



“Coat of Arms”

The village of Baarn originated in the 7th Century, situated on the southern to the Zuiderzee. The crest of Baarn originated in 1350 when the Bishop of Utrecht granted them City rights. In 1818 the crest was officially accepted as the city’s Coat of Arms. Today Baarn is a charming city, the city-center’s lanes are flanked by trees that gives it the original village look.

The Harmonica Bands in Baarn, Netherlands “Battle of the Bands”

Harmonica band playing started as early as 1928, Baarn then counted two very large harmonica bands who were competing each other. On 28 August, of the same year, a third band was established; **“Excelsior.”**

When championships were held all three bands took part. The bands were:

“ONS GENOEGEN” – “DE EENDRACHT” – “EXCELSIOR”

On special days/occasions, when festivities took place, the harmonica bands would march through the streets among regular Marching Bands.

I know little about the first two, but the latter has an astonishing long history. (1928-1992)



Harmonica Band “Excelsior,” conducted by D. A. Stor, as they appeared at the championships organized by marching band “Voorwaarts” on 24 July 1930.



**Harmonica Band “Exelsior” – Baarn, won first prize on 25 May 1933 and received an honorary recommendation.
Conductor: D. A. Stor.**



**Harmonica Band “Exelsior” – Baarn, posing for their 10th anniversary in 1938.
Conductor: D. A. Stor.
Front row center kid is Karel Jansen who is one of the oldest surviving members of the group today.**

In 1949 Mr. Cor Kling became the conductor and took the band to International Championships. In 1961 Mr. Kling handed over to Mr. R. Jongerden who stayed until 1970 when Mr. A. Lokhorst replaced him. In 1975 Syl van Zijst Jr. took over from Mr. Lokhorst as conductor of Excelsior and stayed till it was disbanded in October 1992.



**Harmonica Band “Exelsior” – Baarn posing for their
50th anniversary on 2 August 1978.
Conductor: Syl van Zijst Jr.**



**Harmonica Band “Exelsior” – Baarn who took part
in the International championships on 16 October 1982.
Conductor: Syl van Zijst Jr.
Organisers: “Excelsior” and “NOVAM,”
the “Dutch Accordion and Harmonica Organisation”**



**Harmonica Band “Exelsior” – Baarn posing for their
60th anniversary on 2 August 1988.
Conductor: Syl van Zijst Jr**

The birth of “The Chromonicats”

The Chromonicats have a long history in the world of entertainment in the Netherlands and beyond. They lasted more than 30 years, using different musicians/singers for the group.

Karel Jansen; Syl van Zijst Sr.; Syl van Zijst Jr.; Bram van Kooi and J. Windey have been the driving factor to the everlasting harmonica scene in Baarn, especially when the bass and chord harmonicas were introduced. Together they formed the “Chromonicats.”



**“The Chromonicats” 1952; from l to r:
J. Windey; Hohner Orchestra VIII - Syl van Zijst Jr.; Chord Harmonica
Bram van Kooi; Bass Harmonica - Karel Jansen; Chromatic Harmonica (lead)
Syl van Zijst Sr.; Chromatic Harmonica (harmony)**

This is the original group as it started in 1952, each of them accomplished players since they were all pre-war members of the “Excelsior” group.

Karel’s sister Annie joined the group as a singer, she became the ‘leading lady’ of the group. Their harmonica sounds combined with her voice gave them a sound of their own, only matched by some American professionals like the post-war “Harmonica Gentlemen” who backed the famous “Andrew Sisters” and comedian “Danny Kay.”



**“The Chromonicats” 1952; from l to r:
J. Windey – Bram van Kooi – Annie Jansen – Syl van Zijst Jr. –
Syl van Zijst Sr. – Karel Jansen**



**“The Chromincats” 1953; from l to r:
Syl van Zijst Jr. – Bram van Kooi – Annie Jansen –
Syl van Zijst Sr. – Karel Jansen**

They performed almost every night at variety shows, and were heard on several radio stations. Television was introduced in the Netherlands around 1953, but only broadcasted on very special occasions. It took quite some time to establish a TV network that could be enjoyed by the people of Holland. At that time a European network was launched to link many European counties for special occasions like the “European Song Festival.” It would take some time fore the Chromonicats’ first television appearance.

Tine Bavinck, a guitarist/singer joined the group in 1953, giving it an extra dimension. They grew more popular and lasted 6 years.



**from l to r: 1953-1959
Syl van Zijst Jr. – Syl van Zijst Sr. – Bram van Kooi -
Tine Bavinck – Marian Jansen –
Front row: Karel Jansen**

When Syl van Zijst Sr. left the group in 1959, they diminished to a quintet. This group too had many successes. They toured all over the country and beyond the borders into Germany and Belgium.



**from l to r (back row): 1959-1966
Syl van Zijst Jr. – Karel Jansen - Bram van Kooi –
front row: Tine Bavinck (guitar and voice) – Annie Jansen (voice)**

From 1966 to 1969 the group diminished to a trio since Annie left her home town Baarn, and Tine left for personal reasons.

Since the act was known to have singers in the group, Karel's daughter Marian entered the group in 1969 since she had become an experienced singer as part of a duo with Irma vd Linden "The Irma's." Excelsior drummer Arie Koops was added to the group in 1972.



**from l to r: 1972
Bram van Kooi – Arie Koops – Marian Jansen –
Karel Jansen – Syl van Zijst Jr.**

Arie Koops was replaced by guitarist/singer Jaap vd Hoek in 1973.



from l to r: 1973
Syl van Zijst – Karel Jansen – Marian Jansen –
Bram van Kooi – Jaap vd Hoek



from l to r: 1973
Sylvester van Zijst Jr. – Karel Jansen – Marian Jansen –
Bram van Kooi – Jaap vd Hoek



from l to r: 1976
**Syl van Zijst – Karel Jansen – Marian Jansen –
 Bram van Kooi – Jaap vd Hoek**

1978 was their debut year on television. Prominent TV presentator “Ted de Braak” had launched a new musical program “Toi,toi, toi for the NCRV TV station. The programs were recorded in “De Meerpaal” in Dronten. The regular orchestra for the program was conducted by well-known conductor “Harry de Groot.” Since the VCR hadn’t been introduced into the homes, it was quite common to take photographs of one’s own performance. Here some of those photographs of this particular program.



On 5 February 1977 “The Chromonicats” celebrated their 25th anniversary as guest artists of a concert organized by “Excelsior.” Annie Jansen made a special appearance and performed with the group.



**25th anniversary; from l to r:
 Jaap vd Hoek – Syl van Zijst Jr. - Marian Jansen –
 Annie Jansen – Karel Jansen – Bram van Kooi**

Over the years, The Chromonicats appeared on several television and radio stations, and worked with renowned Dutch artist, such as:

Rudy Carrell, Frans van Dusschoten, Rita Corita and many others.

They have always been welcome guests at International and National Harmonica Festivals, and together with “Excelsior” organized many festivals in Baarn.

In 1973, when an International Harmonica Festival took place, Mr. Herbert Hohner said; “Holland was the biggest importer of harmonicas in Europe.” This was mainly due to the “1st Dutch Chromatic Harmonicas School” which was lead by Geert van Driesten, bass player of the famous “Hotchas.” Geert was a welcome guest in Baarn where he functioned as one of the jurors at their festivals.

Due to several instances “The Chromonicats” disbanded the group in 1988, 36 years of musical fun had become history. Or not.....?

On the double CD, “**De Mondharmonica in Nederland 1947-2002,**” produced by Art Daane, The Chromonicats present their rendition of “Salty Dog,” a live recording with the following members:

Syl van Zijst; Chord Harmonica

Karel Jansen; Bass Harmonica

Bram van Kooi; Bass Harmonica

Annie Jansen; Voice.



Chromonicats members in chronological order:

Syl van Zijst Sr. - Syl van Zijst Jr. - Bram van Kooi - Karel Janssen – J. Windey – Annie Janssen (Karel’s sister) - Marian Jansen (Karel’s daughter) - Irma vd Linden – Arie Koops and Jaap vd Hoek.

**Art M. Daane,
Helmond, 5-02-04**