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**BACK IN THE UK!
We Chat with
Dutch organist**

**DIRKJAN
RANZIJN**

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In Conversation DIRKJAN RANZIYN

with Michael Wooldridge

For many years, Dutch organist DirkJan Ranziyn was one of the most popular players here in the UK, making many journeys over to entertain us on his fabulous Böhm organ. Sadly, since Brexit changed arrangements for his visits, we haven't seen him on these shores, so we are now thrilled that, in association with Rod Pooley Music, we are bringing him over to feature at our 40th Anniversary Hemsby Autumn Spectacular, playing a brand new instrument from Böhm. In advance of this special visit, I thought it would be nice to have a chat with Dirk and to look back over his amazing career in music.



Foto: Peter de Jong - www.ranzi.nl

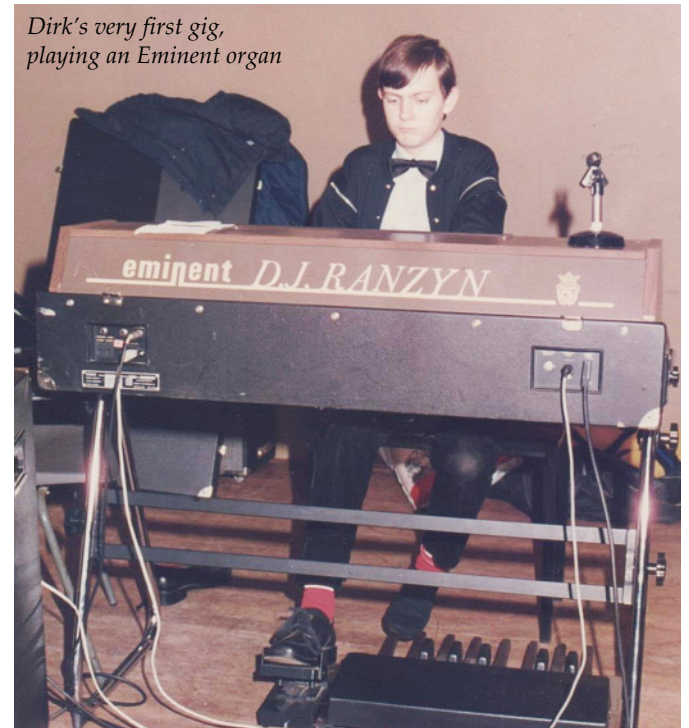
How did your interest in the organ begin?

I am from a very musical family, nearly all the family members were either in the music or entertainment business. At an early age I already knew I wanted to make a living as an artist, most likely as a singer, as I did a lot of singing in children's musicals, but then (when I was about 8 or 9) I saw this Bontempi children's

keyboard in a shop window, and fell in love with it. I got it as a present for Christmas. It was love at first sight.

Can you tell us about your early progress/tuition and then your success in competitions?

I tried out different things on the Bontempi keyboard, and my parents were very surprised as I hadn't had any lessons but started to play all sorts of simple songs. A teacher came into my life and, after a couple of weeks, he gave me the choice, continue on the keyboard or switch to organ. We were running out of options on the Bontempi, so we choose a simple Thomas organ. All together I have had 7 years of tuition, mainly studying classical music and jazz, however, I noticed that jazz wasn't really my thing! I didn't do a lot of competitions really, only a couple, it was fun at that time, but not really my thing. Instead of competitions, I started to give small performances.



Dirk's very first gig,
playing an Eminent organ

I seem to remember you studied at a theatre school. What skills did you study and how do you think they have helped in your career?

That's right. I studied at the Amsterdam Theatre School for about 2 years. It was in the early 90s. I have learned so much about the entertainment/theatre business. We studied acting (I appeared in 2 different plays), presentation (how to move on stage and what to do in certain situations), singing, how to create a folder/poster and how to write a good article for the press, even how to do your make up. Those skills did help me enormously in my career, as I always wanted to approach the instrumental concerts in a different way, a bit more theatrical and more entertaining. That goes right from how I am dressed through to choosing my

repertoire, lights and effects (though nowadays I have a lot less stage effects because of new EU rules).



Mark Shakespeare (left) with Dirk

How did you make the transition to the professional stage?

I already performed quite a lot and then, in 1994, I met up with my friend Mark Shakespeare again. Every time Mark and I met he asked me when I could come over to play Böhm; he also told me that I was on a sort of wish list!

I took the step in spring 1995 when I joined the Böhm team. Soon after that I started to give professional concerts all over Europe. Up to this day I continue to tour a lot for the company - exactly 30 years now!

Who were your favourite organists when you started and through the years?

For quite some time I was influenced by Klaus Wunderlich, I really enjoyed his touch (I still enjoy listening to his records) but I discovered that I couldn't get my inspiration out of fellow players but more out of musicals, films and famous singers, like Andrew Lloyd Webber shows, Barbra Streisand, Michael Ball, etc.

I never really had a favourite organist, as I enjoyed nearly all of them, and I was already creating my very own style and sound.

So what is your favourite type of music?

I am quite broad when it comes to favourite styles. Of course I like music from the shows, and it's always very interesting when a new show comes out to have a listen, I also like country very much, but then I also can enjoy a church organ recital.

I do like the Greek keyboarder, Yanni.

(Ed - Yiannis Chryssomallis - pictured right. Visit www.yanni.com to read more about him)

It's great how he creates his songs out of inspiration from nature or life itself.



One of my all-time favourite songs is 'Wishing You Were Somehow Here Again' from 'Phantom of the Opera'. When I play that song my thoughts always go out to the loved ones I have lost.

What do you think has been your best event involving the organ so far?

I have now been in the entertainment business for 43 years and I am so grateful to have done such amazing events. 22 years of giving the most wonderful shows in UK and Scotland, doing 6 Saturday evening television shows in Holland, my own TV show in Denmark, and over 30 other TV appearances in Scandinavia. There are so many highlights, too many to mention hahahaha...



Dirk on TV - Notice the audience on the left and one of the cameras on the right!

These days, you stand out in our world because you play on TV and at big rock festivals. Can you tell us a little about the audiences you play to and the different music you play in those situations?

In 2012 I performed live for the National Danish Television. I played 'Can't Help Falling in Love' from Elvis, but then played it in the style of UB40 (reggae). It went down like a bomb and, before I knew it, I got into the Danish Charts! The song was popular with mainly students and younger people, so that led to bookings all over Denmark, mainly for students and at the famous Ringsted Rock and Pop Festival.

At those festivals I play songs from Robbie Williams up to YMCA, Final Countdown, Bohemian Rhapsody, etc... and of course... Can't Help Falling in Love with You. I still play student concerts, and now they are not only in Denmark, but also in Belgium. It's a totally different world to the traditional organ concerts.



Performing at a rock festival - photo www.janwillemgroen.nl

Dirk with his Böhm Sempra SE40

I know that outside of music, you have great passions for photography and for circus and sometimes combine these for work. Can you tell us more?

I used to do a lot of circus photography, and it is still a great hobby for me. Circus plays a very important role in my life, and also photography.

About 25 years ago I started to combine those passions, and with success. Lots of my circus shots were published in souvenir brochures, posters and even on billboards. In 2013 my coffee table book was released with hundreds of my circus photos.



*Just one of Dirk's many superb circus photos
The amazing Alessio and his beautiful parrots.*

Due to my concert work and other performances, I haven't had the opportunity to photograph a lot of circuses lately, but hopefully I will have the chance to do a bit more this year.

Can you tell us about any recordings you have for sale?

I haven't released a new album for 5 years. The problem is that people in Europe don't buy CDs or DVDs anymore, they prefer to stream my music via Spotify, Apple Music or Amazon. All of my recordings are there to stream and download, but, of course, I still have hard copies. CDs and DVDs can be obtained by going to my website www.dirkjanranzijn.nl



*Dirk at the
presentation of his
circus 'coffee table'
book*

Dirk on stage at the Dreamfactory in Degersheim, Switzerland in 2023, where Michael also appeared playing the Wurlitzer, to the right of the photo, from the Plaza Cinema in Piccadilly, London, and the Hammond B-3



The video wall at Degersheim makes a stunning backdrop



a couple of my own compositions, all the way to Nella Tu Mani (the main theme from the film Gladiators).

That sounds wonderful, it will be such a treat to have you with us. I know that since you were last here with us in the UK you have a new girlfriend...

Yes, my private life is also going very well, with my 86 year old Mam still being around and doing well.

Also, I have been together with my girlfriend, Annemieke, for 3 years and, since 10 months ago, we are proud parents of Maya, our dog.

We are very much looking forward to welcoming you back to the UK for our Hemsby Autumn Spectacular. I was fortunate to work with you since Brexit and Covid when we shared a bill in Switzerland (photos above) and it was really wonderful to hear your latest show there, which was truly superb.

Can you give readers any clue as to what we may hear from you at Hemsby?

I have such fantastic memories of the Hemsby/Keyboard Cavalcade festivals, so I can't wait to return and see you all again, it's been far too long!

Oh yes, Switzerland was great, we did enjoy it, didn't we? I still go to Switzerland about twice a year.

I am preparing a great show for the Hemsby audience. Of course we will have some music from the shows,



Dirk & Annemieke just before a concert

Thanks Dirk for sharing so much about your life and career with us. We can't wait to see you performing in the UK at Hemsby this autumn. Dirk sent over so many super photos that I can't resist sharing a few more of them with you here.



A concert in 1992 on the Wersi Spectra



Maya



Dirk, Annemieke & Maya

