

A M E R I C A N R E C O R D E R



Editor's Note · GAIL NICKLESS

Soon after reading *Peak* by Ericsson and Pool (see [AR Summer 2021](#)), I ran across *Spark: How Genius Ignites, From Child Prodigies to Late Bloomers* by Claudia Kalb. Written five years later, *Spark* refers back to *Peak* in discussions of how nature and nurture work in tandem. *Spark* draws on history, science and psychology, examining the paths to success taken by 13 people. Fascinated by “when and how people discover the thing they love best,” Kalb is optimistic that the “middle decades of life ... serve as a reawakening.” *Spark* charts collaboration and other means to growth—ideas relevant to musicians of any age.

As a child, Picasso drew for hours at a time, just as young Adriano Trarbach played his recorder as he walked everywhere. Adriano's story is one of three vignettes about recorder playing in Brazil, collected by Cléa Galhano for this AR.

Both Picasso and Yo-Yo Ma were child prodigies who stayed active; others like culinary expert Julia Child and painter Grandma Moses found a spark in later life. Now in his 60s, Ma says of his spark, “I play the cello. That is the best of what I can bring to you,” and compares it to making soup to share with friends: “What would you like to put in the pot?” The teachers of Adriano and other Brazilian youth bring encouragement to put in the pot. What will you bring? ❁

President's Message · DAVID PODESCHI

As chapters, consorts and recorder orchestras (CCROs) start playing together in person again, I want to mention an idea and opportunity that has surfaced from our Membership Drive and Diversity subcommittees, which both include Board members and non-Board volunteers. The opportunity is for CCROs to identify local community arts schools where they can play for new diverse audiences of all ages. These performing groups can demonstrate the recorder and its music, and the joy that comes from pursuing music. At the same time, they can represent the ARS as a welcoming organization to all ages, races and ethnicities, especially if the presenting ensemble itself comes from varying backgrounds.

Over time, contacts like these will increase both our membership and diversity. In order to facilitate this and to identify community music schools, the ARS has joined the National Guild for Community Arts Education. We had a kick-off Zoom meeting in May with about 50 chapter leaders from across the continent. The idea was enthusiastically received, and we heard from many chapters that they already engage in similar outreach.

This year's Annual Members' Meeting will again be held on Zoom, so that members from anywhere can join in. During the meeting, the Presidential Special Honor Award will be presented to Glen Shannon. In addition to being our own music editor, he is an extraordinary composer of recorder music, having created many pieces over the last 25+ years. I've played his music at workshops, and own and love his duets. Glen is a treasure for our community, and the ARS Board enthusiastically supported my selection of him for this fitting award.

I urge you to see the Fall *ARS Newsletter* and the websites below to learn more.

My chapter in Dallas will soon begin to meet in person. I really look forward to seeing my friends and playing in the same room. I know you do too. ❁

- National Guild for Community Arts Education, <https://nationalguild.org>.

For information on ARS efforts with the Guild, contact committee member Ellen Farrell, eafarrell0126@gmail.com

- RSVP for the Annual Members' Meeting, <https://americanrecorder.org/annualmeeting2021>



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RECORDER PERFORMERS

FLANDERS RECORDER DUO

American Recorder editor Gail Nickless moderated a conversation with two former members of the Flanders Recorder Quartet, who have recently formed the FR2



Tom Beets and Joris Van Goethem were half of the former Flanders Recorder Quartet (FRQ), with whom they played concerts in over 50 countries. As members of that group, they were awarded the ARS Distinguished Achievement Award in 2018.

Beets teaches in music schools in Belgium and leads master classes and workshops across Europe, the UK and the U.S. He directs the largest early music and recorder workshop in Europe, Blokfluitdagen, and is chair of its English counterpart, the Recorder Summer School. He is also one of the editors of the Dutch recorder magazine, *Blokfluitist*, and conducts the English recorder orchestra Recorders Incorporated.

Since 2013, Beets has organized and conducted over 50 recorder

orchestra days. He was elected vice-president of the UK's Society of Recorder Players in 2015.

Born in Sint-Niklaas, Belgium, Van Goethem studied the recorder and Baroque flute in Antwerp, Brussels and Leuven, graduating with the highest grade ever awarded in Belgium. Besides performing and appearing on at least 30 CDs on major labels, he is known as an enthusiastic and skilled teacher, leading master classes and teaching in all parts of the world.

His arrangements have found their way to Hollywood and have been published by Heinrichshofen, Ascolta and De Haske.

At the end of the [AR Winter 2016](#) article, we found FRQ disbanding after 30 years. According to the introduction for that article, this was for positive reasons: to allow individual

members to become involved in new projects like writing articles and books, doing more research, conducting and arranging. Many fans did not want the FRQ members to stop playing; Flanders Recorder Duo (FR2) helps fill that void.

After the FRQ Great Farewell Tour of 2017-18, the players each took a short break—and then Beets and Van Goethem decided to carry on as a duo to showcase the recorder's many colors and sizes.

It's fitting, with many recorder players active only in smaller groups over the past year, to check in with a professional recorder duo. FR2 has just recorded its first CD on the Aeolus label, featuring a variety of styles and eras, two contemporary commissions and the world premiere of the duets for pipes by Ralph Vaughan Williams.

GAIL NICKLESS After FRQ, does FR2 feel like a new chapter?

JORIS VAN GOETHEM I think we had a beautiful career. We played in all corners of the globe. It's understandable that we miss traveling to other parts of the world and giving concerts. On the other hand, we were lucky to stop at the right moment, just before the pandemic started. Everything with culture, festivals and concerts were all canceled, and the culture scene became like a battlefield.

I'm looking forward to playing in a group again, to playing concerts. It's an addiction.

GAIL Does it feel like a very new thing, Flanders Recorder 2?

JORIS It's different. It feels very rich, and it's nice to work together. Working together is something that we two had started many years ago.

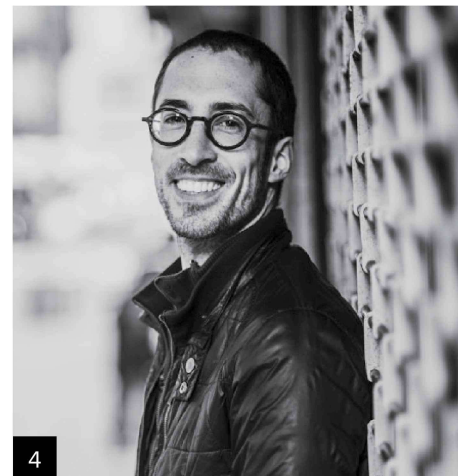
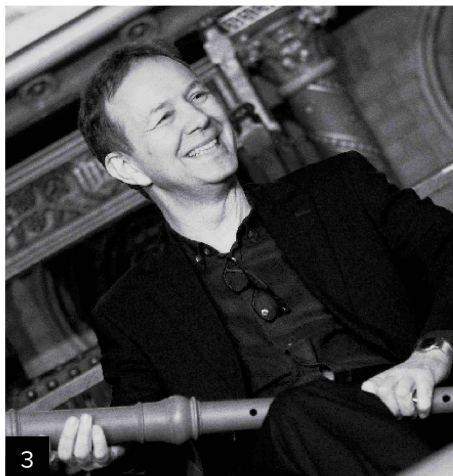
GAIL Did the two of you play together as a duo in the years when you were both members of FRQ? Or was it an idea that appeared during the pandemic?

JORIS Tom and I had worked together a lot, doing projects like "Air Force," which is a traveling recorder orchestra workshop. We gave courses together, and we are a good team. We might not always agree, but we have the same musical vision and goals.

Debut recording and new arrangements

GAIL I know that location matters a lot for a recording. Where was this first one made? Is making a recording of a duo much different from making a quartet recording?

TOM For us, it's essential to do a recording in a place that feels a bit historical, that has the correct amount



1: Joris van Goethem (left) and Tom Beets. *Photo by Koen Beets.*

2: Tom Beets (left) and Joris Van Goethem. *Photo by Debbie Termonia.*

3: Joris Van Goethem. *Photo by Guy Verstraete.*

4: Tom Beets. *Photo by Silvie Bonne.*

5: Tom Beets (left) and Joris van Goethem. *Photo by Debbie Termonia.*

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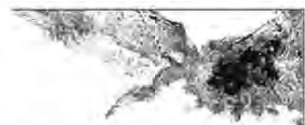
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of reverb—which is already an artistic choice. We also have a sound engineer, Ulrich Lorscheider from our label Aeolus, who's a great artist and very demanding.

We ended up in Kyllburg, Germany, where we recorded in a beautiful church. It lacks the luxury of lots of modern churches or recording halls. It's not about luxury, it's about creating a good atmosphere, focus and making music together.

Recording duos essentially is not much different from recording with four players. I think the biggest difference is actually the concept of the duo versus one of a quartet. The duo textures are often more soloistic and flexible, more adventurous.

Tuning may be a bit easier. But on the other hand, because of the fact that both parts are unbelievably important in any single given moment, tuning may become a bit flexible, you might say. In many ways you take lots of risks in a duo, many more than you would take in a quartet. What is also different is the type of repertoire and how to deal with it.

JORIS I couldn't agree more. I also think that the live ambience is very important. Some people record in a very dry sounding studio, and I don't like that. I was just thinking, as Tom answered the question—I have some colleagues who study acoustics, making a sort of closed box to hear themselves better. That's hard for me to understand. Sometimes I even go into a bathroom to play with a little more acoustic, so you can hear your own sound better.

TOM Natural reverb.

JORIS Yes, that's why this was a beautiful church.

GAIL Is the process of recording very different from playing live on stage,

playing a concert?

JORIS Yes, for me—playing as a duo, we play more adventurously, take more risks. We take those risks in concerts and also while recording.

While the concert is an art of communicating with your audience, a recording is a more “inwards oriented” process. Recording sessions allow us to have multiple takes—each one more meticulous, and at the same time more and more musical.

We've tried to keep the concert approach when recording the CD—certainly a challenge, but it pays off!

TOM No risk, no gain. Avoid at all costs that every concert should sound the same! As players, we try to be as individual and personal as possible.

GAIL Both of you have been involved in arranging and transcribing music for recorders for a number of years. Tell us about your new editions of duets, some of which are featured on your first FR2 recording. Did you work together to create the pieces in these two volumes, in collaboration between the two of you; or are they a collection of pieces made by each of you on your own—or a bit of both?

JORIS Both of us had ideas, but we mainly work together as a team. Sometimes a different approach can be very enriching. Mostly we had a huge selection of pieces that we really loved. In the end, we wanted the CD to show a nice variation in flow and tension, highlighting what a recorder duo can do.

To get from the manuscript to the transcription, we had to think about the musicians we are—each of us has a character and temperament. It's important that, in choosing a piece, it really fits us like a glove.

We also try to stay within the limits of what the recorder can do—trying

to feel the borders of the instrument, to play a little bit with what's possible and not go too far. We didn't transcribe a Brahms symphony!

TOM We tried to consider the limitations of the instruments—we know those quite well, and also which repertoire will work and which won't. We have an enormous collection of very specific types of recorders, which helps.

When starting a new arrangement, we may have an original piece in mind. We try to figure out together which instruments will fit best and how we want that transcription to work. Do we want to focus on keeping it as original as possible, or do we want to be a bit more free? It's a very individual process, even though we do it together. It's different for every piece.

GAIL On the CD there is a Bach toccata and fugue arrangement—*Toccatà and Fugue in d minor, BWV565*. What made you think it might work in a version for two recorders, since it comes from a complex organ piece?

JORIS That's a question for me, I guess. It has such an iconic beginning, which everyone knows. Looking into this organ work, a lot of research says that the composition was not by Bach. Possibly he made a transcription, maybe from a violin solo piece. The writing suggests a stringed instrument!

A lot of the fugues are two-part, and I have seen transcriptions for violin solo that are not very convincing. This piece really needs a duo. It was a challenge, and exciting to play this piece. On the whole CD, I loved playing this music, which has never been recorded by two recorders. It makes it very special to arrange it and also to play it.

GAIL Which do you think will become your favorite track of this CD?

JORIS The pieces I love the most are the ones that are quite unknown and have not been recorded before, and ... well, the whole CD is like that!!

For instance, we have some new compositions, like a beautiful piece by Sören Sieg. Two American pieces, one by Marc Mellits, *Black*, that was originally for two bass clarinets and really fits recorders. It's not new repertoire, but for recorders, it's new. The second piece, by Glen Shannon, is absolutely stunning.

We wanted a Telemann piece on the

CD, but it's not the usual Telemann—so it's also new. The Renaissance pieces have never been recorded—we had to make our own editions, so that music is also new.

That's a very diplomatic answer to say that I love all the pieces on the CD. We played them for the first time on the CD. They only get better on our concerts, the more we play them.

TOM My favorite piece must be the toccata and fugue. I felt a bit uncomfortable when Joris told me that this piece would be included on this project—but with FR2, we give each other the benefit of the doubt.

▼ **FR2 CD recording session in Stiftskirche, Kyllburg, Germany.**

Joris Van Goethem and Tom Beets, sitting on cajons. *Photo by Koen Beets.*



That's part of good teamwork. When somebody has a good idea and is convinced that it will work, then the other one goes with the flow. Still, I was reluctant.

On the other hand, at this moment, it's my favorite piece. It wasn't at first, but it absolutely is now. It really communicates well with audiences. It's a bit of an underdog. I guess everybody knows it can't be done—and apparently, seven minutes later, people are really enthusiastic and realize that it *can* be done.

JORIS There were a lot of good reactions to the online concerts—in the chat, people really loved it.

TOM None of the pieces I would expect a recorder duo to play are on this CD. It's refreshing repertoire, maybe that's the word. It's not the usual suspects—the pieces that recorder duos usually play.

Bamboo pipes and other instruments

JORIS The most exciting piece without a doubt is the *Suite for Two Pipes* by Ralph Vaughan Williams. Here's a short version of a very long story. It started with a quartet by Vaughan Williams for bamboo pipes, which are instruments a little bit like tin whistles. You have to make them yourself out of bamboo wood.

It was originally Tom's idea that he really wanted to play this piece—not on recorders, with our quartet, but on bamboo pipes. He went to a course in the UK to learn how to make these bamboo instruments, and returned with them. Tom got involved in this pipe world, and I was also affected, and we taught some courses. People showed us these secret duets, which might have been by Ralph Vaughan Williams. When you know the quartet very well, it's easy to see the similarities in composing; stylistically, you

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can see these duets are from Ralph Vaughan Williams. It's a world premiere, and they are beautiful pieces.

TOM The Vaughan Williams duets actually represent what the CD's about. It's about discovering new music.

It's a CD that has 70 minutes of events that happen—a very high piece, a low piece, a modern piece, a Medieval piece, a meditation, something a bit more aggressive, something minimalist. It has to read like a good book, where every chapter is different and has its own interesting bits. We didn't want every chapter to be predictable. That's actually how this CD was conceived.

It's not that we cannot play the Telemann canonic duets—we do, and they're worth playing and recording, but many people have done that before us. We didn't feel the need to repeat that. Maybe it's like with the Rachmaninoff piano concerto; many people have done it. One could ask: do we need another recording?

For us, the answer was clear. We wanted to have something really new.

GAIL There is a variety of recorders on the CD, and other instruments as well.

JORIS We made the bamboo pipes we are using on the CD ourselves. That's something I can recommend. Everybody should take a bamboo pipe making course! There are pipers' guilds everywhere, also in the U.S.

We also use a beautiful set of

Renaissance recorders by Tom Prescott. It's a set in fifths: an alto in A, then going down to a tenor in D, a bass in G and great bass in C. All these instruments are showcased in the *Agnus Dei* tracks.

TOM That's an exceptional set indeed, and it actually goes even one fifth lower to contra bass in F. And there are other instruments, American made, by the late Friedrich von Huene—a G basset at A=415 is really lovely. For contemporary music on this CD, we've chosen instruments by Küng. For these pieces specifically, we felt these fit the best.

We've got many recorders. We try to have an open mind to try all of the pieces with instruments that we think might work—to make sure that, within the bigger concept of the CD, everything fits together, the variety, quality, timbre.

We play other instruments besides recorders. There are *cajons*, primitive percussion instruments that you sit on—in a new work by Sören Sieg, who's quite famous for his African style of pieces. We commissioned it for soprano and tenor, and both players also play *cajon*.

We've also got Medieval tracks, where we use a thumb piano, a drone box, and Joris even plays a Renaissance flute. It was really nice to make recordings of other instruments with recorders.

Performers in a pandemic

GAIL Have you been rehearsing in person during the pandemic? How are you dealing with the lack of real-life concerts and workshops?

JORIS It has been hard for lots of musicians. On the other hand, we have to deal with the situation. There have been creative solutions from some musicians—it's beautiful to see that, out of this tragic situation,

a crisis produces beautiful initiatives.

Recording the CD was one of the only things that I did at the beginning of the pandemic—no courses, no concerts. It was really sad. To rehearse together was not easy. In Belgium, you could visit with your family, and you could have one *Knuffel* [buddy] contact. Tom was my so-called “hug buddy.” You could play together with one person, at a certain distance.

Lots of people asked, “can you give me online lessons?” I never liked that idea before, but now we have to do it. It’s not the real thing, of course.

It’s the same thing with online concerts. It doesn’t feel like a real concert, but once you start doing it, it feels OK. It’s strange—once you are playing, when you see on the screen that people are listening, you want to do the best that you can for the audience. It’s only when you stop playing that there’s a big silence. We are very afraid of silence—we think maybe we should do something, like talk about the pieces. Nothing can replace the real sound and the real contact of a real concert.

TOM It’s the same for me. The FR2 project was the only artistic project really worth mentioning for me for over 12 months. We spent a lot of time rehearsing, then a week recording—which was absolutely great! We had plans to have concerts in Japan and Taiwan in January 2021. Those fell through—all of the concerts fell

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We two found our new adventure in the nearby neighborhood: FRQ becomes FR2.

through. So we did start, as many musicians did, to have online recitals.

We also have been doing quite a lot of online teaching as a duo—we work together well. It’s been good. I think it kept me sane. I tried to keep myself safe by not seeing many people. I tried to keep myself sane by finding artistic, musical things to do with good colleagues like Joris.

I think it became really nice, just to see people smile—to see the chats in the digital sessions, and how people appreciate what we’re doing. It’s good to realize that not, only for musicians, but also for audiences and music lovers, these were difficult times. And with no workshops and courses for amateur players, their precious hobby was temporarily on hold. Nothing brings more joy in life than having a hobby. I feel for them—we’re trying to do our best for them, making music and teaching for the international recorder community.

Both Joris and I have regular teaching jobs, so we’ve been doing some teaching in music schools. In that sense, we were never 100% unemployed. We’ve been doing reasonably

well. We did a crowdfunding effort for the CD and the music editions. We sold about 200 CDs, which is great. You can still order the CD and editions on our web site, if you feel like playing music or listening to music.

Joris, do you want to ask any questions or say anything more?

Da capo

JORIS Since I answered the first two questions, maybe you can answer now—the question about life in the quartet. How does this new chapter in your life feel? I don’t remember exactly—but it was the first question.

TOM I tremendously enjoyed working with the FRQ—I think it was for 12 years. Looking back, it was absolutely wonderful. We did many, many concerts, in all parts of the globe. I think I speak for all of us when I say that we were ready to look for a new adventure. What type of adventure would it be, with whom would it be, which instrumentation, what would life bring? I think we two found our new adventure in the nearby neighborhood: FRQ becomes FR2.

It doesn’t feel that much different. Everything feels comfortable. Due to the pandemic, it’s a change, but it also feels like a continuation. Logistics are a bit easier—fewer people, which makes everything easier for planning.

Apart from that, it feels like a continuation for me—not effectively an absolutely new adventure. I love it.

LINKS OF INTEREST:

- Flanders Recorder Duo, Tom Beets and Joris Van Goethem: www.flanders-recorder-duo.be
- Articles in American Recorder: Interview by Tom Bickley with FRQ members, Winter 2016, <https://americanrecorder.org/docs/ARwinter16body.pdf>;
- #FRQexit, Summer 2018, <https://americanrecorder.org/docs/ARsum18body.pdf>;
- ARS Distinguished Achievement Award presentation, Winter 2018, <https://americanrecorder.org/docs/ARwinter18body.pdf>;
- Tom Beets gives North American premiere of recorder concerto by Graham Fitkin, Fall 2019, https://americanrecorder.org/docs/AR_Fall19_body.pdf
- American Pipers Guild, www.americanpipersguild.org
- A review of the FR2 debut CD appears later in this issue