

caféfax

J.S. Bach

ARIA VARIATA

BWV 989



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CALEFAX Reed Quintet

This single captures the final recording Calefax made with their bass clarinetist Jelte Althuis, who left the ensemble in 2025. It stands as a heartfelt tribute to 32 wonderful years of making music and growing together as an ensemble.

ARIA VARIATA BWV 989

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Aria variata in A minor, BWV 989

(Arr. by Jelte Althuis)

1	Aria and Variation 1–5	7. 26
2	Variation 6–10	7. 26

Total playing time: 14. 53

CALEFAX

Oliver Boekhoorn oboe

Bart de Kater clarinet

Raaf Hekkema soprano saxophone

Jelte Althuis bass clarinet

Alban Wesly bassoon

ARIA VARIATA

alla maniera Italiana
BWV 989

J.S. Bach

Arr. Jelte Althuis (2025)

Aria

Only first time

Only play repeat

Sheet music available for purchase on www.calefax.nl

Notes of the arranger

When I listen to music, two questions always run through my mind: do I like it, and can I arrange it for Calefax?

If I answer 'yes' to both, the familiar internal struggle sets in that always precedes the work process: is the music really as good as I think it is? Does my version add anything to the original? And lastly, will the arrangement 'land' with the group?

I made all my arrangements with the members of Calefax in mind, of which I am one myself.

This arrangement occupies a special place, since I wrote it while grappling with a difficult decision – leaving Calefax.

Just like the ten variations that follow the delightful aria, my mood flew in all directions: from ordered and regulated, to frenzied and almost out of control.

During the tenth variation, the music settles down, having reached its final conclusion.



It is with gratitude that I think back on 32 years of Calefax, and the 125 or so arrangements that I was privileged to make for the group.

The *Aria Variata, alla Maniera Italiana* is my final contribution.

It is an early work, from the time when J.S. Bach's employer, Johann Ernst von Saxe-Weimar, charged him with the task of copying music by popular Italian composers of the time. During that same period, Bach wrote another work that was strongly influenced by the copying process, and that also displays Italian characteristics.

As luck would have it, that was my first ever arrangement for Calefax, the Capriccio titled *Die Abreise: The Departure*.

Helte Althuis

Calefax publishes sheet music of its own arrangements for reed quintet under the name Calefax Edition. The score and parts for this arrangement are available to purchase from the Calefax webshop: www.calefax.nl.

All profits from sales of the sheet music will be donated to Médecins Sans Frontières.

The following pages contain personal letters from the members of Calefax, including Jelte, reflecting on their journey together and sharing the memories they treasure most. A tribute to Jelte's 32 years of membership of the group!

From: **Oliver Boekhoorn, oboe**

Concerts are wonderful, and concert performance would seem to be the ultimate goal for anyone learning a musical instrument. But what is the future of performance, if there is nobody left to carry the baton? That alone is reason enough to invest in education. But in Jelte's case, it was also a genuine passion and one of the things that brought us closer together at Calefax.

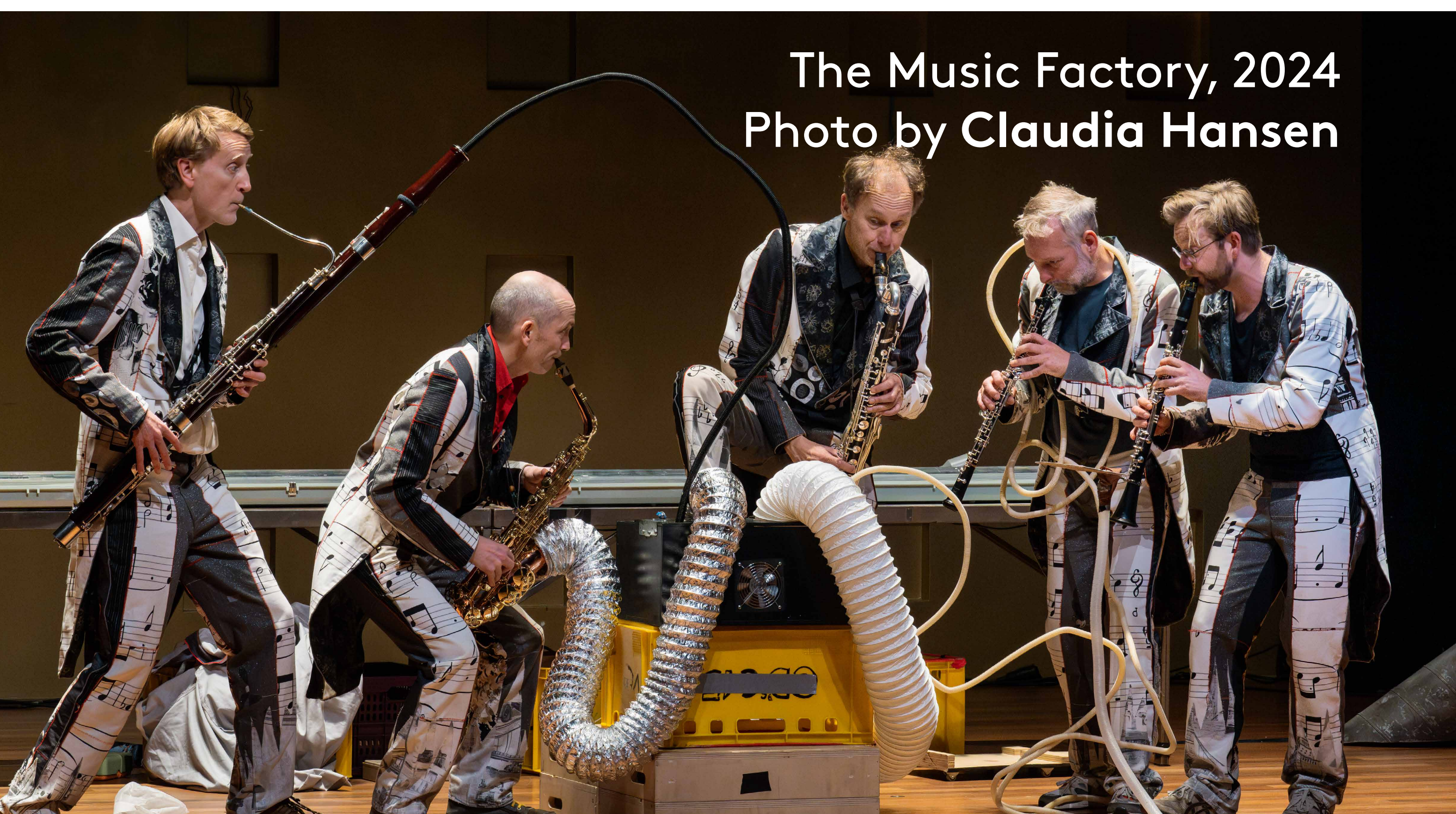
Music education is not just about giving lessons to children. It also involves a far broader palette of activities: masterclasses for conservatory students, family shows, projects with amateur orchestras and ensembles, and school workshops, to name but a few.

Creating suitable programmes for all of these groups is extremely time-consuming, and Jelte invested not only a great deal of time and patience into them, but also plenty of humour and resourcefulness.

I remember the time we were

teaching some children on a tour, in front of quite a large audience. Jelte was given a French horn player who, unfortunately, could not land a single note. Many teachers would have been at their wit's end, but Jelte cheerfully set to work with a lesson on stage presentation. To me, it was a fine demonstration of how to turn a thorny problem into a positive experience. After half an hour, the student left the stage happy and content.

We have all experienced so many wonderful moments during these projects. There's the occasional hiccup, but ultimately the results are always worthwhile. And plenty of fun, of course! So thank you so much Jelte, these wonderful memories will endure.



The Music Factory, 2024
Photo by Claudia Hansen

From: **Alban Wesley, bassoon**

What many people probably don't know is that Jelte is also a seasoned craftsman, with a fantastic eye for detail and perfection. To name some examples, in descending order of grandeur: he has renovated two houses, always maintained his boat with love and dedication, and once built five marvellous portable organs for our show titled 'One-way Trip to Mars.'

It goes without saying that these qualities are also reflected in Jelte's music-making, and in 'building the ensemble.' He was always aware of everyone's individual state of mind, and how that affected both the social and musical structure of the group as a whole. There are also purely musical qualities that are distinctly his, which will continue to resonate through Calefax for a long time to come. Attention to timbre, to the expressive arc of a phrase, or making sure that chords not only begin together, but also end

together. One metaphor that he used to compare our rehearsal process with the various stages of sanding wood will definitely stay with us: 'Good job on 100 grit today. Let's work up to 500 grit tomorrow.' It therefore makes complete sense that Jelte, shortly after leaving Calefax, started working with renowned organ builder Flentrop. A workplace where his passions for both musical and physical fine-tuning will remain united for years to come.



Jelte Althuis – From [the video](#) 35 Years of Plenty by Bowie Verschuuren, 2020

From: Bart de Kater, clarinet

eed time, reed time,
it's reed time!

Without fail, after every venue sound check, Jelte would always put on his operatic baritone and usher in the moment when we would go in search of our best reeds for the concert.

For five years, I have enjoyed the most wonderful 'reed time' with my clarinet buddy. And it wasn't always just about reeds. Any subject could come up: deep and meaningful conversations, hours of pointless waffle, fun and games, keeping each other sharp, a critical note at the right time, a helping hand where necessary, but above all: encouraging one another to enjoy playing, and to go in search of those memorable, musical moments.

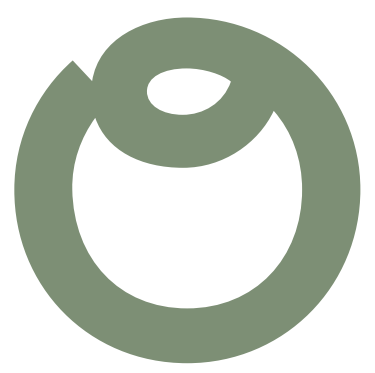
Reed time was more than just a bridge between the rehearsal and the concert. It became a time for

music, friendship, depth,
engagement, and enjoyment.
The time flew by, but I would not
have missed it for the world.
Jelte, thank you for all that time,
and for all that happened in-be-
tween the notes. Until the next
Barolo moment!

Jelte Althuis & Bart de Kater, 2025



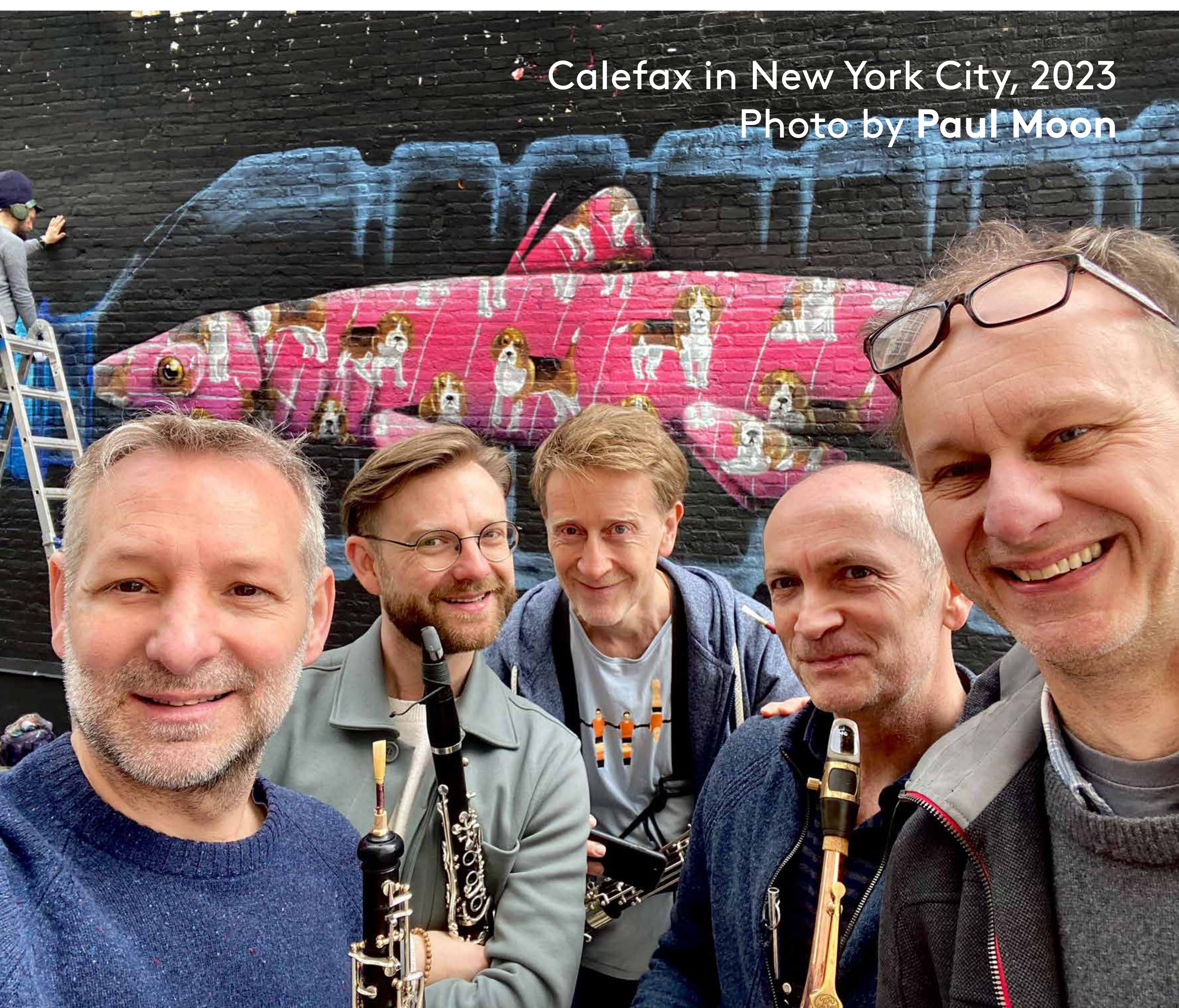
From: Raaf Hekkema, saxophone



One added benefit of playing with Calefax is travelling to distant countries. Acclimatisation days offer the opportunity to explore the local surrounds, and Jelte and I often took long walks together. We talked about life, the state of the world, recent group developments, previous projects, and of course, our family lives.

We both became fathers at more or less the same time, and so that was a favourite topic of conversation. During our (occasionally perilous) treks through San Francisco, New York, São Paulo, Pretoria, London, Turin, Riga, Ankara, Dubai, New Delhi, Singapore and Shanghai, we discussed the various developmental stages of sons and daughters, and what they had taught us about fatherhood and about ourselves. And about how having children influenced our perspective on work, and sometimes even led to new project ideas, such as children's

shows, or performances with a focus on social developments.
Thank you for the walks, Jelte!
I shall miss them.



Calefax in New York City, 2023
Photo by Paul Moon

From: Jelte Althuis, bass clarinet

My departure from Calefax took place in several small steps.

The first – and greatest – hurdle was during the initial rehearsal after the 2025 summer recess, when I told my fellow musicians that I was leaving. Shortly after that, I told the Calefax staff at the office.

Several weeks later, during a long-planned tour to Singapore, I was invited to speak about my departure live on the Dutch radio station NPO Klassiek.

Directly after the radio show I received a text message from the boys: 'We're sitting outside, and have already ordered you a beer.'

I went from playing every concert with Calefax, to playing lots of concerts with Calefax, to no longer playing with Calefax. And in the meantime, Calefax has been doing what it does best: soldiering on! First of all with me still around, then occasionally without me,

and lastly almost entirely
without me. I say 'almost,' because
thankfully we still have the
photographs, as well as the stories
from all the adventures we have
experienced together.

My life will be very different, but then
again, not so different after all:
Calefax is always with me, just no
longer in my calendar.



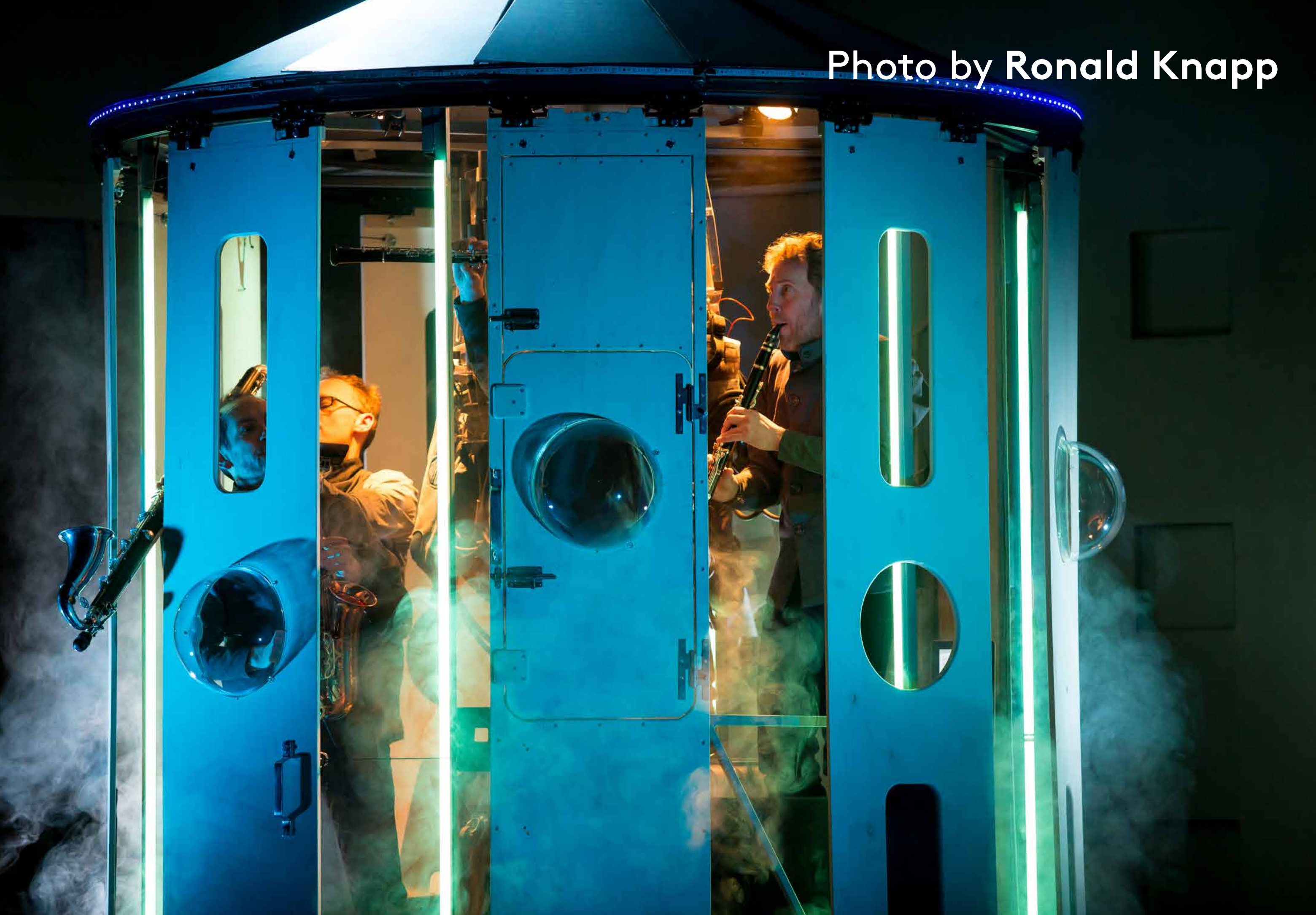
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PRODUCTION TEAM

Recording, editing & mastering

Oliver Boekhoorn

Cover design

Marjolein Coenrady (PENTATONE)

Cover photo

Jouk Oosterhof

Liner notes

**Alban Wesly, Bart de Kater,
Jelte Althuis, Oliver Boekhoorn,
Raaf Hekkema**

English translation

Brent Annable

Product management & design

Ana Milovanović (PENTATONE)

Calefax team

General Director

Hannah Soepenbergh

Marketing & PR

Larissa Kaptijn

Production

Renée Vos

Financial Director

Stef Koenis

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PENTATONE TEAM

Managing Director

Sean Hickey

Label Director

Silvia Pietrosanti

A&R

Alice Lombardo

Product Management

Ana Milovanović

Press

Allie Summers

Distribution

Camilla Vickerage

Audio

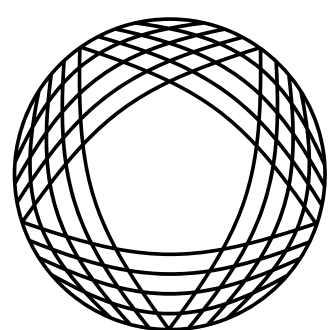
Wirre de Vries

Finance

Adrie Engels

Admin

Lineke Steffers



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