NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART ONLINE EDITIONS
Dutch Paintings of the Seventeenth Century

Hendrick ter Brugghen
Dutch, 1588 - 1629

Bagpipe Player

1624

oil on canvas
overall: 100.7 x 82.9 cm (39 5/8 x 32 5/8 in.)
framed: 129.54 × 111.76 × 7.62 cm (51 × 44 × 3 in.)
Inscription: upper right, in brown paint, HTB in monogram: HTBrugghen fecit 1624
Paul Mellon Fund and Greg and Candy Fazakerley Fund 2009.24.1

ENTRY

Hendrick ter Brugghen was unparalleled in capturing the rhythms of music, and he did so in the very way he composed his paintings.[1] His musicians lean into their instruments, their bodies alive with the joy of the sounds they bring forth, whether coaxed from a violin, lute, recorder, or bagpipe. In this remarkable image, a bagpipe player, seen in strict profile, squeezes the leather bag between his forearms as he blows through the instrument's pipe and fingers a tune on the chanter. Two large drones, composed of different wooden sections, rest on his bare shoulder. The interlocking rhythms of this ensemble—the broad, round shapes of the musician's shoulder, beret, and brown bagpipe bag; the flowing patterns of folds in his creamy shirt and taupe robe; the pronounced diagonals of the drones and pipe; and the verticality of the chanter—parallel those of a musical score. In music, broad, fulsome notes, quickly cadenced flourishes, and strong beats not only punctuate melodies with dynamic accents but also culminate in a well-defined and emphatic finale; Ter Brugghen achieves the same effects in this painting.

Though muted in tonality, the *Bagpipe Player* is both bold and forceful in its scale and painting techniques. The musician's larger-than-life-size form fills the picture plane, his passion for his music reflected in the energy of Ter Brugghen's sure, broad brushstrokes, which flow across the canvas. The numerous adjustments the artist made in the folds of the shirt and robe, as well as in the shape of the bagpipes, indicate the freedom with which he approached his subject.[2] Also astonishing is Ter Brugghen's control of light, which falls most strongly on the bagpipe player's shoulder, shirt, and fingers while leaving his face in

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shadow—evidence that the painting focuses primarily on the sensuality of music and not on a specific individual.

The bagpipe player is a muscular, rough-hewn type, hardly an ideal of grace and refinement. His head is large, his nose is round, and he sports a shepherd's mustache and beard. His hands and knuckles are thick, yet from the manner in which he fingers the chanter, leaving the vent hole uncovered, it is clear that he is adept at playing the instrument. The same feeling is evoked in a second depiction of the bagpipe player, also dated 1624 [fig. 1], in which the musician, wearing the identical beret and cap medal, and with his shoulder similarly sensually exposed, looks intently out at the viewer while playing a three-drone instead of a two-drone bagpipe.[3] The turn of his head and the apparent movement of his fingers on the chanter make it the more active of the two images, but both paintings are equally about the player's complete engagement in his music.

Bagpipes were traditionally viewed as folk instruments, played at country dances or by herdsmen and shepherds whiling away their time. These types of portrayals were common throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, appearing in the works of Albrecht Dürer (German, 1471 - 1528), Lucas van Leyden (Netherlandish, 1489/1494 - 1533), Pieter Bruegel the Elder (Flemish, c. 1525/1530 - 1569), David Teniers the Younger (Flemish, 1610 - 1690), and Jan Steen (Dutch, 1625/1626 - 1679), among others.[4] Ter Brugghen's musician, however, is not a local peasant or shepherd the artist might have encountered on a foray into the countryside; it is unlikely that shepherds played their bagpipes with drones resting on a bare shoulder. The loosely draped robes here reflect a manner of dress based on antique fashions. Like the brightly colored, fanciful outfits in Ter Brugghen's depictions of violinists, flutists, and lute players from the 1620s, which derive from sixteenth-century Spanish and French prototypes as well as from Caravaggio (Roman, 1571 - 1610), this all'antica mode of dress alluded to an arcadian ideal of country living that was popular in aristocratic and court circles, and among the urban elite, particularly in Utrecht and The Hague. Essential to this mythology were notions of the purity and bounty of country existence, as well as the romantic ideals of love and beauty that emanated from Renaissance literary and pictorial traditions.

Bagpipes were often included in these odes to pastoral life, which may help explain the appeal of paintings of musicians for aristocratic patrons during the early

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to mid-seventeenth century.[5] In Daniel Heinsius' 1616 poem "Pastorael," the shepherd Cordion sits quietly in the countryside dreaming of his beloved while he soulfully plays his bagpipe and sings his lover's lament [fig. 2].[6] Two extremely popular pastoral plays of the period, Giovanni Battista Guarini's *Il Pastor Fido*, 1590, and Pieter Cornelisz Hooft's *Granida*, 1615, similarly evoke an arcadian ideal of bucolic existence quite different from the profligate ways of urban and courtly life.[7] Musicians playing bagpipes, flutes, and other pastoral instruments created the auditory ambience for such plays. In 1637, for example, Sir Anthony van Dyck (Flemish, 1599 - 1641) depicted the engraver and print dealer François Langlois playing a bagpipe and dressed as a *savoyard*, a type of itinerant shepherd-musician found performing in French aristocratic circles [fig. 3].[8] An anonymous portrait of 1632 portrays a distinguished and well-dressed Dutch gentleman proudly holding his bagpipe, a further indication that the instrument was also played by respectable members of the upper class [fig. 4].

The specific character of *Bagpipe Player*—a single, larger-than-life-sized musician shown against a plain grayish ocher background—owes much to the influence of Gerrit van Honthorst (Dutch, 1592 - 1656) and Dirck van Baburen (Dutch, c. 1595 - 1624), Dutch Caravaggist painters who returned to Utrecht from Rome in 1620. They brought with them stylistic and thematic predilections appropriate for expressing the sensuous, idealized concepts of arcadian subject matter that they adapted from paintings by Caravaggio and his followers, particularly Bartolomeo Manfredi (1582–1622). There were also other significant pictorial sources for half-length depictions of musicians. Marten Jan Bok has persuasively argued that the inspiration for this new subject matter owes much to the existence in Utrecht of an early sixteenth-century Venetian painting of a flute player, which at the time was attributed to Correggio (Parmese, 1489/1494 - 1534) but which was almost certainly painted by Giorgione (Venetian, 1477/1478 - 1510) or Titian (Venetian, 1488/1490 - 1576).[9]

Even though Ter Brugghen had been in Italy earlier and presumably had seen some of Caravaggio's paintings of musicians, these additional pictorial sources probably inspired his initial foray into this subject matter in 1621, when he painted the *Flute Player* and the *Shepherd Flute Player*, both now in Kassel.[10] It was not until 1624, however, the date of the Gallery's *Bagpipe Player*, that Ter Brugghen fully turned his attention to the depiction of musicians. In that year alone he painted no fewer than five separate compositions devoted to music, featuring not

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only bagpipers but also musicians—sometimes singing—who play the lute and the violin.[11] He continued this interest in the years to follow.[12] Just what prompted this output is not known, but the appeal of this subject was such that Ter Brugghen and/or his workshop made replicas of a number of these works, including *Bagpipe Player*.[13]

Similarities in subject matter, style, and size among the canvases have led to the supposition that Ter Brugghen conceived of a number of these paintings as pendants. Indeed, Leonard Slatkes has proposed that the *Bagpipe Player* has a pendant, the so-called *Pointing Lute Player* [fig. 5].[14] He and Wayne Franits argue that the two works—which are identical in size, are both signed and dated 1624, and have complementary compositions—are also thematically conjoined.[15] They believe that the lute player's laughing demeanor and pointing gesture are meant to mock the bagpipe player as he plays this rustic instrument,[16] an interpretation that draws its bite from ancient mythology, specifically the musical contest between Marsyas, who played Pallas Athena's cast-off *aulos* (which was occasionally depicted as a bagpipe in fifteenth-century publications), and Apollo, who won the contest by playing a lyre.

Even though wind instruments were indeed considered to be less refined and elegant than string instruments [fig. 6],[17] the hypothesis that *Bagpipe Player* and *Pointing Lute Player* were pendants is not convincing and does not take into account the positive connotations of the bagpipe in seventeenth-century Dutch culture discussed above. The composition of *Pointing Lute Player* clearly indicates that it had a pendant, but the *Bagpipe Player* almost certainly was not the companion piece. Visually, the compositional relationships between the two works are not as compelling as they initially seem. The scale and disposition of the figures differ: the bagpipe player is larger than the lute player, higher in the picture plane, and more fully fills the space around him. Most important, the *Bagpipe Player* is an image of quiet grandeur and dignity. Nothing about the figure's pose, expression, or gestures suggests that Ter Brugghen conceived this image as the focus of a lute player's mockery.[18]

Ter Brugghen's *Bagpipe Player*, thus, should be seen as part of a broad cultural interest in the pastoral during the early seventeenth century that evoked the idyllic pleasures of country existence, particularly as experienced through music. Ter Brugghen fully embraced this theme in a series of remarkable paintings of

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musicians and singers that capture both the joy and the sensuality of life. As with this masterpiece, these engaging images invite us into a world where, through the boldness of the artist's brush and the rhythms of his forms, we feel the enduring power of music on the human spirit.

Arthur K. Wheelock Jr.

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COMPARATIVE FIGURES

fig. 1 Hendrick ter Brugghen, *Portrait of a Man Playing the Bagpipes*, 1624, oil on canvas, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

fig. 2 Anonymous, *Cordion Playing a Bagpipe*, engraving from Daniel Heinsius, “Pastorael,” in Heinsius, *Nederduytsche poemata*, Amsterdam, 1616

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fig. 3 Anthony van Dyck, *Portrait of François Langlois*, probably early 1630s, oil on canvas, National Gallery, London, Bought jointly by the National Gallery and the Barber Institute of Fine Arts, University of Birmingham, with the assistance of the Heritage Lottery Fund, 1997. Photo © National Gallery, London / Art Resource, NY

fig. 4 Anonymous, *Musician Holding Bagpipes*, 1632, oil on panel, Concordia University, Montreal

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fig. 5 Hendrick ter Brugghen, *Pointing Lute Player (A Seated Lutanist Pointing)*, 1624, oil on canvas, Private collection. Photo © Christie's Images / The Bridgeman Art Library

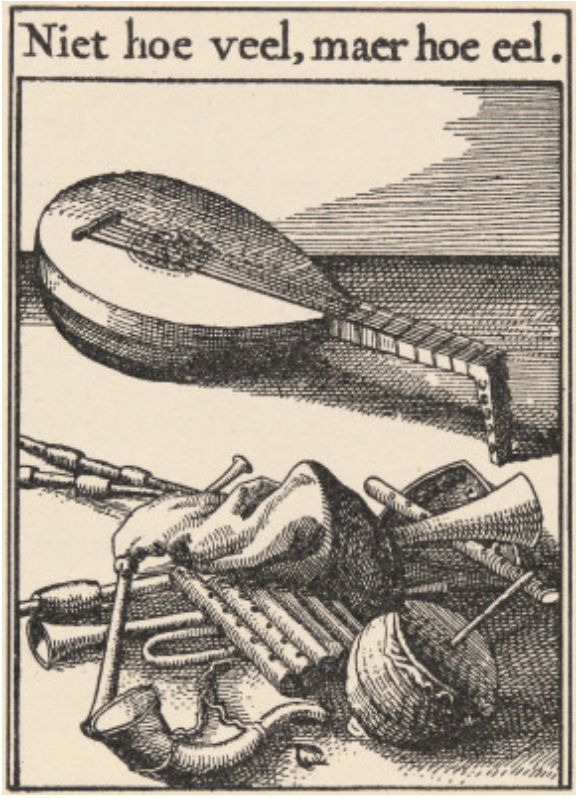

fig. 6 Claes Jansz Visscher, "Niet hoe veel, maer hoe eel" (Not how many, but how fine), 1614, engraving

NOTES

[1] I would like to thank Wayne Franits for his thoughtful comments on this entry.

[2] See the Technical Summary of this painting.

[3] For the history of bagpipes, see Emanuel Winternitz, *Musical Instruments and Their Symbolism in Western Art: Studies in Musical Iconology,* 2nd ed. (New Haven and London, 1979), 78, 80; and Anthony Baines, *Bagpipes*, ed. T. K. Penniman and B. M. Blackwood, 3rd ed. by H. T. La Rue (Oxford, 1995), 17, 115–117, fig. 72. I would like to thank Joel Robinson, maker of bagpipes, for his thoughtful observations about the instrument depicted in this painting and the portrayal of the bagpipe player.

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[4] Bagpipes often had negative associations: in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century prints they were frequently associated with fools and given sexual connotations. See, in particular, Marcus Dekiert, *Musikanten in der Malerei der niederländischen Caravaggio-Nachfolge: Vorstufen, Ikonographie und Bedeutungsgehalt der Musikszene in der niederländischen Bildkunst des 16. und 17. Jarhunderts* (Münster, 2003), 214–220. Nevertheless, bagpipes were also included in sixteenth-century images of musical ensembles that had positive overtones. For example, Frans Floris I (Flemish, c. 1519 - 1570) included a bagpipe in an allegorical image of *Musica* for a series of the Seven Liberal Arts, which Cornelis Cort (Netherlandish, 1533 - 1578) reproduced in an engraving (F. W. H. Hollstein, *Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings, and Woodcuts, ca. 1450–1700*, 41 vols. [Amsterdam, 1949], 5:59, no. 228). An engraving after Floris by Philips Galle (1537–1612) depicts a musical company scene consisting of string and wind instruments, including the bagpipe (Hollstein, *Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings, and Woodcuts*, 7:83, no. 787). The Latin text beneath the print distinguishes between music that enlivens the spirit (wind instruments) and that which calms the spirit (string instruments). These two prints are illustrated in *In de Vier Winden: de prentuitgeverij van Hieronymus Cock 1507/10–1570 te Antwerpen* (Rotterdam, 1988), 99–100.

[5] Emanuel Winternitz, *Musical Instruments and Their Symbolism in Western Art: Studies in Musical Iconology,* 2nd ed. (New Haven and London, 1979), 78, 80.

[6] Daniel Heinsius, “Pastorael,” in *Nederduytsche poemata* (Amsterdam, 1616), 34–36. “Oock heb ick veel vreucht bedreven, / En mijn lullepijp gestalt / Naer de deunen van het veldt.”

[7] See Alison McNeil Kettering, *The Dutch Arcadia: Pastoral Art and Its Audience in the Golden Age* (Totowa, NJ, 1983), especially 101–113.

[8] See Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., Susan J. Barnes, and Julius S. Held, *Anthony van Dyck* (Washington, DC, 1990), 304, no. 81.

[9] Marten Jan Bok, “On the Origins of the Flute Player in Utrecht Caravaggesque Painting,” in *Hendrick ter Brugghen und die Nachfolger Caravaggios in Holland,* ed. Rüdiger Klessmann, (Braunschweig, 1988), 135–141. As Bok notes, the painting, which has been attributed to both Titian and Giorgione, is probably: Attributed to Titian, *A Boy with a Pipe,* London, Hampton Court (see his fig. 183).

[10] Leonard J. Slatkes and Wayne E. Franits, *The Paintings of Hendrick ter Brugghen, 1588–1629: Catalogue Raisonné* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia, 2007), 176–177, nos. A61–A62, argue that the paintings are pendants “with antithetical types rather than two young musicians playing in harmony.”

[11] Leonard J. Slatkes and Wayne E. Franits, *The Paintings of Hendrick ter Brugghen, 1588–1629: Catalogue Raisonné* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia,

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2007), nos. A63–A72, RA2, W16.

[12] Ter Brugghen's interest in depicting musicians, including bagpipe players, was matched by Abraham Bloemaert (Dutch, 1566 - 1651) and Jan van Bijlert (1597/1598–1671). See Marcel G. Roethlisberger and Marten Jan Bok, *Abraham Bloemaert and His Sons: Paintings and Prints*, 2 vols. (Doornspijk, 1993), 1:267, no. 399; and Paul Huys Janssen, *Jan Van Bijlert, 1597/98–1671: Catalogue Raisonné* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia, 1998).

[13] In the collection of the Sarah Campbell Blaffer Foundation, Houston, Texas. The painting, which measures 89.3 x 83.2 cm, has been trimmed on all sides. See Leonard J. Slatkes and Wayne E. Franits, *The Paintings of Hendrick ter Brugghen, 1588–1629: Catalogue Raisonné* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia, 2007), 187, nos. W16, RA2.

[14] Slatkes proposed this pendant relationship in Albert Blankert et al., *Nieuw Licht op de Gouden Eeuw: Hendrick ter Brugghen en tijdgenoten* (Utrecht, 1986), under no. 15; and in "Bringing Ter Brugghen and Baburen Up-to-Date," *Bulletin du Musée National de Varsovie* 37 (1996): 210–213.

[15] Leonard J. Slatkes and Wayne E. Franits, *The Paintings of Hendrick ter Brugghen, 1588–1629: Catalogue Raisonné* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia, 2007), 184–188, nos. A70–A72, RA2, W16.

[16] For the implications of the pointing gesture, see Albert Blankert, "Heraclitus en Democritus: in het bijzonder in de Nederlands kunst van de zeventiende eeuw," *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 18 (1967): 56–57.

[17] In the emblem by Claes Jansz. Visscher, "Niet hoe veel, maer hoe eel" (Not how many, but how fine), which appears in Roemer Visscher, *Zinne-Poppen* (Amsterdam, 1614), a single lute stands in contrast to an array of wind instruments, including a bagpipe.

[18] Significantly, the *Bagpipe Player* has at least one extant workshop replica, and originally had at least two, yet no other version of the *Pointing Lute Player* exists. If thematic connections between the works were crucial to their conceptual underpinnings, one would expect that the various versions of the *Bagpipe Player* would also have had pendants. Indeed, in the only seventeenth-century reference to a Ter Brugghen *Bagpipe Player*, the painting did not have a pendant. See the inventory of Aernout van Lingen, "raad in de Vroedshap," which was made in Utrecht in 1676 and lists: "Een saakpijp van Ter Brugghen." The inventory, first published by Marten Jan Bok ("Hendrick Jansz. ter Brugghen," in Albert Blankert et al., *Nieuw licht op de gouden eeuw: Hendrick ter Brugghen en tijdgenoten* [Utrecht, 1986], 71), is in the Gemeentearchief Utrecht, Stadsarchief II, inv. no. 3146, 1676.

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TECHNICAL SUMMARY

The painting was executed on a plain, open-weave fabric, which has been lined. Paper tape covers the edges, making it difficult to determine if the tacking margins are intact, but cusping along all four sides indicates that the painting probably retains its original dimensions. The ground is a fairly thick red layer with large pigment particles. Ter Brugghen applied the oil paint directly, mostly using a wet-into-wet technique. The paint is fairly thin in the background but it is much thicker in the lighter areas and the drapery, especially in the creamy pink shirt. Ground is visible around the edges of the figure indicating that Ter Brugghen left a reserve. He used broad brushstrokes to outline the figure and the folds in the drapery. Examination with visible light, X-radiographs, and infrared reflectography at 1.5 to 1.8 microns[1] revealed numerous changes by the artist in the sitter's drapery and the bagpipes.

The painting is in good condition. It exhibits some weave enhancement, which was probably caused by too much pressure during the lining. The X-radiographs show a small, triangular loss in the lower left corner in the fabric in the sitter's gray cloak. The paint bears a broad craquelure in the lighter areas and a finer craquelure in the darks, which is enhanced by some tenting. In addition to paint loss associated with the hole, there is a vertical area of paint loss in the upper left corner, tiny losses along the bottom edge in the right corner, and small losses associated with old stretcher-bar cracks along the top, left, and right sides. The paint is fairly abraded in the background, especially around the word "fecit" in the inscription. The painting was treated in 2009, at which time discolored varnish was removed and the losses and much of the abrasion were inpainted.

[1] Infrared reflectography was performed using a Santa Barbara Focalplane InSb camera fitted with an H astronomy filter.

PROVENANCE

Possibly Aernout van Lingen, Utrecht, by 1676.[1] probably with (Glenz, Berlin), in 1915;[2] possibly Gustav Klemperer Edler von Klemenau [1852-1926], Dresden; his son, Dr. Herbert von Klemperer [1878-1951], Berlin;[3] (sale, Lange, Berlin, 18-19 November 1938, no. 151); acquired by Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, Cologne, inv. no.

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2613; restituted July 2008 to Klemperer's heirs; (sale, Sotheby's, New York, 9 January 2009, no. 40); (Johnny Van Haeften London Ltd., London; Otto Naumann, New York; Bernheimer Fine Art Ltd., Munich); purchased April 2009 by NGA.

[1] The inventory of Aernout van Lingen, "raad in de Vroedshap," which was made in Utrecht in 1676, lists: "Een saakpijp van Ter Brugghen." The inventory, first published by Marten Jan Bok ("Hendrick Jansz. ter Brugghen," in Albert Blankert et al., *Nieuw Licht op de Gouden Eeuw; Hendrick ter Brugghen en tijdgenoten*, exh. cat., Centraal Museum, Utrecht; Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, Braunschweig, 1986-1987: 71), is in the Gemeentearchief Utrecht, Stadsarchief II, inv. no. 3146, 1676.

[2] A. von Schneider, *Caravaggio und die Niederländer*, Marburg-Lahn, 1933; 2nd ed., Amsterdam, 1967: 140.

[3] Dr. Klemperer was forced to surrender the painting when he left Germany in 1938.

EXHIBITION HISTORY

1984 Masters of Seventeenth-Century Dutch Genre Painting, Philadelphia Museum of Art; Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin; Royal Academy of Arts, London, 1984, no. 24, pl. 9 (shown only in Philadelphia and Berlin).

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2011 Larger than Life: Ter Brugghen's *Saint Sebastian Tended by Irene*, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 2011, no catalogue.

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