



Elizabeth

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## Biography

In the wake of its 1200-plus concerts on five continents, the "Flanders Recorder Quartet" has built up an unsurpassable reputation for its exciting and varied performances. The ensemble has performed on the stage of many of the world's most renowned concert halls: from Helsinki, Paris, Geneva and Moscow to Mexico City, Tokyo, San Francisco, Vancouver and Taipei. There are many cd's of the "FRQ" available, recorded and distributed by major record companies such as the "Deutsche Grammophon Gesellschaft" (DGG), "Harmonia Mundi", "EMI" and "Naïve". 2004 saw the start of an interesting and prolific collaboration with the German label "Aeolus", which has resulted in the cd "Consort of Fower Parts" with music of the English composer Matthew Locke. In 2005 a new recording with music by Bach will be released. The "FRQ" takes the recorder, so often underrated for the past two hundred years, and lets it shine again in all its glory. The ensemble's use of a wide assortment of more than one hundred instruments from soprano to sub-bass, coupled with a virtuoso interpretation in a varied program, makes of every concert an unforgettable event. A broad range of originals and copies made by the leading recorder builders, is to be found in the exceptional instrument collection of the quartet. This investment in such an array of unique and very rare musical gems provides the public with a feast for both the eyes and ears and is also a convincing plea in honor of the recorder.

Tom Beets • Paul Van Loey • Bart Spanhove • Joris Van Gothem



## Contact

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The Flanders Recorder Quartet is supported by the Flemish Government

# The Darke is My Delight

ENGLISH MUSIC FROM  
AROUND 1600 FOR SOPRANO  
AND THE FRQ WITH  
COMPOSITIONS BY BYRD,  
MORLEY, DOWLAND AND  
FERRABOSCO AND TEXTS BY  
SHAKESPEARE AND  
JONSON



**M**usic experienced a golden age during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I (1558-1603) and flourished as never before. Composers quested to equal the beauty of the "Music of the Spheres". They came as close as is humanly possible to achieving their ideal. The "consort song" was the perfect compositional form with which to illustrate the godly celestial harmony. This is clearly audible when listening to the very refined works for soprano and recorder quartet on this programme, "The Darke is My Delight". Eminent poets as William Shakespeare and Ben Jonson were responsible for the strikingly beautiful texts. The sweet sound of the recorder was often compared to the human voice. Just as the "Flanders Recorder Quartet" today, back then one enjoyed making music in recorder consorts. On such occasions, the huge great-bass recorders, which lent the ensemble depth and colour, could not be missed. The nearly ethereal melancholy expressed in the elongated melody lines is combined with melting harmonies and floating rhythms. An important proponent of this gripping style was William Byrd, the apple of Queen Elizabeth's eye. John Baldwin, a colleague of Byrd in the Chapel Royal, expressed his admiration as follows:

*O famous man of skill: and judgement greate profound:-  
lett heaven and earth ringe out:thy worthy praise to sounde:-  
Fare well I saie fare well: fare well and heere I end:-  
Fare well melodious birde:fare well sweete musicks frende:-*



# The Darke is My Delight

The heartrendering suffering that is depicted in some works is, thank goodness, not really fatal in the end. Rather, it symbolizes the ideal of courtly love and shows a longing for refinement. A large and wealthy aristocracy had evolved which considered being enveloped in the mellow sounds of a consort song to be the ultimate delight.

Elizabeth's father, Henry VIII, played an important role in popularizing ensemble music. The king was a passionate recorder player (as were James Dean and Umberto Eco later on...) and appointed five Venetian brothers to play every day for him during dinner. Elizabeth was raised in these inspiring surroundings

and it is therefore not surprising that music meant so much to her throughout her life. With the programme, "The Darke is My Delight", the "Flanders Recorder Quartet" wishes to carry the listener back to that time when the magic of the consort song resounded in richly ornamented halls, where the wood in the fireplace crackled cosily and the sweet aroma of venison, being prepared in the distant kitchen, wetted the appetite of the guests.



in the press:

"The superb concert by the Flanders Recorder Quartet was one of the best classical performances overall in Milwaukee last year. The Belgian group's exquisite playing was always perfectly clear, balanced, tight, agile, fluent, witty, soulful—it's difficult to stop with the adjective list. The musical pleasures were so constant."

- SHEPHERD EXPRESS METRO, USA

"The quintessence of the recorder, the art of consort playing brought to its perfection".

- DIAPASON, France

"World class recorder playing"

- SALZBURGER VOLKSZEITUNG, Austria.

"You can say anything about this group, except that what they play is old music: everything lives, vibrates and bubbles, as if you were present at a jubilant act of creation. It is exceptional." - RÉPERTOIRE DES DISQUES COMPACTS, France.

"..The attention to detail is one of the outstanding features of this ensemble's playing. It's refreshing to hear a commitment to bringing Bach alive – rather than simply preserving it."

- THE AMERICAN RECORDER MAGAZINE, USA

# Flanders Recorder Quartet

Bart Spanhove • Tom Beets • Joris Van Goethem • Paul Van Loey