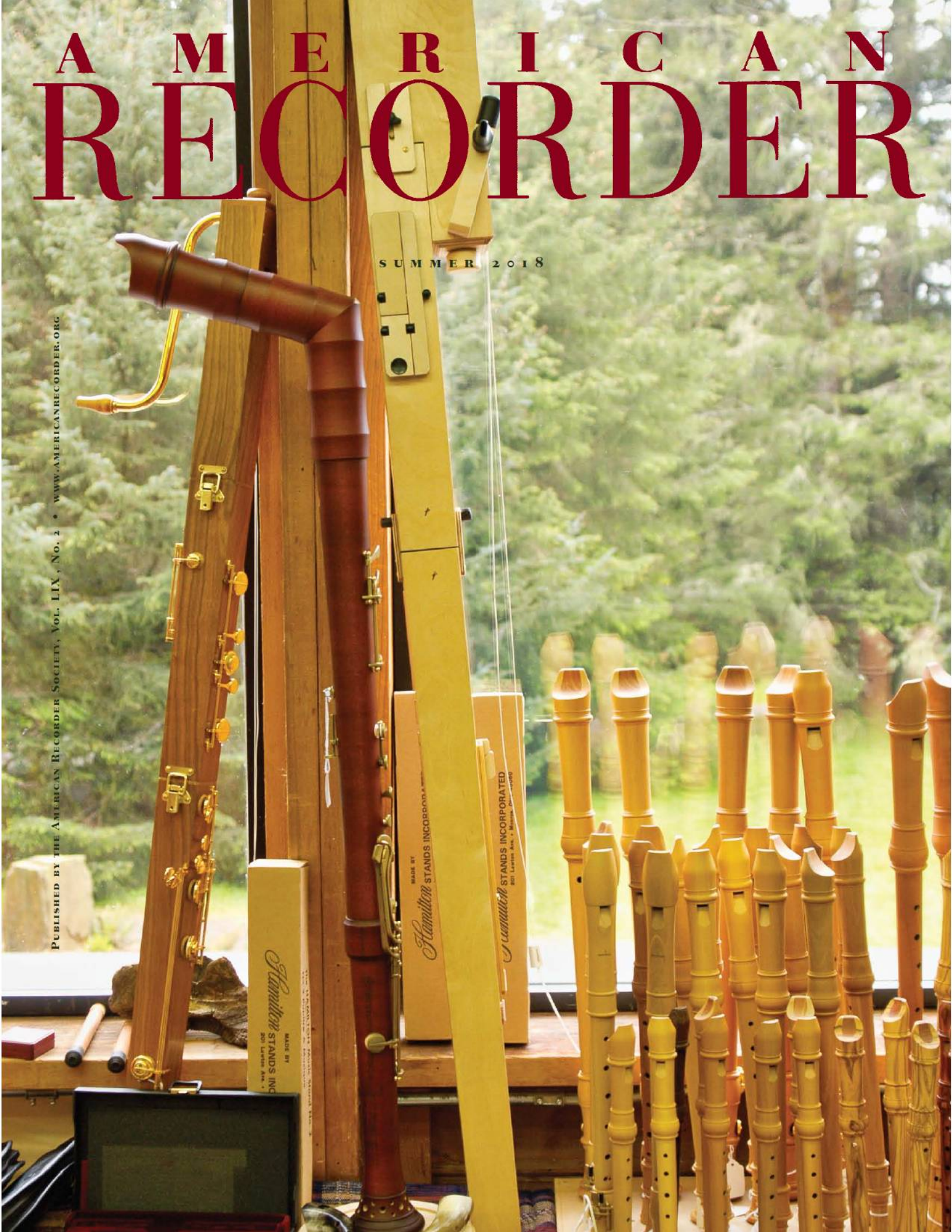


# AMERICAN RECORDER

SUMMER 2018

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# EDITOR'S NOTE

I think I first saw the Flanders Recorder Quartet (FRQ) approaching across a misty field, carrying recorder cases. The mist was fog elsewhere, causing their plane to circle and land late—and the quartet to have to dash to their concert as the recorder headliners at the 2000 Berkeley (CA) Festival (*September 2000 AR*). Immediately setting to the work of unpacking recorders, and having no time to warm up, they proceeded to play a stellar concert. It was my birthday—and what a lovely present.

ARS members scattered around the U.S. sent in reports on the FRQ “Final Chapter” tour in North America this spring—but you can hear them play, one more time, during the Amherst Early Music Festival on July 16. After that performance, they will be presented the **ARS Distinguished Achievement Award** (page 8).

At the other end of the spectrum for recorder playing is the **East Bay Junior Recorder Society**, a group for young recorder players, now celebrating 20 years of its success. In an expanded Education Department, **Mary Halverson Waldo interviews the leaders of that group** (page 16), with additional thoughts from its present and former members. It’s a particularly good example of a way to cultivate the next crop of recorder players.

*Gail Nickless*

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# AMERICAN RECORDER

VOLUME LIX, NUMBER 2

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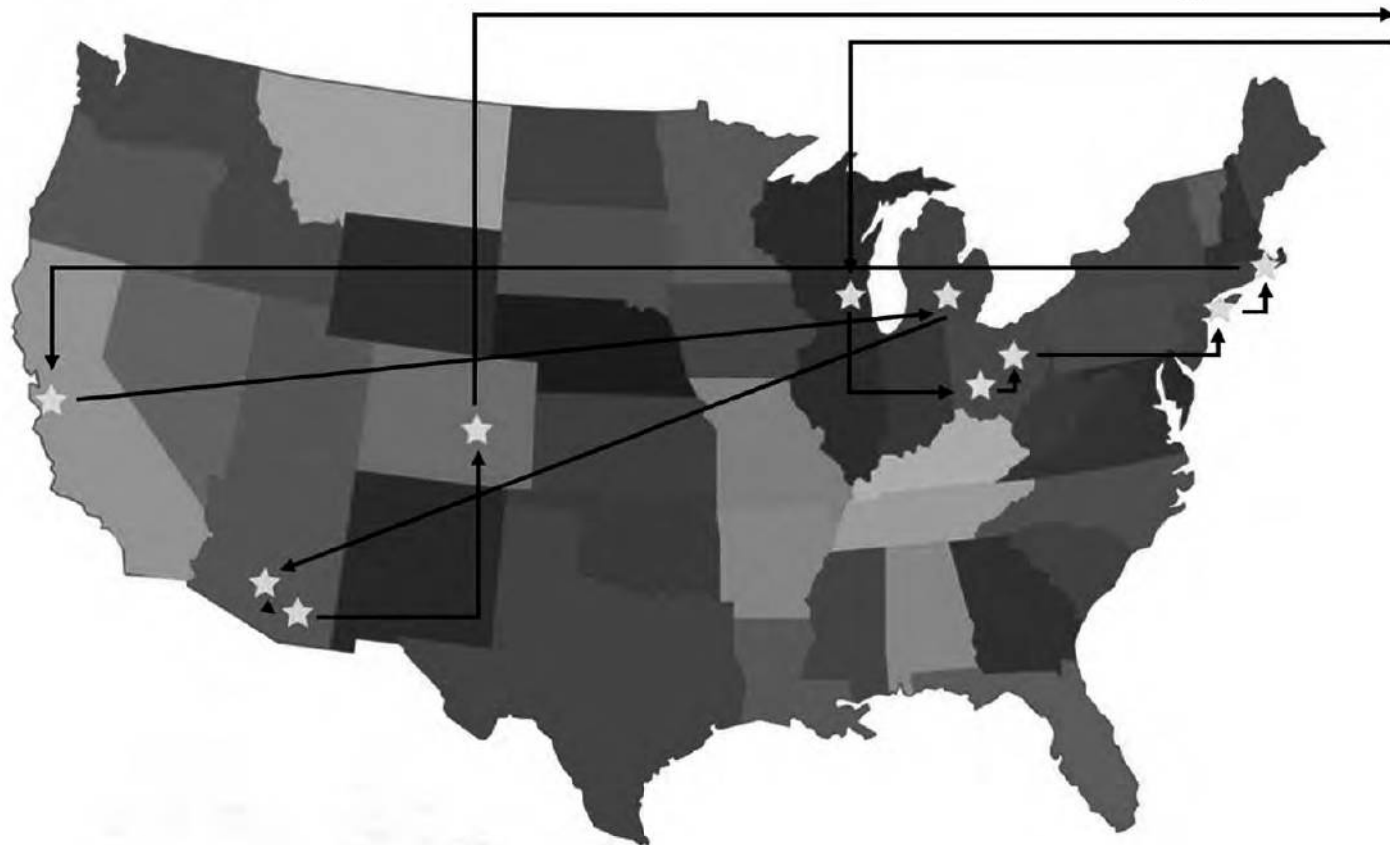
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## #FRQexit: Flanders Recorder Quartet “Final Chapter”



On October 26, 2016, a video appeared ([www.facebook.com/136317119740374/videos/1193703577335051](https://www.facebook.com/136317119740374/videos/1193703577335051)) that gave the news: after 30 years of intensive working together, rehearsing, CD recordings, and concerts worldwide, the **Flanders Recorder Quartet (FRQ)** was “drawing a double barline under the group.” They promised a memorable farewell tour, chock full of exceptional concert selections that had pleased audiences for three decades.

The video came at a time when American Recorder Compact Disc Reviews Editor **Tom Bickley** was interviewing group members by e-mail about their 30 years and over 2500 concerts together. When the group turned the corner and

announced their upcoming full stop, we turned the corner with them, announcing their retirement in the **Winter 2016 AR**.

In Europe, and Belgium in particular, they are known as “*Vier op 'n Rij*,” a humorous name they adopted while attending conservatory; it refers to a game somewhat like “Connect Four,” its literal translation. In Japan, they have become known as “the Fab Four,” a reference to The Beatles.

Over the years, three of the FRQ have remained constant (**Joris Van Goethem, Paul Van Loey and Bart Spanhove**); the fourth Connect Four member has changed several times. The most recent new member, **Tom Beets**, joined over a decade ago.

Both in their performing and interaction with an audience, the FRQ has remained constant in its excellence over the years, making a significant contribution to the recorder's reputation in the music world. Their legacy will continue.

The extensive “Final Chapter” tour set dates in Europe and U.S., starting in late 2017 and planned to last through 2018. North American concerts began in mid-February, with Milwaukee, WI; Columbus and Oberlin, OH; New York City, NY, and Boston, MA (“*A Song for the Seasons*” with soprano **Cécile Kempenaers**); San Jose, CA; Lansing, MI; and carried over to March in Tucson, AZ, followed by two days “with a spectacular mountain view” in Colorado Springs, CO.

Since the same program was performed in multiple locations, this report takes a sampling of those “Final Chapter” concerts.





## *Ma fin est mon commencement*

The Flanders Recorder Quartet (FRQ) originally appeared at the Morgan Library in 2006—the first concert in New York City, NY, to be presented by the prestigious Boston Early Music Festival. A music critic for the *New York Times* wrote: “The players ... combined the breathy timbre of a portative organ with the expressive interplay of a fine string quartet.”

That program had as its theme English consort songs and instrumental works from the time of Elizabeth I. For their farewell concert in New York City on February 22, the FRQ deliberately reimagined the earlier event.

Focusing on 16th-century English consort music, the FRQ used the four seasons—not the Vivaldi work—as a framework, choosing music to provide the “feeling” of each particular season. For artistic reasons, the “seasons” were presented out of order.

The instrumental consort of Tom Beets, Joris Van Goethem, Paul Van Loey and Bart Spanhove primarily played Renaissance recorders at 8' pitch, placing the sonic range within the human vocal range—and beautifully supporting Belgian soprano singer Cécile Kempnaers.

The auditorium acoustics suited the recorders and singer very well. The low notes of the large recorders were projected clearly over the wood floor of the elevated stage to the audience. Those in the first 10 rows had a particularly thrilling, clear, resonant soundscape.

After a lively welcome with Hugh Aston's *Maske*, the FRQ was joined by Kempnaers, whetting hopes for an early Spring in February with two anonymous 16th-century songs: *This merry pleasant spring* and *When May is in his prime*. Richard Nicholson's *Cuckoo* closed the set—and as its final chorus seemed to have no end, Kempnaers jokingly produced a

*Flanders Recorder Quartet, with Cécile Kempnaers, center: (l to r) Paul Van Loey (seated), Bart Spanhove, Joris Van Goethem, Tom Beets*



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green plastic soprano to play final “tweets” to cut it off.

*Ballo del Granduca* served as an Interludio before the concert continued with the Autumn section. Originally an organ work thought to be by Dutch composer Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck, the title refers to a “dance for the great Duke.” Sweelinck was very influenced by the style of English virginalists. This highly virtuosic music, here configured for four recorders, gave a brilliant demonstration of the runs, arpeggios, flourishes, diminutions and other types of figuration typical of the composer. The FRQ made it sound effortless.

The two inner sections of Autumn featured Kempenaers’s clear, graceful singing. Although the composer of the early-17th-century song *In the dark is my delight* is unknown, the text comes from a Jacobean play that shows a pessimistic outlook on life. The group followed with English composer Thomas Campion’s *The peacefull westerne winde*. Here the instrumental underlay and text are quite somber.

The autumnal transition from a sense of regret to darker days is brilliantly presented in contemporary composer Pieter Campo’s instrumental work: *Meditativo & Fire*. The meditative portion quietly builds chords that ripple across one’s consciousness. A soloistic line floats across a quiet foundation of chords that evoke gently moving water. *Fire* is assertive and restless; the chiffing recorders evoked dancing flames while the familiar tune

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***The FRQ discovered that  
this highly listenable  
music incorporated  
Fibonacci numbers to  
create the architecture of  
the work. Fascinating!***

---

*The Leaves be green* (Browning) provided the basis of the melodic lines.

Thomas Preston’s fascinating *Upon La, mi, re* closed out the first half of the program. Kempenaers joined Beets to sing the repetitive *la, mi, re* figure while the other three wove an increasingly intricate pattern around it. The FRQ discovered that this highly listenable music incorporated Fibonacci numbers to create the architecture of the work. Fascinating!

Following intermission, music associated with Summer reflected care-free activities—dancing, drinking, loving and regretting loves lost. Familiar tunes included Henry VIII’s *Pastime with good company*, Dowland’s *Can she excuse my wrongs* and an anonymous tourdion, a lively early dance in triple meter with lyrics in praise of good wine and a fat ham. Kempenaers sang in turn the rollicking soprano, alto and (bravely) tenor lines over the recorder accompaniment.

Robert Parsons’s *Ut, re, mi, fa, sol, la* was offered as an instrumental Interludio. Though written for viol consort,

this music works beautifully and hypnotically on low recorders. It eased the transition into the final section, Winter.

The Flanders players selected Winter music, often in minor keys, that reflected on the days before Christmas. This section opened with two vocal settings of the anonymous 16th-century text, *Sweet was the song (the virgin sang)*. The lively, late-14th-century dance tune *Czaldy Waldy* then led to the final piece on the program—*Lullay, Lullay*, also a familiar 14th-century melody.

In this section, as throughout the concert, Kempenaers’s supple, limpid voice blended gracefully with the recorders. It seemed fitting that she was highlighted in an encore. Sitting informally on the edge of the stage, she sang Glenn Miller’s *Moonlight Serenade* backed by the FRQ in their own arrangement—a charming finish to an awesome, memorable evening. For recorder enthusiasts in the audience, the evening was especially bittersweet as the group put down their instruments and left the stage.

### ***From East Coast to West***

After a brief sojourn in Boston, MA, where they presented the same program that had been presented in New York City as well as various European locations with Cécile Kempenaers, the FRQ moved to the West Coast for a February 25 concert in San Jose, CA. As noted by Tom Beets, the most recent FRQ member, this performance was about halfway through their farewell tour. They were expressing mostly feelings of joy and gratitude, rather than sadness, in coming to the conclusion of their adventures as a touring ensemble. On this evening—their third visit to San Jose—the FRQ shared their joy in their music-making with the almost completely full house, and certainly evoked much gratitude from the audience.



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Much of the music on their “Final Chapter” program was adapted from music written for organ, although several works were originally scored for recorder quartet. The transcriptions/arrangements were well crafted, not only to convey the beauty and substance of the original works, but also to exploit the pitch, timbre and articulation possibilities of the FRQ’s instruments.

The members of FRQ travel with nearly 50 recorders. Two matched sets of recorders were in use on this evening (and at other times on the tour), supplemented with a few that are each member’s personal favorites. The matched sets are a Bassano set by **Tom Prescott**, and a Baroque set by **Friedrich von Huene**.

The performance opening was played with the Bassano consort, yielding a full, round Renaissance sound. An arrangement of Michael Praetorius’s hymn for Christmas, *Summa Parenti Gloria* (1611), segued seamlessly into Pieter Campo’s 2015 works, *Meditativo* and *Fire*. As an audience member noted in the Q&A following the concert, the clean lines and rather somber harmonies of the Praetorius hymn blended with the similar affect of Campo’s work.

The interplay among the members of FRQ was quite engaging, and the ensemble made very effective use of solo, duo and trio instrumentation to vary the density and maximize the affect.

Each member of the quartet provided comments between groups of pieces, welcoming the audience into a richer listening experience. Seventeenth-century English composer Matthew Locke’s *Suite in F* followed, played on the Baroque instruments. The ensemble’s phrasing balanced the quirky harmonies of Locke with the elegance of his writing. A satisfying suite of stylized dances, *Suite 15* from Johann Hermann Schein’s *Banchetto Musicale* (1617) concluded the first half of the concert.

The second half started with Sören Sieg’s three-movement *Inxaxheba* (2016), which embraces the richness of aspects of African rhythms and interlocking counterpoint. Hearing this work, recorded on the FRQ’s recent CD 5 [*fi v e*] (see the review in the [Winter 2017 AR](#)), evoked thoughts of Recorders Without Borders ([www.recorderswithoutborders.org](http://www.recorderswithoutborders.org)). Sieg’s work, and the inclusion of *Inxaxheba*, is a reminder that the recorder is an instrument in worldwide use, with potential for connecting cultures. The audience responded very enthusiastically.

Two organ works by Bach followed (*Fantasy in C*, BWV570, and *Fugue in C*, BWV545), which were an obvious fit for the Baroque set of recorders, as was the Sieg work. Argentine composer Astor Piazzolla (noted for his compositions in the “New Tango” style) had written the penultimate piece, a moving and somber work titled *Oblivion*. Though originally a part of a film score, the title, as well as its pres-

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*All will continue to be active in recorder performance and teaching, even working together at times.*

---

ence on the “Final Chapter” tour, surely reflected the complex mix of emotions for the ensemble, presenters and audiences.

The FRQ closed the San Jose performance (*photo at left*) with a boisterous version of Louis Prima’s *Sing, Sing, Sing!* Their extroverted articulations maximized the energy of that well-loved big band tune. The crowd demanded encores and the FRQ delivered: first with a remarkably goofy arrangement of the popular song *El Condor Pasa*; and then, in response to the audience’s ebullient insistence, an even more extroverted and charmingly chaotic *Circus Renz* by Gustav Peter in an arrangement by Jan Van Landeghem.

Following the performance was a Question and Answer session in which the quartet members affably fielded queries ranging in topics from how to clean a recorder to their rehearsal process to their opinions on new recorder designs.

To the last question, they made it clear that they prefer traditionally designed instruments and enjoy maximally exploiting them in new as well as old repertory. However, they supported the role of new developments. The interchange was full of energy, wit and good humor, plus plenty of substance.

In response to a question about what they all have planned for December 23 (the day after the conclusion of the farewell tour), they replied that all will continue to be active in recorder performance and teaching, even working together at times.

At a few stops along the “Final Chapter” tour route, the FRQ offered master classes or other interactive



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events. Besides the Q&A after the San Jose concert, in the pre-concert talk, Spanhove made an excellent point about teaching the recorder in schools. He believes that the main reason the recorder is not considered a serious instrument is that most school music programs are not taught by recorder specialists (recorder professionals), but rather by teachers whose musical training is on other instruments—perhaps clarinet, oboe or violin—who then encourage their students to move on to what they consider to be “real” instruments.

FRQ members also offered a workshop class earlier in the day in San Jose. Beets taught a one-hour course featuring Stan Davis’s arrangement of *My Funny Valentine* by Rogers and Hart. Beets’s approach was to help participants understand the mood of the piece with its jazzy rubato and pulsing bass line, using the expressions in the text to illustrate the differences in phrasing. It was an excellent example of the versatility of the recorder, proving that the perception of dynamics is achievable with different articulations and intent. Having the luxury of large instruments in the room, Beets conducted the class by playing a contra bass recorder rather than giving a strict beat.

Van Goethem covered two pieces in one class: *Je te veux* by Erik Satie, and *Oblivion* by Astor Piazzolla. He coaxed long, luscious phrases from the class on the Satie, and incited the thrill of the tango by Piazzolla. With the latter, he appeared almost apologetic to those playing the bass line, which had a repetitive and percussive rhythm under the florid melody line (played in this class by Glen Shannon), but everyone understood the important need for that driving movement, so no one objected.

The FRQ included *Oblivion* in their evening performance in San Jose, giving the class participants the pleasure of also hearing it played by these remarkable musicians. (Van Goethem played the bass line.)

While these “how to get the most out of this piece” classes by Van Goethem and Beets were fun, the session from Spanhove on technique and practicing was finely honed and outstanding. Given the choice between working on recorder technique or learning practicing methods, the participants almost unanimously elected to learn how to practice more effectively.

With one sheet of music from J.J. Quantz, everyone explored multiple ways to approach a 32-bar exercise of 16th-note patterns. Spanhove sought ways to vary its playing; participants offered ideas, the most typical being to change articulation patterns.





***For difficult passages,  
practice the tricky  
transitions, but always  
play the following note,  
connecting the part  
being practiced with  
what comes next.***

One strategy was to slow the tempo down to a manageable speed. If it became too fast to play accurately, we would be practicing our mistakes. For difficult passages, practice the tricky transitions, but always play the following note, connecting the part being practiced with what comes next.

The participants memorized short patterns, then played the exercise by leaving out certain notes of every pattern of four 16ths (first, second, third or fourth). Then the sequence was practiced with two notes omitted from each pattern.

Spanhove suggested that another way to make practicing more challenging would be to turn the page upside down and play it as before, but seeing it from a totally different perspective. These brain tricks required effort, but the point became clear when participants returned to playing the normal way—it seemed much easier.

The most important thing about practicing is to *do* it.

### ***From Tucson's mountains to the Colorado mountains***

On March 4, the Arizona Early Music Society (AEMS) was fortunate to engage the FRQ near the end of the North American portion of their "Final Chapter" farewell tour, in the beautiful setting of Tucson's St. Philip's in the Hills, with its gorgeous view out from the altar over the Catalina Mountains.

Van Loey gave a pre-concert lecture, personally demonstrating the recorders—including the contra bass in F made by the late Friedrich

von Huene some years ago (see the [September 1998 AR](#))—and talking about the group's now 31-year history.

An enthusiastic audience of about 250 reveled in the quartet's reprise of favorite pieces from Praetorius to Piazzolla and Louis Prima, by way of Schein, Locke and Bach. As always, the group included several commissioned works: Belgian composer Pieter Campo's yearning *Meditativo* and flamboyant *Fire*, and the German composer Sören Sieg's African-inspired suite, *Inxaxheba*, with clicks and bird calls, flutter-tonguing and the flat-out brilliant ensemble playing that has characterized the FRQ from its beginnings.

All of the FRQ members are very friendly, casual and easily accessible. Different players spoke between sets, engaging comfortably with the audience. When Tom Beets, who joined the quartet some 10 years ago as its most recent member, asked the audience how many play or have played recorders, he was visibly surprised, but also delighted, to see nearly a quarter of the audience members raise their hands. This audience had traveled from all over Arizona, as well as California, New Mexico and even Texas, breaking attendance records.

Among those in the audience were several students from the **Lineweaver Elementary School** who had been invited as guests by AEMS, along with their marvelous recorder teacher **Karen Fields**. For 10 years, Fields has been working wonders with her students. Tucson has an arts program called Opening Minds through the Arts, which augments the public school system by helping to provide teachers in the arts. The Tucson Recorder Society has made outreach efforts to the Lineweaver school and others, and has donated SATB recorders for their use.

One beaming little girl had her photo taken with the huge contra bass recorder, wearing her Lineweaver Recorder T-shirt from the school.  
(See photo on facing page of Audrey O., taken by teacher Karen Fields.)

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As with other locations, the arrival of the FRQ in Colorado Springs presented opportunities for extra sessions, held at Colorado College. On the day before their March 5 concert, Van Loey's workshop aimed to improve listening among the members of the college's student collegium.

Late in the morning on March 5, Beets and Van Goethem jointly greeted students from two combined classes from Colorado College, supplemented by Front Range recorder community members. At the lecture's start, Beets asked whether those in the audience of at least 100 were familiar with the recorder—and was pleasantly surprised that nearly all were in that category, and that a substantial percentage played the recorder themselves.

This informed the nature of the information presented by the two from the FRQ. They started by briefly mentioning (single line) monody of the 1300s. By the 1400s, those with financial resources like merchants began to buy sets of recorders, which were played in families. They paused in the 1500s, when several landmark events occurred. In 1511, music theorist Sebastian Virdung's *Musica getuscht* described three recorders: the descantus in G, cantus in C and bassus in F. The famous illustration in the 1600s by Michael Praetorius (*Syntagma musicum*, 1614–20) shows more families of instruments, including recorders, all still tuned in fifths.

Van Loey and Beets played a duet from *Odhecaton* (Ottaviano Petrucci, early 1500s), illustrating the pattern of motive–imitation–cadence found in this type of music.

Recorders continued to double or imitate vocal music until the Baroque era, when recorders were no longer played strictly in families, and the alto became a solo instrument. The technique for making recorders also changed, as Beets showed by taking up a Baroque recorder. Three-part instru-

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### *...they know a lot of music after 30 years of playing together!*

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ments could be played fully chromatically, as demonstrated in a Telemann duet played by the FRQ pair. Later, during the Industrial Revolution, other wind instruments began to be constructed of metal—but not recorders.

The lecture fast-forwarded to the 1900s, when an interest in restoration of older buildings was also reflected in the types of instruments played. Using recorders in school music classes came into popularity, which is still the case.

In a very natural and conversational style, the two opened the floor to questions, which they answered individually or together, depending on the topic. They received one query about how to match the types of recorders played to the music chosen for a program. Since music by J. S. Bach is a favorite of the FRQ, they explained that the quartet had commissioned a family of instruments (including the von Huene contra) that hadn't existed in Bach's time—but which are played faithfully, in the spirit of the Baroque, on arrangements of music of that time.

While other questions were in a more typical vein (how the two began

playing the recorder, and their opinions on the recorder in education), a surprise question dealt with extended techniques. Beets pointed out that the recorder is ideal for these effects because of its lack of keys. He then produced a gradual glissando of over an octave, smoothly lifting his fingers as the pitch rose. Do try this at home!

The conversational atmosphere extended to the evening's concert, when (as in other performances) the various members spoke casually between the pieces on the program. As they had in other locations, they opened with the Praetorius pieces (*Hymnodia Sionia*, 1611, and the toccata-style *Summa Parenti Gloria*). These works melted into Campo's *Meditativo*—with Beets's soulful alto pitch bends, as in the five-part version at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=YVIZbwuuYas](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YVIZbwuuYas)—followed by *Fire*, with its insistent opening.

Switching from the Prescott Renaissance recorders to the Baroque set for Locke's *Suite in F*, the group announced a program change. Not too surprising, after playing the same program for a while (and indeed, as they commented, they know a lot of music after 30 years of playing together!), they substituted their version of a Bach arrangement of one of Vivaldi's *L'Estro Armonico* concerti, instead of Schein.

## Amherst Early Music 2018-2019 Events

### CityRecorder!

October 27-28, 2018  
New York City

### Winter Weekend Workshop

January 18-21, 2019  
Historic Philadelphia and Rutgers-Camden

### Spring Break Workshop

March 16-17, 2019  
Washington, D.C.

### Memorial Day Weekend Workshop

May 24-27, 2019  
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### The Amherst Early Music Festival

July 14-21, 21-28, 2019  
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**Moonlight Serenade, the final notes of the “Final Chapter” FRQ tour (l to r): Paul Van Loey, Bart Spanhove, Joris Van Goethem and Tom Beets**



During intermission, audience members traded stories about the FRQ. Some had also driven from Denver and farther north to hear the group's earlier Colorado Springs concert (recalled as being in about 2002, when Han Tol was with the FRQ). One audience member had traveled to this concert from New Mexico; he had studied with group members at a past workshop.

The second half was mostly as reported from other locations, starting with the minimalist percussive articulations and lush African singing harmonies of Sören Sieg's *Inxaxheba*. (Part of this suite was eloquently played by the FRQ at the October 2016 memorial service for Friedrich von Huene. One of the FRQ members, talking about this commissioned piece, mentioned

that Sieg composed it while his father was dying. Hear the first movement, *Yitsho, yintoni ulonwabo*, “Tell me what happiness is,” at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=LTmgHrBhZMg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LTmgHrBhZMg).)

Continuing with Bach's two works in C, BWV570 and BWV545, the group demonstrated their absolute command of the stage, taking the audience into the music and bringing them out again when it was time to applaud.

And applaud everyone did: the full house loved the chuffy tango *Oblivion* by Piazzolla and Prima's *Sing, Sing Sing (with a Swing)*, during which the group hammed it up with pitch bends, flutter-tonguing and sputato (hear it at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=NAu-O-oNUuc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NAu-O-oNUuc)). The applause continued for three encores—the second being, as in San

AR gratefully acknowledges the following concert report contributors: Nancy M. Tooney, Brooklyn, NY; Tom Bickley, Berkeley, CA; Greta Haug-Hryciw, Montara, CA; Suzanne Ferguson and Scott Mason, Tucson, AZ; Gail Nickless, Centennial, CO. Concert photos courtesy of Amy Bearden (New York City); Lloyd Hryciw (San Jose); Karen Fields (Tucson); Gail Nickless (Colorado Springs); and still life with recorders, but no players, Deborah Peters (New York City).

### FRQ to receive the ARS

#### Distinguished Achievement Award

As announced in the [Spring 2018 AR](#), following its last North American concert during the Amherst Early Music Festival, the Flanders Recorder Quartet will receive the ARS Distinguished Achievement Award. On Monday, July 16, at 7:30 p.m., at Evans Hall, Connecticut College in New London, they will offer a program of favorites including works by Costanzo Festa, Robert Parsons, Matthew Locke and J.S. Bach. Admission is free for Amherst workshop participants; single tickets are \$25 general admission, \$20 for students and seniors. (A series subscription, to hear eight concerts during the July 8-22 workshop, is \$150 general admission, \$120 for students and seniors.) Tickets can be ordered at [www.amherstearlymusic.org/concert\\_series](http://www.amherstearlymusic.org/concert_series). Following the recital, there will be a reception where the award will be presented by Wendy Powers and Barbara Prescott, both currently serving on the ARS Board.

Jose, the breathless *Circus Renz* by Gustav Peter, with the very long first phrase played without break on a rarely-used soprano by Van Loey (who did not employ circular breathing).

The third encore was *Moonlight Serenade* by Glenn Miller—the FRQ encore in New York City, there with Kempnaers singing. Since this was the end of the North American leg of their “Final Chapter” tour, this rendition was dedicated to the concert organizers and audiences who attended (especially in Colorado Springs)—and particularly to their agent of three decades, Valerie Bernstein. She was in the audience to hear them one last time and to see them off early the next morning as their “Final Chapter” continued in Europe.