

Baroque Music and Bottles?

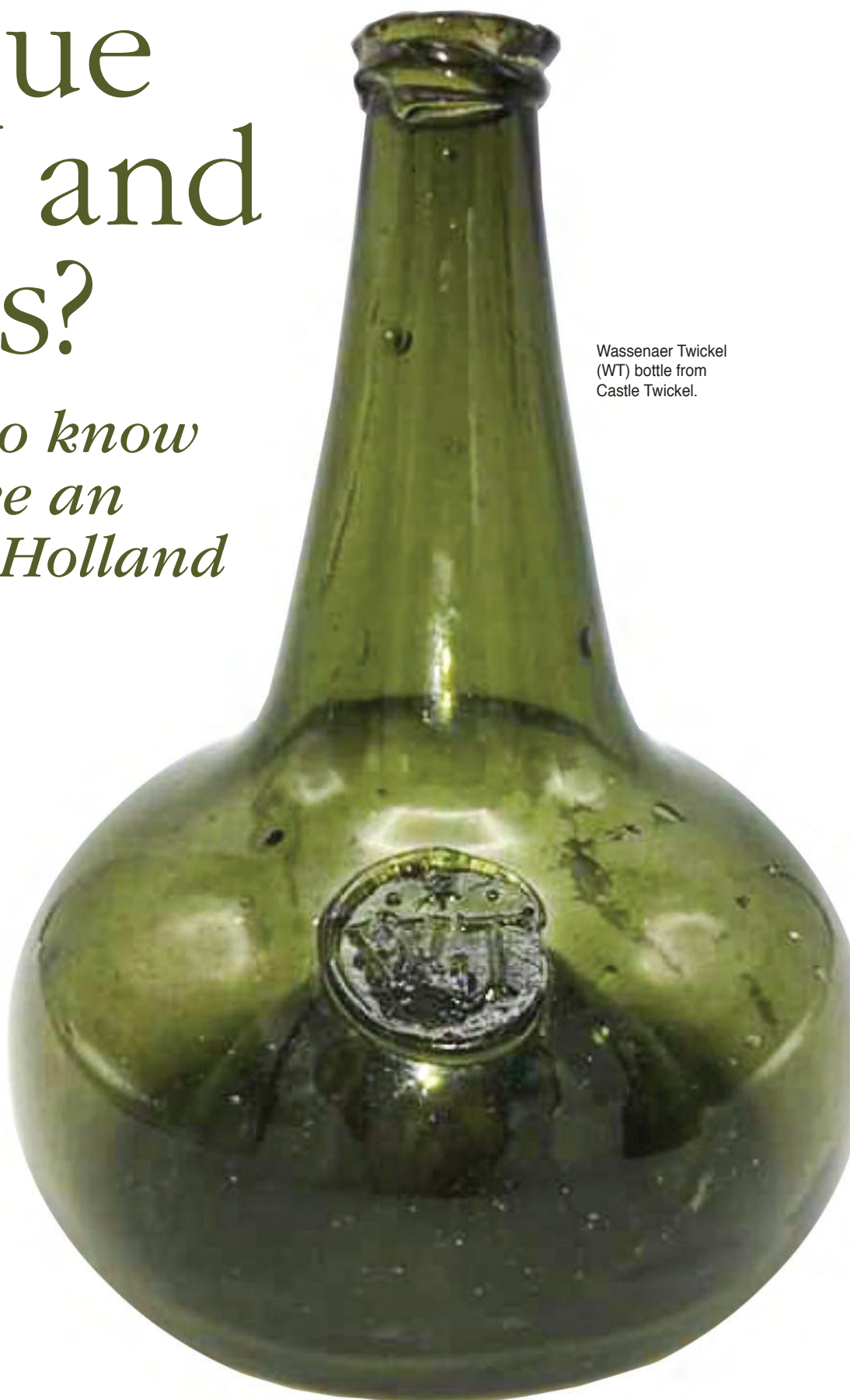
*If you want to know
the score, take an
excursion to Holland*

*By Johan Soeten
Rotterdam, Netherlands*

For more than 150 years, lovers of ancient music have been wondering who could have been the composer of the six Concerti Grossi in Italian style, published in 1745 by violinist Carlo Recicotti under the title *Sei Concerti Armonici*.

Because of the high quality of the works, music analysts attributed them to famous Italian composers such as Pergolesi or Locatelli. In 1980, however, a Dutch historian, Albert Dunning, was studying the 180 running meters of archives in the Castle of Twickel, a more than six hundred year old stronghold in the east of Holland. Twickel was named after the first inhabitants, and in the late 1600s, was transmitted to the noble family of van Wassenaer Obdam.

Wassenaer Twickel
(WT) bottle from
Castle Twickel.





A portrait of the
composer of *Sei
Concerti Armonici*,
Baron Unico
Willem van
Wassenaer.



Multiple views
of the Wassenaer
Obdam (WO) bottle.

To his surprise, Dunning found an early edition of the *Sei Concerti* with a handwritten introduction by the composer, Baron Unico Willem van Wassenaer (1714-66). Although known in private circles as a gifted musician, his position as member of one of the most prominent noble families did not allow him to present himself to the world as a “simple” composer.

But now, with that restraint gone, his name as one of Holland’s most gifted Baroque composers is well established. That undoubtedly caused among bottle collectors, creating a special interest in the 18th-century sealed wine bottles that were found in the wine cellar under the south tower, one of the oldest structures of the castle and, in the Middle Ages, in use as a dungeon.

The seals carry the initials of Wassenaer Obdam (WO), Wassenaer Twickel (WT) and Graaf (count) Wassenaer Twickel (GWT). An example of the latter can be found in the collection of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington D.C.

In the late 1970s, the last Baroness van Wassenaer gave a number of bottles to her gardener as a present. Those, as well as some stray bottles from one of the former cellar cleanings, gradually made their way into collectors’ hands.

Nowadays the cellar of the Twickel Castle is designated as a National Heritage site, so the chance that more bottles will come onto the market is quite remote. But the story they can tell is music to your ears: Baroque music.

Editor’s note: Twickel Castle is one of the largest private estates in Holland, covering more than 4,000 hectares. The oldest parts of the current castle date from the 16th century. And Ralph Finch couldn’t help but add, “With bottles, as with music, if it ain’t baroque, don’t fix it. So fix the bottle with the chip?”



ABOVE: An engraving of the composer Baron Unico Willem van Wassenaer.

BELOW: Aerial view of Twickel Castle, a 16th-century castle and private residence with elaborate landscaped gardens open to visitors.





Multiple views
of the Graaf (*Count*)
Wassenaer Twickel
(GWT) bottle.