

Tafelmusik

GET TO KNOW

*This is part of a series of informal interviews with members of the Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra and Chamber Choir. This week we introduce you to flute & recorder player **Alison Melville**, who has played with the orchestra since 1983.*

ALISON MELVILLE



How old were you when you started to make music?

I started playing the recorder when I was about eight years old, just like many, many people! I was living in London, England at the time and my schoolteacher Mr. Green offered after-school group lessons for anyone who wanted to learn the recorder. We paid him for the instrument and the book, but he taught the lessons for free, out of the goodness of his heart. I still have that recorder and book!

Why is the recorder such a common instrument in schools?

The recorder is a common school instrument because it's possible to make very inexpensive plastic ones, which are relatively unbreakable – no keys or strings to break. And now you can get plastic soprano recorders in VERY cool colours ... It's also an easy instrument to start playing on, but then, so is the piano.

What is the difference between a recorder played by an elementary school child, and your recorder?

The recorders I play now are copies of 17th- and 18th-century instruments, in various kinds of wood, and mostly

hand-made by very fine builders, so they're quite different than school instruments.

Where did you grow up?

I grew up in several places. By the time I was ten I had lived in Toronto, Calgary and Winnipeg; and in Barrow-in-Furness (Cumbria) and London, UK. After that, I lived in Toronto until I went to study in Europe.

What other musical groups do you play with?

Besides playing with Tafelmusik, I play renaissance and medieval music with the Toronto Consort, baroque music with other ensembles in Toronto and further afield, and more contemporary music with the Bird Project and other groups. I also play Scandinavian-based music with Ensemble Polaris, of which Marco Cera is also a member; we do a fair bit of original music and I've written some tunes for that band. With Polaris I also play a bit of Norwegian seljefløyte, or willow flute.

What kind of music do you listen to, besides baroque and classical?

I'm pretty much a musical omnivore and listen to many kinds of world and folk music, rock, and various kinds of jazz, new music, and early music, as the mood takes me.

Who is your favourite composer?

Some of my favourite 'western art music' composers are Dufay, Cornysh, Corelli, Charpentier, Bach, Satie and Messiaen.

Where is the best place in the world to play baroque music?

There are many wonderful places I've played, like when Tafelmusik played at Carnegie Hall last year, or when I went to New Zealand with the Aradia Ensemble.

One memorable career moment was the first time I played for *The Friendly Giant* at the CBC TV studios on Jarvis Street ... I'd watched the show devotedly as a kid, and so seeing Friendly, Jerome and Rusty "in the flesh" was just awesome.

But other kinds of performances also stay with you. I once played for a Canadian citizenship ceremony in Toronto, and it was very touching to be a part of that. I also spent one summer playing with a group doing concerts in prisons and reform schools across southern Ontario. That experience was an eye-opener.