Frans Brüggen (1934–2014)

Indeed a superb role model!

By Cléa Galhano, St. Paul, MN

Thank you, Frans, for being a role model!

Everybody in life has and needs a role model who inspires them. My role model, as well as that of many recorder players around the world, was Frans Brüggen. I was inspired by his expressivity, his musicianship, and, above all, his intelligence. The way he thought about music and revolutionized the recorder and the Early Music world was extraordinary.

Although he was no longer teaching when I studied in The Hague, I had many encounters with Frans, all of them very meaningful to me. I even had a dream about him once, in which he put me in front of his orchestra to listen to Beethoven symphonies. He then asked me to *just* listen to the silence!!! It was a magical moment!

When I served on the American Recorder Society Board of Directors, I had the honor of personally delivering the Distinguished Achievement Award to Frans at his home in Amsterdam. It was quite a task to arrange the encounter. Every time I would call him to arrange it, he would say: "I no longer play the recorder," with a cynical tone. I would explain to him that the award represented how he inspired a generation of recorder players and changed the way we thought about the instrument.

After several calls, he agreed to receive it. On a beautiful spring day in May 2001, Marion Verbruggen, the harpsichordist Jacques Ogg and I went to his home. We had coffee in the kitchen while his five- and seven-year-old daughters listened to the St. John Passion upstairs!

At the beginning it was a bit formal, but after three hours of talking and walking outside, the atmosphere was amazing. We talked about the films of Bergman, music and architecture. When I left, I gave him a hug and said to him: "You see, Frans, you didn't need to be cynical after all. It was even fun." He replied: "Indeed, you were right!"

A couple of months later he sent a nice letter to ARS, thanking this beautiful organization for the award.

(Photo below by Jacques Ogg in 2001 shows Brüggen, center, with family members; Galhano in blue, on his right; Verbruggen in grey at his far left)



***Frans Brüggen**, a pioneer of the early music revival, died in August at age 79.*

Born in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, he studied musicology at the University of Amsterdam and recorder at Amsterdam's Muzieklyceum with Kees Otten, a student of Karl Dolmetsch. Brüggen became the first Muzieklyceum graduate to earn a diploma in recorder.

At age 21 in 1955, he was named professor at the Royal Conservatory in The Hague. His written output included recorder exercises, treatises on playing, and editions of Baroque music. He commissioned a number of recorder works, among them Luciano Berio's 1965 work Gesti.

In the late 1960s, his recording label Telefunken capitalized on his near-cult popularity, including a poster of Brüggen with his LPs. His solo performing was full of rubato, many shades of tone color, dazzling technique and dramatic affect—at first startling, then widely accepted. He justified these by pointing to 17th- and 18th-century performance treatises.

With disciples Kees Boeke and Walter van Hauwe, in 1972 (during the Dutch counterculture movement), he formed the avant-garde recorder trio Sour Cream. Tours by this group, his residencies at Harvard University and at the University of California, Berkeley, and his many lectures, workshops and private lessons created a following in the U.S. He was the subject of at least a dozen articles in AR.

In 1981, he and Sieuwert Verster co-founded the period-instrument Orchestra of the 18th Century, the group for which he wielded the baton for the rest of his life. Brüggen's health deteriorated in his later years, to the point that his last concert was conducted from a wheelchair.

Brüggen is credited with inspiring generations of recorder players. In 2000, AR *readers chose him as "Recorder Player of the [20th] Century; in 2001 he received the ARS Distinguished Achievement Award (see the May 2001* AR*).*

He is survived by his wife, the art historian Machtelt Israëls, and their daughters, Zephyr and Eos.

An Example of How to Live

By Adriana Breukink, Enschede, The Netherlands

In 1980 all the students in the recorder making class of the late Fred Morgan made a copy of the Stanesby Sr. alto recorder from Frans Brüggen's private collection. At the end of the project, the whole group went to Frans's house in Amsterdam to compare their first try with the masterpiece from Stanesby Sr.

Frans welcomed us into his huge 17th-century home. In a beautiful room with dark red silk wallpaper, we were able to try out and study the original. We were totally impressed by the instrument, but even more by the atmosphere of this event. Frans was sitting in the room next to our room; we could see him studying the score of a Rameau opera. He had just started conducting his famous Orchestra of the 18th Century. He was so kind to us, and endured all of our playing and testing very patiently. At the end, he wished us all success—although to be honest, Frans was not interested in our copies of his recorder.

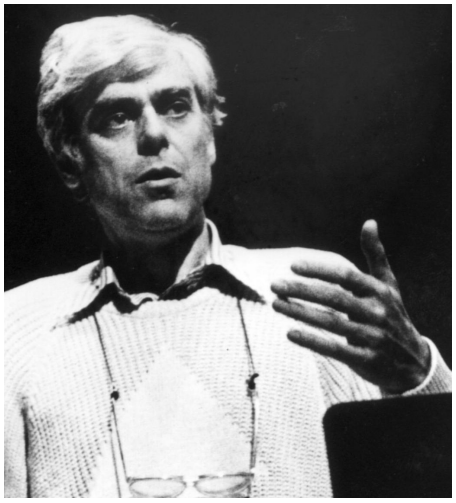
Morgan was in The Netherlands then to teach a recorder making class at the conservatory at The Hague. First we learned to make a Ganassi, in the new and famous "modern Ganassi style" Morgan had developed. I love this wide bore, and the sound of its tone with the strong fundamentals. All the later models I developed (like the Dream recorders and the Eagle recorder) have this wide bore. Frans Brüggen loved this Ganassi model, and Fred made many prototypes for him to test.

Twenty years and many handmade recorders later, I went with Paul Leenhouts to a cafe in Amsterdam that Frans often visited. He was sitting at the bar, and Paul went to greet "Uncle Frans" (the Loeki Stardust Quartet guys all called him that, because he was the uncle of Daniël Brüggen, a quartet member).

I hid behind Paul because I was so nervous. Then Frans started joking with me. He recognized me from an article about the Dream recorders in the Mollenhauer magazine. I was so surprised he knew about my project, that I could not speak a word. I think he was still interested what was going on in the recorder world, even after he stopped playing recorder in the '80s.

Before I started making recorders in the class at the conservatory in The Hague, I studied recorder performance and went to all of Frans's master classes. Frans was my greatest teacher and example of how to live and play. He was a master at teaching, and he could improve a person's playing with a few words—always spoken very, very slowly. It was as if he were a shaman, first absorbing the energy of what you had to understand—and then, very slowly, the sentences came. He never said anything twice.

He treated each student very differently. I remember a student who played the slow movement of a Handel sonata with many embellishments, and with a lot of ego. After he finished the piece, Frans waited some very long seconds and he said; "terrible…." The student had to play the first two bars, with all the notes separated and not articulated, and he had to breathe between all of the notes. So for one minute we heard only, "*huuuu. huuuuu, huuuuu….*" As the student finished, Frans said in a deep voice; "much better!" When the student left 30 minutes later, he played this movement beautifully!



Remembering Uncle Frans

By Daniël Brüggen, Bussum, The Netherlands, ***d.brueggen@me.com***

When I interviewed Frans a few years ago, it was a sort of special occasion for both of us. I had only learned about his attitude towards music and the recorder through his students—my teachers—rather than through personal contact. At that point, I knew he was extremely reluctant to talk about his former life as a recorder idol.

People in the audience always reminded me of that status, occasionally driving me and my fellow [Amsterdam Loeki Stardust Quartet] colleagues crazy. But we all knew this was perfectly justified because of his exceptional talents—for being able to control all technical aspects of the recorder and of combining it with musical vision and original ideas.

My teachers, Kees Boeke and Walter van Hauwe, told me that the level of playing should be so excellent that all possible critique would evaporate. I suppose this was actually a trace of being raised in the ideas of Frans.

The interview took place in a friendly and open manner, underlining how important it is to keep blowing at all times. While instruments got better and better, finally resulting in playing museum originals, I think that [playing the recorder] became less relevant. As a brilliant musician, he found the way to the very heart of

the sound on any instrument, using shadings and nuances, magically transforming and modeling it in order to tell a tale that was simple or virtuosic—but always kind of mysterious.

After radically stopping his recorder career, his authoritative conducting breathed life into the orchestral repertoire of Rameau, Beethoven and Mozart. With the same determination, his ideas proved to pay off, being just as special and effective as in our favorite recorder repertoire.

His last performance [on May 14, 2014, with the Orchestra of the 18th Century in The Hague], even sitting in a wheelchair, he drew the most intense sounds from a mega-orchestra playing Rameau—and with a moving encore, bringing several orchestra musicians to tears.

We are the heirs of quite a lot of contemporary music dedicated to him, unforgettable concerts and many treasured recordings of this passionate musician.

Brüggen's DVD Ricercata*, in which he interviewed his uncle and others, was the topic of a column by Tim Broege in the in the Summer 2013* AR*. Parts of it are posted on YouTube or Vimeo.*

Five Remembrances of Frans Brüggen, my idol

By Bart Spanhove, Flanders Recorder Quartet
(translation: Ellen Delahanty)

I. In 1978 I heard Frans Brüggen live for the first time in Belgium. He radiated charisma, poise and inventiveness, and won the audience over with impressive ornamentation and a unique, enchanting style. His stage presence was remarkable: seated, with his legs crossed and his upper body leaning forward, he performed masterfully on the recorder. He completely disregarded the advice given in contemporary recorder manuals. In his hands, the simplest tune became a fascinating listening experience. After this concert, I spent countless hours, deep into the night, listening with headphones to his albums, and enjoying his exceptional, exciting recordings. Back then he was known for stating: "the recorder has the most heavenly sound imaginable."

II. Anyone who bought a Frans Brüggen album in the 1970s got a poster of him as well. Brüggen was portrayed like a pop-idol, with wild hair, messy jeans, a turtleneck sweater and a cigarette. This was unusual: a classically-trained musician was expected to dress well, neatly and conservatively. It was also most unusual that a recorder player should get so much publicity. For me that was something characteristic of Brüggen—he wanted to shock. With his ensemble, Sour Cream, he put together programs featuring the most atypical selections, from old to extremely modern, from improvisations to electronic music—you heard, felt and saw the strangest things. In this spirit, he offered up this little prayer in one of the accompanying booklets of his albums: My God, who is present in the cellars of museums, who can open the eyes of individuals, and knows hidden attics, grant me many more, or all, old recorders.

III. Brüggen had long since stopped playing the recorder, and was making waves directing the Orchestra of the 18th Century. Top musicians from all over the world came together to make music under his direction. In spite of his sometimes clumsy movements, he was a top conductor: with fine detail and finesse, he managed continually to get his orchestra to speak a language that moved the hearts of its audience. He searched for the right performance style, was deeply knowledgeable about historic performance practice, and conducted with an exceptional sense of musical expression. One lasting impression of a concert given in May 2014 will remain forever etched in my memory: ***www.blogflutes.wordpress.com/2014/08/14/video-orkest-van-de-18de-eeuw-olv-frans-bruggen***.

IV. Brüggen was a pioneer who was involved with heart and soul in the revival of early music. Together with colleagues Gustav Leonhardt and Anner Bylsma in the 1960s, he still had much to discover. His earliest recordings resulted in sounds resembling an imitation of goats bleating, and in interpretations on modern instruments with yet no inkling of historical style. But Brüggen evolved enormously. Ten years later he would create dream LPs, which would convince and inspire listeners around the world. I daresay that without Frans Brüggen there would be no recorder-playing as we know it today. Thanks to his work, many were compelled to revise their opinions of recorder playing. He fought to allow the recorder to be seen as a fully-fledged instrument, and made it clear to us that one could build a full concert life as a recorder player.

V. One of Frans Brüggen's slogans while teaching was: "*Blokfluit spelen is een mentaliteit*" ("Recorder-playing is a state of mind"). He found that a deep love of the instrument was an absolute necessity. The next anecdote speaks volumes: he was giving a lecture-demonstration in an auditorium full of recorder freaks; one of the audience asked why, with all of his talent, he had remained a recorder player. An icy silence fell, then Brüggen asked the lady in question, "You also play the recorder, don't you? Have you then never gotten tears in your eyes when you heard the recorder?" Indeed, Brüggen's music brings one to tears.

Also memorable was his fascinating remark made in the Concertgebouw of Amsterdam in 1970: he rebelled by saying that every note of Mozart played by the [modern instrument] Concertgebouw Orchestra was a lie from A to Z.

At his funeral, one of the speakers remarked that every note Frans Brüggen played was fantastic from A to Z!

We will greatly miss our recorder-guru, Frans Brüggen.

My Experiences With the Master

By Aldo Abreu, Boston, MA



As a boy growing up in Caracas, Venezuela, Frans Brüggen's recordings were my greatest inspiration. Not only did they determine my instrument, they led me to a passion and a career. Luckily, I found a local teacher, Ruth Gosewinkel, who had been a student of Hannover recorder player Ferdinand Conrad.

Then, a year later, I met Scott-Martin Kosofsky, an American who had studied with Brüggen. This came about through a remarkable chance meeting in Oslo of my father, the harpsichordist Abraham Abreu, and Scott, both of whom were on tour at the time. The two became fast friends and my father made the most of the situation, visiting Scott in Boston and inviting him to play duo concerts in Caracas and Bogotá. As a guest in our home, Scott happily gave me lessons throughout his stay.

What followed were visits to Boston during my winter and summer vacations, more concerts in Venezuela and beyond, and a family friendship that lasts to this day.

It was Scott's teaching and mentoring that brought me to the next level. In 1977, while still a high school student, I was accepted into the Royal College of Music in London. I entered the RCM's Junior Department with a scholarship from the Venezuelan Culture Ministry. There, I was a student of Ross Winters, who had studied with Walter van Hauwe, one of Brüggen's best-known students, and so during my studies in London, I had the opportunity to meet and hear Brüggen in person.

My first opportunity to play for him was at a master class he gave for the Early Music Center. The piece I performed was the Vivaldi/Chedeville *Sonata in G minor*. Brüggen's comments were not about technique but about phrasing and intent, with much detail on the piece's rhetorical phrasing.

That same year at Easter, Bruggen taught at the Swansea Bach Festival. I had two master classes with him, in which I played the Cima *Sonata in D minor* and Alessandro Scarlatti's *Sonata in A minor*. It was there that I heard him perform for the first time. The expressivity, sound quality, and flawless virtuosity were astounding. He played the Telemann *Concerto in C major* with the Academy of Ancient Music, and a recorder recital with harpsichordist and organist Peter Williams. The latter program also included the Bach partita for solo flute, played in C minor on alto recorder, and the Telemann *Sonata in D minor* (from *Essercizii Musici*), in which clarity of articulation in the triplets of the last movement was unforgettable. I also became aware of his perfect intonation and masterful use of alternative fingerings for color and phrasing. I wanted to study with him, but by 1980 he had stopped teaching to focus on the newly created Orchestra of the 18th Century (O18C).

After two years in London, I transferred to the Royal Conservatory in The Hague, where I studied with Ricardo Kanji, another former student of Brüggen. Ricardo had been a winner of the Bruges competition together with Marion Verbruggen; he also plays Baroque flute and has been a member of O18C since its beginning. During my seven years in The Hague, I was lucky to hear Brüggen in many concerts, including recitals with Gustav Leonhardt and Anner Bylsma, conducting O18C, and with Quadro Hotteterre.

In 1984 (*photo*), the conservatory hosted a Contemporary Recorder Festival that included master classes with Brüggen, Walter van Hauwe and Michael Barker. I participated in a two-hour master class on Luciano Berio's *Gesti* with van Hauwe, which was extremely interesting—two hours of comments on a three-minute piece! I was also extremely lucky to participate in Brüggen's master class on *Sweet* by Louis Andriessen. Here, his approach was different from the classes in England, where he was teaching the student and the audience equally. In The Hague, he worked with an unparalleled level of minute detail, settling for nothing but the highest standards. The piece has extremely complex rhythms. When I was close to accurate, Bruggen would still correct me, saying, "Yes, but this note needs to be even a little longer."

Perfection was a common theme throughout:

- "Super fast passages must be perfectissimo."
- "You must hit all the notes perfectly."
- "You must always have an impeccable style."
- "Alternative fingerings must be absolutely perfect, or don't do them at all."

- "You have to check yourself constantly [to see] if you are still playing neat and proper."

The class gave me an idea of how much he demanded of himself when preparing a piece. When you heard him play, you could hear that he did those things that he taught.

Many years later, O18C came to Boston, and played perhaps the fastest and most exciting rendition of Beethoven's fifth symphony I have ever heard. When I greeted him after the concert, I told him what a master and inspiration he was for me, like a father. He thought about that for a moment and replied, "more like a grandfather."

A few years ago, I sent him a copy of my CD of *Telemann Fantasies* and he replied with this letter:

Dear Aldo,
Thank you, and Bravo!
Frans

I miss him very much.



The Recorded Legacy of Frans Brüggen

By Tom Bickley, CD Reviews Editor

Frans Brüggen's engaging and persuasive playing, striking interpretations, and subtle yet theatrical approach to performing caught countless ears and spirits in North America. I was an undergraduate music theory major in 1974, playing recorder (disguised as a French horn player, since study of recorder was not an option at my school); I was introduced to another recorder player, who wanted me to hear some recordings by a Dutch player he thought I would enjoy.

What I heard was from the 1972 *Das Alte Werk* three-LP set, *Frans Brüggen spielt 17 Blockflöten.* The sounds baffled and amazed me, and captured my imagination: such ease of execution, such variety of articulation and phrasing! Seeing him perform live a few years later opened my eyes to his "wiggly" stage presence, which provided a sort of choreography that matched his phrasing.

I think that listening to Brüggen's recordings helped me form both a sonic and cultural image of the recorder as a real musical instrument. The energy and vitality of those sounds influence me to this day, as a performer, composer and listener.

There are many fine recorder players and recorder recordings available to our ears now. I find it difficult to imagine that we'd have the breadth and depth of musical endeavors using the recorder had it not been for the riveting sonic presence of Frans Brüggen as a recorder virtuoso.

Likely, many *AR* readers have enjoyed (to the point of wearing out) older LPs of Brüggen. Many have been reissued on compact disc; as mp3 files, many can be acquired via iTunes and other services. To get a sense of his playing and presence, I recommend spending a few hours watching the many videos of him on YouTube. Even the older black and white TV footage makes wonderful viewing and listening. His economy of finger motion is a worthy focus of attention.

As well-known as he was in early music, Brüggen's work with Sour Cream (his trio with Kees Boeke and Walter van Hauwe) and as a soloist embraced avant-garde performance. Two of my favorite clips are his playing of Luciano Berio's *Gesti* ("Gestures") composed for him: ***http://youtu.be/VYO35N3t1nQ***; and his performance with Walter van Hauwe in Bach's *Cantata 106* ("Actus tragicus") conducted by Gustav Leonhardt: ***http://youtu.be/Mc1VeoTOF4c*** .

For a treasury of Brüggen's releases on the now-defunct Telefunken *Das Alte Werk* series, there is a reasonably priced Warner Classics 12-CD set (TELDEC 2564 65836-1). Feast your ears and give thanks for his ongoing influence.