (Composer Laureate of

## Honours & Awards