

The Royal Wind Music
Sample Programmes

THE ROYAL WIND MUSIC



About us

An array of international musicians perform repertoire from the golden age of polyphony on an impressive collection of Renaissance recorders. Together they are The Royal Wind Music, an ensemble that has captivated a steadily growing audience all over the world since 1997. They strive to bring Renaissance music to life in an authentic and accessible way. Playing entirely from memory and without a conductor, the ensemble communicates intensely on stage, which gives its concerts a strong bond with the audience.

All members of The Royal Wind Music studied at the Conservatorium van Amsterdam, where the ensemble was founded by Paul Leenhouts.
The instruments played by The Royal Wind Music were made by Adriana Breukink (the Netherlands) and Bob Marvin (Canada). Both makers modelled their instruments on recorders in the collection of the 'Kunsthistorisches Museum' in Vienna. The ensemble's Renaissance recorders range from a sopranino of no more than 15 cm to a three-metre-long sub-contrabass recorder, designed according to Renaissance principles in 1998 by Adriana Breukink, Winfried Hackl and Paul Leenhouts.

The Royal Wind Music has performed in major concert halls throughout Europe, as well as in the United States and Mexico. In the Netherlands the ensemble has appeared at prestigious venues such as Het Concertgebouw and 'Muziekgebouw aan 't IJ' in Amsterdam, 'Tivoli Vredenburg' in Utrecht, 'De Doelen' in Rotterdam, 'De Philharmonie' in Haarlem and 'De Oosterpoort' in Groningen. The group has also performed at major festivals in the Netherlands and abroad, including the 'Tournees Oude Muziek', the 'Festival Oude Muziek' in Utrecht, 'Musica Sacra Maastricht', 'Tage Alter Musik' in Regensburg, the 'Berliner Tage für Alte Musik', the 'Greenwich International Early Music Festival' in London and the 'Boston Early Music Festival' in the United States.



In its nearly thirty years, The Royal Wind Music has received many distinctions. In March 2006 it won the 'Noorderkerk' Prize in the final of the 'Vriendenkrans Competition', a joint initiative of the Concertgebouw Amsterdam and the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra. In 2009 and again in 2011 the group was awarded a two-year project grant by the 'Performing Arts Fund NL'. The Prince Bernhard Culture Fund also supported the purchase of new instruments.

The Royal Wind Music has developed a wide range of educational activities. 'The Royal Wind Music Academy', a collaboration with the recorder department of the Conservatorium van Amsterdam, offers workshops and educational concerts that give children and adults access to the music of the Renaissance. The ensemble also initiated a large-scale festival: the Open Recorder Days Amsterdam (ORDA). Every two years this event brings together hundreds of young recorder players, adult amateurs, instrument makers and music lovers from all over the world in Amsterdam. The seventh edition took place in July 2026 at Felix Meritis and De Rode Hoed, Amerpodia's historic venues in the heart of Amsterdam.

To date, The Royal Wind Music has released eleven CDs on the Lindoro and Pan Classics labels. Their most recent album *The Orpheus of Amsterdam* was released in 2024 on Pan Classics. On their joint album *Gratia Plena* (2023), The Royal Wind Music and vocal ensemble Psallentes (directed by Hendrik Vanden Abeele) draw inspiration from the *Annunciation* by Hans Memling in the Metropolitan Museum in New York.

For nearly thirty years, The Royal Wind Music has shown that Renaissance music is anything but a museum piece: lively, surprising and direct, performed with an energy that sweeps every listener along.



New



Dancing with William of Orange

Court, Faith and Revolt in Eleven Voices.

Programme and arrangements: Hester Groenleer
Available from November 2027

What did the world of William of Orange sound like? Known as William the Silent and remembered as the Father of the Dutch Republic, he lived in a time of religious upheaval, political conflict, and profound cultural change. What music accompanied life at court, resonated in churches, or was sung in the streets during these turbulent years? In Dancing with William of Orange, The Royal Wind Music brings the sixteenth century to life in a captivating musical performance filled with contrasts, movement, and stories.

Programme Dancing with William of Orange



Through music by composers including Nicolas Gombert, Orlando di Lasso, Ludwig Senfl, Jacob Clemens non Papa, Cornelis Schuyt, and Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck, the audience is guided through an era of profound change. Refined courtly music and exuberant dances give way to religious reflection, political unrest, and the emergence of new ideas. Music proves to be far more than entertainment: it connects, persuades, comforts, and inspires people to action.

A central thread throughout the programme is the Wilhelmus, which originated during William's own lifetime. This famous melody reappears in various forms: recognizable, yet constantly transformed. The programme also features Geuzen songs from the time of the Revolt and the new work REVOLTE, in which past and present meet.

With eleven recorder players, joined by voice and percussion, The Royal Wind Music creates a remarkably rich and varied sound world. Intimate moments alternate with festive dances, improvisation, and theatrical elements, resulting in a vibrant performance where the boundaries between concert, history, and experience begin to blur.

Dancing with William of Orange invites audiences to move through an age of faith, conflict, ideals, and change—and to discover how powerfully these stories still resonate today.

Programme



Lamentation and Celebration

A Musical Journey Through Melodic Transformation and Innovation

Music by Josquin, Gombert, Attaingnant, de Rore, Frescobaldi, Palestrina and others

Step into the world of Renaissance music, where the vibrant exchange of melodies spanned courts and churches across Europe. In the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, secular chansons and madrigals found new life in sacred music through the art of parody masses—innovative compositions that reimagined familiar polyphonic works, transforming them into striking new creations.

> “The Royal Wind Music brings history emotionally into the present.”
>
> (July 2026 - Jens Klier, Online Musik Magazin Bachtrack)

Programme Lamentation and Celebration

One of the most beloved examples of this practice is Josquin des Prez's *Mille Regretz*, a poignant chanson that captured the heart of King Charles I of Spain. This four-part masterpiece inspired many reworkings, including versions by Morales, Gombert, and vihuela virtuoso Luis de Narváez. The transmission of these melodies also continued through oral traditions, including diminutions and improvisations by composers like Rognoni and Dalla Casa, reflecting a lively culture of spontaneous musical expression.

> "I bet this is what humming angels sound like."
> (Henry Beenh, March 2018)

The Royal Wind Music's new programme brings these historical melodies to life alongside two contemporary reflections: a newly commissioned work by Raivis Misjuns and an improvisation inspired by Renaissance techniques. These new pieces honour the past while showcasing the enduring power of imitation and variation in today's music. Additionally, the ensemble will perform their own diminutions on 16th-century madrigals, breathing fresh life into these timeless tunes.

With works by Palestrina, Josquin, Cabezón, De Rore, and Lassus, this performance promises an unforgettable journey from simple melodies to intricate polyphonic masterpieces. Join us for a celebration of music's past, present, and future—an experience that will inspire and captivate!

Programme, concept and arrangements: Anna Stegmann

> "This enables these masters of the recorder to achieve a degree of common phrasing, joint breathing and final chord gilding that cannot be topped. In addition, the eleven glorious ones achieved a profound, soft, heavenly euphony through frequent doubling of lines - truly an experience!"
>
> May 2023, Reinhard Mawick, Zeitzeichen



The Orpheus of Amsterdam

Masterworks by Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck

Programme, concept and arrangements:
Hester Groenleer

If there should be one single name from the music history of the Northern Netherlands that has been imprinted in the collective memory, it is without a doubt Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck, composer of an impressive body of vocal and instrumental works of exceptionally high quality. Rightly hailed as the 'Orpheus of Amsterdam', he still gives the Dutch capital, where he was uninterruptedly connected to the Oude Kerk as an organist between 1577 and 1621, an exceptional and deserved honour.

Programme The Orpheus of Amsterdam

Thanks to the thriving music publishing industry, his vocal works enjoyed wide circulation. His keyboard music survived only in manuscript, but thanks to Sweelinck's fame as a teacher at home and abroad and of course the exceptional quality of his work, instrumental music in general became increasingly important; it was the beginning of a triumphant progress that would continue into the seventeenth century.
The new programme reflects the breadth of Sweelinck's diverse oeuvre. It consists of four blocks, each block containing a vocal work and two keyboard works, namely a fantasy and a variation work. Contemporary reflections on Sweelinck have been inserted in two blocks; in the first block this is the 'fantasy' *Dance for Orpheus van Amsterdam* by Aspasia Nasopoulou, and in the third block the improvisation *Chain reaction*: a game in which the players inspire and imitate each other, react to each other and contradict each other in a sound world with contemporary techniques for recorder. The end of the improvisation is loosely based on the theme of *Mein junges Leben hat ein End*, one of Sweelinck's most popular works.

The Royal Wind Music makes the music of the most famous composer in the Netherlands sound like it never sounded before, but at the same time perhaps as it always sounded: the ensemble is often compared to a walking organ. The fantasy of how the 'Sweelinck organ' sounded in the Oude Kerk stimulates our interpretation of his beautiful keyboard works. Sweelinck's vocal works are also perfect for The Royal Wind Music, because the consort recorders can beautifully imitate the sound and range of a choir.

"Early music, compellingly prepared and masterfully presented: this is how recorder music can really inspire. The concert was granted with a long final applause, several encores and a standing ovation, which was deserved in every respect."

Dr. Gerd Klingeberg
January 2024 - klassik-begeistert.de

THE ROYAL WIND MUSIC

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Promotional Material
Programmes, repertoire lists, photos and CDs are available on request.

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Education
Besides the educational programmes it is possible to book an introduction workshop prior to all of our concert programmes. During these demonstrations the public will be informed about the instrument collection, the repertoire, our way of working, and the members of The Royal Wind Music. This informal meeting can be tailored to different age groups, such as children, teenagers, adults and music lovers.

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"If a concert of 11 recorders doesn't sound like a musically enchanting event, you've never heard @RoyalWindMusic."

@PaulHyde7, 16 June 2013
(Paul Hyde, USA)

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