

Burn Vallotti!

Ton Koopman

In discussion with Claire Bracher and Aliye Cornish

Ton on his own inspiration and introduction to Early Music:

I was a student of Gustav Leonhardt and so of course with him I saw the very first beginnings of early music, the founding of Telefunken with his and Harnoncourt's part in some of the first recordings of music on historical instruments. Through this, I fell directly in love with that way of performing music, and I kept asking Leonhardt, again and again, 'why do this?' and 'how do I do that?' Parallel to my harpsichord lessons, I was also at university studying musicology. This combination of playing myself, having the lessons with Leonhardt, and studying musicology worked well for me. I was always asking myself questions and always curious to know more.

I didn't get too much direction with the musicology supervision, as the professor that I had here was very happy after a paper I wrote on Heinichen, and perhaps thought I was able to continue researching on my own. I was also a boy treble singing in the choir. I had always been interested in early music, and never in later music, so in that sense it was very easy. Also, at a very important time for me, I met Ku Ebbinge who later became a very famous baroque oboe player, although at that point he was a young person playing recorder. All in all, I had very good luck with my musical education, I have to say!

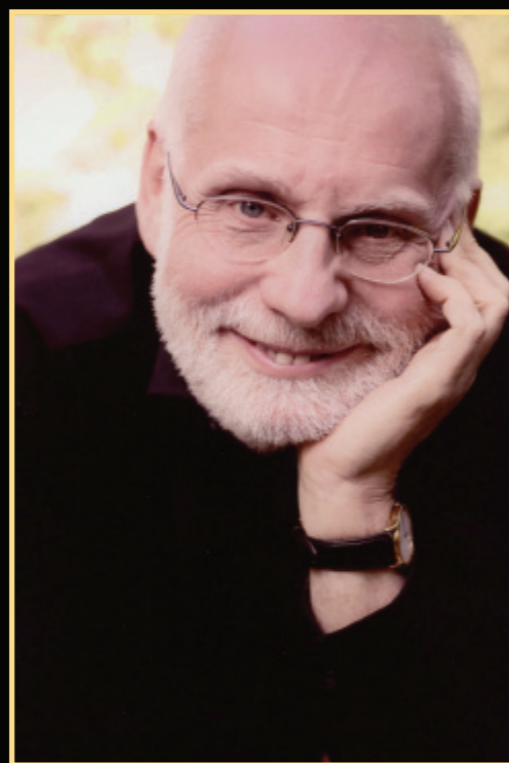


photo: Marco Borggreve

Telefunken

In 1958, Telefunken (now Teldec Classics International), launched a new series of recordings entitled 'Das Alte Werk'. This series - produced in mono and in the form of black vinyl discs - featured music performed on period instruments, and were some of the first recordings of early music. The series was co-founded by Wolf Erichson, and brought worldwide recognition to artists such as Gustav Leonhardt, Nikolaus Harnoncourt, Frans Brueggen, Anner Bylsma, and ensembles such as Concerto Amsterdam, Concentus Musicus Wien, and Capella Antiqua Muenchen; artists whose research and performance has proved, until this day, to be highly influential in period performance.

Visiting the British Library as a student:

When I was a student in the Conservatoire in Amsterdam, I had a small chamber group, and when we went to play some concerts in London, I stayed a few extra days and visited the British Library to gain access to as much new repertoire as I could possibly get my hands on, and to look through the huge catalogues which were there. In fact, I still today have my notes from what I saw there on that trip.

I went through the books and manuscripts there, up to the letter K, so around half way, so I didn't do too bad! At that time it was sometimes difficult to get important things in your hands, so I had to ask my professor to write a letter in order for me to be allowed to see them. That same professor was however, also wondering why I should want to do such things when there were already such good editions, why did I want to see the original? This experience made a great impact on me, and resulted in a productive and ground-breaking time for me.

The British Library was particularly good for finding Italian music, such as editions of Frescobaldi, but also for English music with fingering markings in it. I was very interested in that early fingering. I

particularly wanted to see originals, in order to see what people actually did. For example, I have never found another copy of Frescobaldi where there were original fingerings in the part. From this point, I began to collect different books and sources of original fingerings.

I was also looking for new chamber music for *Musica da Camera*. We began at that point slowly to build up what had begun as a small group of four - up to reduced strings: three first violins, two second violins, one viola, one cello, a bass, and also some wind instruments. These were the two reasons why I used to visit these libraries.

I founded my first orchestra as a student in Amsterdam in 1968. We began by playing lots of Bach, that was always a great love, also a bit of Purcell, Heinichen, Muffat, Telemann - a lot of which was not yet published, which I had found in libraries, a resource for which I was very grateful.

We worked really very hard to find our way then, to find concerts, and to perform our unpublished works. At that time it was not too complicated to find concerts, there were a lot of small churches which were keen to have us play, although for no money of course.



Gustav Leonhardt at the MAfestival in Bruges

Gustav Leonhardt

studied organ and harpsichord with Eduard Mueller at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis in Basel. He was professor of harpsichord at the Academy of Music from 1952 to 1955, and at the Amsterdam Conservatory from 1954. Leonhardt's first recordings were of J S Bach's harpsichord works in the 1950s.