

Book Review

Originally published in
ARTAFacts May 2008, p. 4

Recorders Based on Historical Models – Fred Morgan, Writings and Memories compiled by Gisela Rothe, photography and graphic design by Markus Berdux, published by Mollenhauer Verlag, Fulda 2007, 205pp. \$59.00

This is really several books in one, with the common theme being a tribute to the late Fred Morgan, recorder maker extraordinaire. First, it is an anthology of his complete essays on recorder building and its foundation in historical instruments, mainly those of the 18th century, but also touching upon the renaissance and the “van Eyck” soprano – in this case the two instruments found in the Rosenberg Castle.

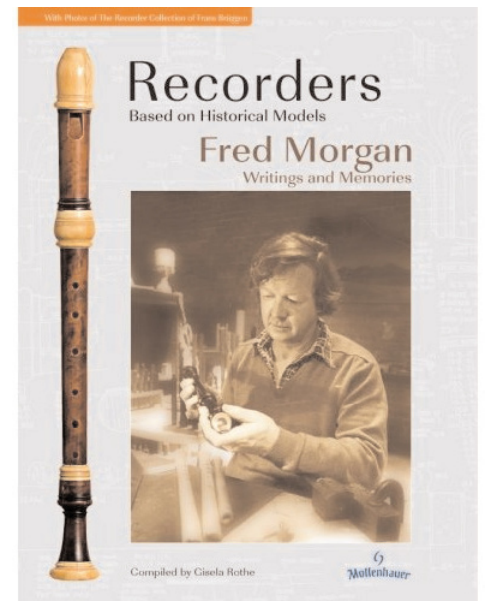
These essays have long been out of print, having originally been published in *Early Music* and other specialist journals, and consist of: “Old Recorders,” “Our Design Heritage,” “Making Recorders Based on Historical Models,” “A Player’s Guide to the Recorder,” “A Recorder for the Music of J. J. van Eyck,” and “Old Recorders and New Ones.” In addition there is a long interview with Morgan by Geoffrey Burgess. They have been updated with appropriate photos or drawings of original instruments as well as photos of the Morgan instruments they inspired. Taken together, these essays provide a valuable portrait of the man’s design philosophy and methodology.

The second book reflects the detailed accounts of those who worked directly with Fred in his workshop in Daylesford, Australia. Alexandra Williams and Natasha Anderson were hired as “blowers” to play the instruments as Fred was making them. Joanne Saunders describes her life as an apprentice. Dieter Mücke, who still turns instruments in the workshop for further refinement by a few selected makers, narrates a fascinating tale of the tools required for the job, most of which had to be created. Other essays follow by fellow Australians involved in the recorder world who were strongly influenced by Morgan.

The third book contains the inspiring accounts of eight instrument makers who studied directly with him in his course at the Hague: Ricardo Kanji, Jean-Francois Beaudin, Adriana Breukink, Shigeharu Hirao-Yamaoka, Peter van der Poel, Philippe Bolton, Jacqueline Sorel, and David Coomber. It is really amazing that seven out of those eight are still actively making recorders. Of course many other makers have been influenced by the publication of his intricate designs of the recorders in Frans Bruggen’s collection as well as his freely-distributed design for the “Ganassi” recorder.

The fourth book is by far the largest, comprising the sections *Frederick G. Morgan 1940-1999*, *Player and Instrument*, and *Memories*. The first section has extended biographical portraits of Morgan by Walter van Hauwe, Kees Boeke, and Rodney Waterman. The second and third sections also consist of portraits of Morgan, but mainly as they concerned the intersection of his life and instruments with the player’s own. Many of the leading recorder players of today have been included in this section, with only a few notable younger players missing. Taken together, these essays provide not just a moving tribute to the man, both as a craftsman and a person, but also a reflection of just how great his overall influence has been on recorder performance in the last few decades.

Bruce Hayne’s article in the *Player and Instrument* section, “The Accommodating Recorder,” is less a portrait of Morgan than an extended meditation on pitch, tuning, and temperament and has its own extensive bibliography.



I must comment here on the elegant graphic design of this book. Markus Berdux has provided perhaps the best color photos of baroque recorders I have seen published as well as many charts and drawings and has laid them out in a visually compelling manner. There is even a handy chart of the timeline of baroque recorder makers in the appendix of the book. This book is self-recommending if you have even more than a passing interest in recorder organology and the evolution of recorder making and modern performance.

Charles Fischer