



**Flanders Recorder Duo,
FR2 Tom Beets &
Joris Van Goethem
Aeolus (AE-10316,
EAN 4026798103163)**

Sören Sieg discusses their CD release with the duo.

How do you feel about this new chapter in your musical life?

Joris: We've been playing together in the Flanders Recorder Quartet for such a long time and the duo gradually evolved out of that. It's nice to feel that during a rehearsal you don't have to say everything by words, you can just hear what and how the other plays, and you feel connected by the waves.

I suppose it's more responsibility, but also more freedom?

Tom: The mentality is different. The more people you are on stage, the more you are settling for a common cause. In a quartet you are making the music of the group, a duet is practically soloistic and adventurous. As long as you have mutual understanding and you know exactly what the other one wants you have ultimate freedom.

I know of only one other recorder duo: how can that be?

Tom: The recorder duo is niche, unlike the string, woodwind or recorder quartets which have lots of repertoire. Your audience will be mainly recorder enthusiasts. But a duo can 'show off their feathers' as much as a quartet and has the charm of being the underdog.

The CD contains many unexpected works including Bach's Toccata and Fugue in d minor. I was surprised how well this works on recorders – it's a highlight of the CD.

Tom: It's one of the pieces I doubted! I thought it was risky but it turned out so well and is apparently the best piece in concerts. So difficult to play, and yet you need to play it with such stylistic ease to make it work. Audiences know massive organ renditions of this piece. Joris's theory is that it will work for one recorder, he has already written a solo version. Joris: We like to think the original scoring was for recorders and Bach transcribed it for organ.

You recorded Black by Marc Mellits on two great bass recorders: you can't breathe anywhere! Is there a special technique?

Joris: There are some small rests, but not many.

Tom: You learn to breathe many litres of air in a very short period of time. You breathe hundreds of times just a little bit, and it keeps you going. We use great basses by Küng, which need so much air and energy, it is absolute suffering! But we knew that in advance. The hard work paid off, I'm very happy with the industrial, machine-like effect.

The album includes the premiere recording of Suite for Two Pipes by Ralph Vaughan Williams played on bamboo pipes. You made your own pipes?

Joris: Yes: with a piece of bamboo, basic tools, and luckily, a lot of friendly guidance! Making a wind instrument yourself is very rewarding, and humbling when thinking of professional instrument makers. The bamboo pipes culture came into existence in the 1930s with the concept that bamboo pipes were the ideal school instrument. Youngsters would step-by-step make their own pipe and only be allowed to continue with drilling the next hole once they had mastered the tones of the holes they already had. I love this philosophy. Vaughan Williams was President of the British Pipers' Guild and wrote great pieces for them such as the Quartet for Pipes.

You use Renaissance traverso, thumb piano and drone box for the medieval pieces. Is this all improvised?

Joris: Our version is shaped around two short melodies, with Tom and I improvising in between existent melodies to create the atmosphere.

Tom: It was recorded in an almost pitch-black church, practically midnight. Ulrich Lorscheider's (the sound engineer) recording sessions last until late in the evening. We started recording the medieval section around eleven, and only did a few full takes.

I wrote The Dervish and the Devil for recorders, cajon and foot tapping for this album. Was it challenging?

Joris: I am just in the process of buying a new tenor just for this piece. The percussion is loud and the recorder not so much. The key to success is finding a balance where you push your recorder and do the percussion and feet tapping very softly. Not easy!

Tom: Our ears are oriented towards a soft sound, towards delicate details. It was a challenge for Ulrich and us. This would be a stunning competition piece, and am sure it won't get lost in history!