

Paul Rans

Paul Rans was born in Leuven, Belgium, where he co-founded a band called **RUM** in 1969. During the next ten years **RUM** proved to be one of the major European folk bands whose original blend of traditional and contemporary songs and music proved to be the right touch at the right time. **RUM** performed not only in Flanders and Wallonia, but also extensively in the Netherlands, France, England, Ireland, Germany and Switzerland.

Besides performing with **RUM**, Paul Rans also studied classical guitar at the Brussels Conservatoire, but his interest in early music led him from the guitar to the lute. He studied in Cologne with Michael Schäffer and later also in England.

In 1976 he moved to London and later to Dorset, where he divided his time between music and lute making.

In 1979 he recorded the LP *Die Nachtegael int wilde* with lutenist *Lieven Misschaert*, featuring 16th century Flemish songs, lute solos and duets – an LP which enjoyed very favourable reviews well beyond Belgian borders (*An exciting record*, Early Music).

He participated in various Belgian Radio productions such as the *Islandsuite* in 1984 (songs of Flemish fishermen in Iceland) or *Vive le Geus* in 1988, singing 16th and 17th century Flemish revolutionary songs in the company of Wannes Van de Velde and the BRTN Radio Chorus, conducted by Vic Nees. He also took part in a Radio 1 series on *Flemish Songbooks*, with other prominent Flemish singers such as Wannes Van de Velde, Dirk Van Esbroeck and 't Kliekske.

Blame not my lute was a solo LP, recorded in 1987, featuring 16th c. Flemish, English and French songs and lute music, again well received by the music press. (*Consistently attention-gripping*, Classical Guitar).

In 1987 he moved back to Belgium and founded the **PAUL RANS ENSEMBLE** (Philippe Malfeyt: lutes, hammered dulcimer; Piet Stryckers: fiddle, viol, hurdy-gurdy; Paul Van Loey: recorders, dulcian). Soon after their first CD was released, *Mit desen nyewen iare*, Christmas songs from the Low Countries, followed by a second, *Egidius waer bestu bleven*, a selection from the 14th c. Gruuthuse Ms. These recordings as well as the group's concerts were greatly appreciated by audience and critics alike.

Honest and pure like the flame of a candle (Knack)

Musicians in heart and soul (De Standaard)

Paul Rans is a marvellous singer (Early Music Review, London)

1993 saw another first with the release of a selection of songs from the *Antwerp Songbook* (1544): *A caress for the ear in our stressed-out fin-de-siècle*, Uit-Magazine.

In February 1994 he took part in a Brussels concert where the European lute was confronted with the Arab 'ud. Here he was in the company of lutenist Philippe Malfeyt and two Moroccan 'ud players, Abid El Bahri and Kamal Hors. This resulted in further Flemish-Moroccan cooperation, **RANS & WESHM**, an intercultural programme based on Moroccan as well as Flemish roots. A taste of this programme can be heard on the compilation CD *Warande Express*.

Since then the name **RANS** has been kept and the group has also worked with the *Capilla Flamenca* in performing secular songs and folk songs besides their 16th century polyphonic counterparts.

Paul Rans is also the Flemish voice on the Dutch ensemble *Camerata Trajectina's* discs *De Vrede van Munster* (1998) and *Wilhelmus en de anderen* (Amsterdam University Press)

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In 2001 he was involved in *Het Project*, a contemporary approach to traditional music, with Marc Hauman, Lode Vercampt, Philippe Thuriot, Philippe Malfeyt and Kim Delcour, directed by *Wouter Vandenabeele* who wrote and arranged the music.

More recently *RANS* has worked with the French singer and hurdy-gurdy player *Claude Flagel* as *RANS & FLAGEL* in a programme called *De la Seine à l'Escaut / Van Antwerpen tot Parijs* – a meeting between Germanic and Latin cultures showing many links between Flemish and French songs. The CD was awarded a *CHOC!* by the prominent French music magazine *Le Monde de la Musique*.

In 2002 Paul Rans joined the top Flemish folk band *Ambrozijs* to perform the longest known ballad in the Dutch language, *De Hertog van Brunswyk*, also resulting in a CD with just the one ballad, but sung to a variety of tunes.

In 2003 he was invited to take part in the Brussels literary festival *Muziek en Poëzie*. With stage and film actress *Antje de Boeck* he devised a programme confronting Middle Dutch songs and poems from the Gruuthuse MS. with the modern verse of Hugo Claus.

In 2005 further cooperation is planned with *Erik Van Nevel's* early music ensemble *Currende*, and a new CD is in preparation with songs about wars in Flanders Fields throughout the centuries.

Since 1985 Paul Rans has also been a regular broadcaster with the English programmes of the Flemish World Service, *RVI* (Radio Vlaanderen Internationaal), he has worked free-lance for BRTN's Radio 1 and Radio 3 and since 1993 he is a producer and presenter of world music programmes for VRT Radio 3, now called *KLARA*. This has also resulted in his production of an award winning series of 8 CDs with Traditional Music from Flanders.