

Biography of Carel Kraayenhof

Carel Kraayenhof was eight when he first looked at a piano book. Eight years old, but already dreaming of the day when he could move and stimulate people with his own music, in the same way that he was deeply touched every time by the emotions that music could stir in him. Music was already an important means of communication for Carel, as young as he was, and that has only increased over the years. His enthusiasm convinced his parents to buy an old piano for a hundred and fifty guilders, which Carel practiced on avidly. He worked through the first piano books by himself; after that he took lessons. Carel himself says that he was not a natural talent, but he was driven and motivated, and by playing a lot he gained more and more skill. However the most important ingredient was not lacking: Carel had found his great passion in music.

In the mid-seventies, under the influence of his brother Jaap, Carel became fascinated by Irish, Scottish and English folk music. He learned to play the accordion and the English concertina. It was in that period that he began to perform with his brother at parties and festivals, on the street and in theatres.

In the early eighties Carel first encountered the bandonéon. He discovered an LP of purely solo arrangements for this passionate instrument, and Carel was struck as if by lightning. He was deeply impressed by the large range of timbres that came from the LP, knowing that it was from a single instrument. Carel knew at that exact moment without any doubt that he wanted to become a bandonéonist. For thousands of hours he listened to Argentine tango music, he wrote out the notes, he played his bandonéon, and practiced for days at a time to learn to master and understand all the buttons, sounds and possibilities of his beloved instrument.

Carel had fallen for the Argentine tango, and this didn't go unnoticed by the big names of the tango world. It was the great maestro Astor Piazzolla who in 1987 personally invited Kraayenhof to play for him on Broadway in the tango musical 'Tango Apasionado' (1987). Although Carel was playing in his first tango ensemble at that time, 'Tango Cuatro' (1985), this was the golden opportunity to play with this great maestro, his great role model, and he went to New York for three months. In 1988 Carel started his tango sextet 'Sexteto Canyonque', and was invited by his other idol, maestro Osvaldo Pugliese, to play with his sextet in Buenos Aires together with Pugliese's orchestra. Countries like Argentina, Uruguay, the United States, Malaysia, Turkey, and a large number of Western European countries got to know the compelling music of Carel y su Sexteto Canyonque. In these years Carel also developed as an arranger and composer of tango music. In the early nineties Carel was invited by the Rotterdam Conservatory to create a course in bandonéon. This led to the establishment of the Argentine Tango Department, where Carel has been teaching the bandonéon and piano as main subjects for almost ten years, and conducts ensembles and the OTRA student orchestra. To this day this is the only place in the world where lessons in tango are given at the conservatory level. Although Carel was enjoying increasing fame in the international tango scene, the breakthrough with the general public in the Netherlands had not yet happened.

On the 2nd of February 2002 that changed dramatically. At the wedding of H.R.H. Prince Willem-Alexander and H.R.H. Princess Máxima he played a passionate rendition of the sensitive 'Adiós Nonino' by Astor Piazzolla in De Nieuwe Kerk in Amsterdam. For the newly wed royal couple and their thousand guests, among whom were Nelson Mandela and Kofi Annan, and also at the same time live for more than 55 million people around the world, the passionate sounds of Carel's bandonéon coaxed Máxima's famous tears. Not only was our future Queen moved by the exquisite performance; but in this moment Argentine tango made a lasting impression on the hearts of the Dutch people. 90,000

CDs of the music from the wedding of Willem-Alexander and Maxima were sold, and the single 'Adiós Nonino' can be found in 30,000 Dutch living rooms; the 'Tango Royal' CD with Carel's performance crossed shop counters 75,000 times, and the CD 'Tango Maxima' that was independently released by Kraayenhof's own orchestra, Sexteto Canyengue, sold over 30,000 copies.

Since that moment, the concerts that Kraayenhof gives with his Sexteto Canyengue are attended *en masse* by the Dutch. People are fascinated by the Argentine tango, with its provocative compositions, its emotional melodies and its challenging changes in tempo. His hard work was not only rewarded by the grateful appreciation of the public, connoisseurs also know the value of Carel y su Sexteto Canyengue. He received the 'Gouden Notenkraker' (the 'Golden Nutcracker') (1993) from the Nederlandse Toonkunstenaars Bond (Dutch Musicians Union) as appreciation for his skill and constant effort to perform live. Kraayenhof received a prize from the Nederlandse Vereniging van Danslereraren (Dutch Society of Dance Teachers) (2002) for stimulating the Netherlands to learn how to dance tango. Henk Geels Evenementen honored Kraayenhof with the annual presentation of the Popularity Awards with the prize for the great breakthrough of the year (2002). In 2003 Carel received the Edison audience prize for his CD 'Tango Royal'. Carel could take great pride in receiving a high cultural distinction from the Argentinean government in 2005 for all his work in the last 20 years as a worldwide ambassador of the Argentine tango!

Big names are like a red thread through Carel's career. He received his first bandonéon lessons from Alfredo Marcucci, the highly talented bandonéon player living in Belgium. In 1987 he was invited to work on the musical 'Tango Apasionado' with Astor Piazzolla, the father of Tango Nuevo, and in 1990 he had the opportunity to tour with the legendary Osvaldo Pugliese. In the meantime, Carel himself has become a world-renowned master of tango. In 1997 Carel and his sextet appeared on Dutch TV with Yo-Yo Ma, and in 2002 he performed in a Piazzolla tribute to a sold-out Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires, with the famous Sexteto Mayor which sees him as a distant son. In 2006 Carel created the enchanting sound of the successful CD 'Guardians of the Clouds' together with the famous film composer Ennio Morricone.

In the Netherlands Carel appeared on albums by artists such as Youp van 't Hek, Herman van Veen, André Hazes and Bløf, and performed with Trijntje Oosterhuis and René Froger. He accompanied Bløf on their trip to Buenos Aires and at their performances in Ahoy and Nieuwe Luxor. In the summer of 2004 he played six evenings with Marco Borsato in an overfull Kuip, playing for more than 320,000 people in a week.

As a child Carel Kraayenhof had found his great passion in music. Over 40 years later the burning passion of the eight year old Carel has grown into a bright, unquenchable fire.

www.carelkraayenhof.nl

Bandonéon soloist

Carel Kraayenhof has worked as a bandonéon soloist with:

- the Brabant Orchestra
- the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra
- the Metropole Orchestra conducted by Dick Bakker

- the Philips Symphony Orchestra
- the Residentie Orchestra
- the Concertgebouw Chamber Orchestra
- the Gelderland Orchestra.
- the Orchestra from the east
- Tonkünstler Orchester Niederösterreich
- Rundfunk Sinfonieorchester
- 2008: Australia, Sydney, Perth, Adelaide
China; Peking, Xi'an

-2009 'London Symphony Orchestra' and Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra

Documentaries

Documentaries that Carel Kraayenhof has worked on:

- 'In de greep van de Tango' ('Embraced by the tango'), director: Leendert Pot (1990)
- 'Bandoneón', director: Rolf Lambert (1998)
- 'Nostalgia? A tango road movie', director: Wouter Hasebos (2002)

Discography

'Tangueros de Holanda' (1997)	Independent release (see website)
'Cinco tangos' (1998)	Independent release (see website)
'Tango Maxima' (2000)	Independent release (see website)
'Tango Royal' (2002)	Universal
'Street Tango' (2003)	Universal
'Guardians of the Clouds' (2006)	Universal
'Tango heroes' CD/DVD (2006)	Universal
'Memorias de Cuba'(2008)	universal

Management & Booking

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