

The Lure of Jacob van Eyck (A Forest Full of Nightingales)

Rodney Waterman

At the Melbourne Recorder '95 Festival, Rodney Waterman substituted at short notice for an ailing Marion Verbruggen to give a plenary lecture/demonstration on the music of *Der Fluyten Lust-hof* by Jacob van Eyck. Marion kindly lent him her copy of the wonderful book entitled *Jacob van Eyck's Der Fluyten Lust-hof* by Ruth van Baak Griffioen. He read the book that night and made the presentation early the following day. He introduced the talk with a recording of Dutch carillon and finished by performing three of his favourite *Lust-hof* selections: *Boffons*, *Engels Nachtegaeltje* and *Wat zal men op den avond doen*. The following article is loosely based on the talk.

*Lovers of the art of measured Song and Flute,
Whose lovely, magically sweet, soul tugging sound
Can compel hearts of metal, rock and stone.
... O Utrecht's Orpheus! Honor and fame of Artists!*

Lambertus Sanderus

(from an elegy on the death of Jacob van Eyck, 1657)¹



Encounters with van Eyck

I have vivid memories of my first exposure to the music of Jacob van Eyck. As a first year guitar student at the University of Melbourne I attended a concert of Baroque music at Trinity Chapel (Parkville, Melbourne) in 1976 given by Fred Morgan (recorders) and Ann Murphy (harpsichord). It was the first time I'd heard Baroque music performed in an exciting and interesting way, and consequently inspired me to seriously pursue studies as a recorder player. I found Fred's performance of a solo piece by a composer I'd never heard of, Jacob van Eyck, most enthralling.

As I recall, Fred dramatically positioned himself away from the audience towards the very back of the performance space in the chapel and played *Wat zal men op den avond doen* on a Renaissance tenor in c' made by himself. I was amazed at the rich, fleshy fullness of the tone, and surprised that a solo re-

corder could 'fill' the chapel with sound in this way. The intricate cascade of notes was mesmerising. I loved the implied polyphony of the leaping variations and an effect that I still marvel at today: the magical way that, in a good acoustic, the brilliant glitter of the quicker variations seems to hang in temporary suspension somewhere high up in the rafters.

In 1984 I heard Frans Brüggen play *Doen Daphne d'over schoone maeght* in Rome. He stormed home to the final cadence and then dramatically, and mischievously, omitted to play the final note. The temporarily expectant and puzzled audience decided that it could live without the note and clapped madly anyway.

Since spending two years in Italy and some months in Holland in the mid-1980s, I've been fascinated by bells and especially carillon. When I returned to Australia I went through, for better or 

worse, what you might call my 'bell period'. Many of my solo recitals of both early and contemporary recorder music were interspersed with the sounds of recorded Dutch carillon. Some may remember the Melbourne Recorder '87 Festival contemporary concert, *A New Ground for the Sweet Flute*, which began with recorded carillon merging in to my composition *Prelude* (1987)—improvisations, echoes and flourishes for recorder consort based on van Eyck's *Engels Nachtegaeltje*—and after another bell interlude, led into John Martin's performance of Hans Martin Linde's *Amarilli mia bella – Homage to Jacob van Eyck* (1971).

My favourite instrument for performing van Eyck's music is a 'van Eyck' descant in c" (a' = 466) by Fred Morgan.² This type of recorder projects well outdoors and I have used it many times in such a situation, continuing the 'Lust-hof' tradition.³ My joy in playing this music is in part connected to the bustling bell-laden soundscapes of the Dutch cities Amsterdam, Delft and Leiden, and to those early Melbourne performances by Fred Morgan.

Jacob van Eyck (1590-1657) and *Der Fluyten Lust-hof* (1644-c1655)

Jacob van Eyck was an important figure in the history of bell theory (science) and practice. He was an accomplished carillonist who reportedly had an excellent ear for bell partials and was primarily responsible for improvements to the shape of bells which led to the first well-tuned carillons in history. In particular, he made a significant contribution to improving and upgrading the bellworks at the Dom in Utrecht and other parish churches. He inspected, tuned and repaired bell installations all over Holland.

Van Eyck was also a brilliant recorder player and master of improvisation and ornamentation. His public performances in the Janskerkhof (the gardens of the St Jans church) were popular. In 1649, as many will know, he received a salary rise provided that he occasionally entertained the people strolling in the church garden with the sound of his 'little flute' (recorder). He is said to have also played the transverse flute and probably the organ.

The *Fluyten Lust-hof* (flute's pleasure garden) of van Eyck was both real and imaginary. It is the real title of his two volume edition of recorder music.⁴ The imaginary 'lust-hof' was an integral part of seventeenth century Dutch pastoral mythology, frequently represented in the contemporary iconography of

Dutch paintings⁵ and which often depicted recorders. Similar thematic musical publications include *Der Gooden Fluyt-Hemel* (1644), *'t Uitenement Kabinet* (1646 and 1649) and others, many of which have been lost.

The 'lust-hof' was also the real garden (or park) where van Eyck actually performed on the recorder at the Janskerkhof. The delightful engravings in van Baak Griffioen's book⁶ clearly show its relative extent (it was the second largest green area within the walled city of Utrecht at the time) and the beauty of St Jans and surrounds. The following description, an extract from a poem by Opperveldt (1640)⁷ apparently refers to van Eyck and his playing in the gardens:

Eyckie comes to honour our plain
And teach the bells to sing
Peeling through the tender leaves,
So that they toss back little sounds.
There he begins on his recorder
That's what it was! Oh! what a lovely tingle!
... Am I in heaven?
O! glorified boxwood holes,
O! what superhuman measures
Flow from the artistic round
From an agile mouth's breath!

For van Eyck romantics who, like me, might like to make a pilgrimage to the Janskerkhof to dream, ponder and worship under the elms of those luscious green gardens, I have bad news! Van Baak Griffioen reports that 'the Janskerkhof, where van Eyck gave his summer evening concerts, is now a parking lot'.⁸

Most serious recorder players are generally aware of the nature and extent of the *Lust-hof* collection, which contains many tunes with variations for solo descant recorder, and a few duets. Selections from *Lust-hof* have been standard repertoire for many decades, especially the famous *Engels Nachtegaeltje*. W.H.Thijssse was the editor of the first modern anthology published in the late 1940s. I still treasure my moth-eaten Gerrit Vellekoop complete editions of *Lust-hof* (1957/1958 and 1965). The excellent modern *Amadeus* complete edition is now widely used by students and performers everywhere, and the beautiful Saul B. Groen facsimile is a must for the serious performer.

Historically *Der Fluyten Lust-hof* is important in a wider context:

- It is the largest single collection of music for solo woodwind in the history of European music;
- Not surprisingly, it is the single largest source of solo recorder music in European history.

It is a compendium of seventeenth century European song (150 pieces altogether, based on 120 different tunes including 14 liturgical psalms). Sources of tunes by nationality are 50% French, 20% English, 10% other (Dutch, Italian, German and Spanish) and 20% unknown—possibly French or Dutch. The collection puts us in touch with the tunes that would have been heard regularly (four times per hour) on carillon during van Eyck's life. The only difference is that the proportion of liturgical to popular tunes would probably have been reversed from that of van Eyck's *Lust-hof*. Most of the tunes were probably 'household words'.⁹ The market for this publication and other similar *liedboekjes* was essentially the 'well to do, young unmarried public with money in its pocket and love on its mind'.¹⁰

The really fascinating part of van Baak Griffioen's book is the detailed and comprehensive sourcing of all the *Lust-hof* tunes. The bulk of the book concentrates on this very useful and illuminating task. Ruth Wilkinson's review of van Baak Griffioen's book¹¹ gives *Nachtegaeltje* as an example showing how the source of the tune can give us new ideas about the modern interpretation of van Eyck's music, even for a piece as much played and loved as this one. I found it interesting that one of my favourites, *Boffons*, is 'unique'. The 'tune' is a *passamezzo moderno* bass line rather than a melody, and 'variations on this bass line had been called 'Bouffons' for nearly a hundred years before *Der Fluyten Lust-hof* was written'.¹²

There are a number of mistakes in the original *Lust-hof* manuscripts. Van Eyck presumably painstakingly dictated every note to a very patient scribe, having learnt every tune by ear in the first place. He no doubt played the diminutions differently virtually every time. In attempting to put all of this into print, there was much room for error and idiosyncratic variation and departure from any fixed version of a piece. Furthermore, it would have been difficult for the blind van Eyck to proof 'read' or proof 'play' every note, even though his publisher claims

the later reprints were reheard. He would have had to rely heavily on others to help him. Therefore van Baak Griffioen's source analysis of the tunes can help us correct possible and probable errors. Most importantly it puts every tune into a meaningful historical context. The *Amadeus* editions also contain very good summaries of melody sources. The five duets in the collection are not well composed and are probably not by van Eyck. They were more likely prepared by the publisher (Matthysz) or a publisher's lackey and included to increase marketability.

The style of *Lust-hof* for the mid-seventeenth century is 'antiquated' in the sense that it uses the diminution techniques espoused in earlier treatises such as *Fontegara* (1535) by Silvestro Ganassi. While stylistic elements from the Italian diminutionists (such as Virgiliano, Bassano and Dalla Casa), English virginalists (such as Bull and Byrd) and Sweelinck (his use of the *Fantasia & Echo* genre) can be found in van Eyck's music, he generally does not use the more modern and developing Baroque *agréments* of his time.¹³

Van Eyck's style was already old-fashioned when his works were published. Not only were Italian, German and English composers decades beyond this older diminution style, but even other Dutch composers were. In 1659, just after the last reprints of van Eyck's works, Anthoni van Noordt published his *Tablatuur-Boeck van Psalmen en Fantasyen*, a collection for organ showing harmonic daring which contrasts sharply with the conservatism van Eyck's lines imply.¹⁴

Van Eyck's 'conservative lines' can, however, be converted into pure magic in the hands of a good performer.

Van Baak Griffioen also looks at the type of recorder that van Eyck might have played. It's a fascinating question and she gives a good overview. Although my favourite instrument is a 'van Eyck' descant in c'', his music can be effectively performed on instruments of varying sizes. *Daphne* and *Lachrymae* sound well on instruments such as a Ganassi in g', tenor in c' or voice flute in d'.

With regard to articulation in performing the music from *Lust-hof*, I recommend the approach described in the 16th-century diminution methods. I generally avoid slurring notes, even in the quickest

variations, and use a varied range of single and double tonguing techniques. In addition, a constant sense of relation between the derivative variations and the original tune is necessary at all times. I'm also sure van Eyck would have encouraged performers to compose or improvise their own variations.

Finally, I commend you to explore the world of Jacob van Eyck, and in particular to get hold of Ruth van Baak Griffioen's magnificent book—a must for all students and lovers of van Eyck. And I leave you with this final thought and image:

...Listen to van Eyck, who lures to Utrecht
Forests full of nightingales...¹⁵

May he lure you as he has me and countless others.

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Rodney wishes to thank Ruth Morley for the use of her copy of the van Baak Griffioen book.

¹ Cited in Ruth van Baak Griffioen, *Jacob van Eyck's Der Fluyten Lust-hof* (The Hague: Vereniging voor Muziekgeschiedenis, 1991), p. 397.

² For a detailed discussion on the Copenhagen narwhal tusk 'Rosenborg' recorders upon which the 'van Eyck' instrument is based, see Fred Morgan, 'A recorder for the music of J.J. van Eyck', *The American Recorder* 25.2 (May, 1984), pp. 47-49 and Eva Legêne, 'The Rosenborg Recorders', *The American Recorder* 25.2 (May, 1984), pp. 50-52. Eva Legêne prefers the term 'diminution recorder': see Jan Epstein, 'Conversation with Eva Legêne', *The Recorder* 7 (Dec, 1987), pp. 1-6.

³ These include a friend's wedding at the Melbourne Botanic Gardens and busking at Notre Dame square (Paris) and the *capisotto* end of the village of Pitigliano (Italy). See Rodney Waterman, 'With the recorder in Italy: a personal journey', *The Recorder* 4 (1986), pp. 29-33.

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Der Fluyten Lust-hof. Vol I, published in 1649, is essentially a reprint of his earlier publication, *Euterpe oft Speel-goddinne* (1644). Vol II was published in 1646.

⁵ See Mary Rasmussen and Friedrich von Huene, 'Some recorders in seventeenth century Dutch paintings', *Early Music* 10.1 (Jan, 1982), pp. 30-35.

⁶ *Jacob van Eyck's Der Fluyten Lust-hof*, p. 26 and p. 44.

⁷ Cited in van Baak Griffioen, *Jacob van Eyck's Der Fluyten Lust-hof*, pp. 44-45.

⁸ van Baak Griffioen, *Jacob van Eyck's Der Fluyten Lust-hof*, p. 41.

⁹ van Baak Griffioen, *Jacob van Eyck's Der Fluyten Lust-hof*, p. 78.

¹⁰ van Baak Griffioen, *Jacob van Eyck's Der Fluyten Lust-hof*, p. 78.

¹¹ Ruth Wilkinson, review of *Jacob van Eyck's Der Fluyten Lusthof* by Ruth van Baak Griffioen, *The Recorder* 17 (1993), pp. 25-26.

¹² van Baak Griffioen, *Jacob van Eyck's Der Fluyten Lust-hof*, p. 125.

¹³ van Baak Griffioen, *Jacob van Eyck's Der Fluyten Lust-hof*, p. 391.

¹⁴ van Baak Griffioen, *Jacob van Eyck's Der Fluyten Lust-hof*, pp. 391-392.

¹⁵ Poem from *Der Fluyten Lust-hof II* (1646, 1654) cited in van Baak Griffioen, *Jacob van Eyck's Der Fluyten Lust-hof*, p. 55.



'Van Eyck' recorder from *Der Fluyten Lust-hof*

Hall of Fame

Our roving photographer Ruth Lewis caught five of the six VRG presidents at this year's Lorne Workshop.



Jan Epstein (1986-88): Creator and Founding Editor of the Journal in March 1984.

Diane Draper (1988-90), Gwen Rathjens (Rodgers) Founding President (1973-82), Diane Rex (1993-1997), Barb Praetz (1982-86), Belle Farmer (1990-93).