

# Feast on Six Strings!

Five Years of Guitar Festival Nordhorn



By  
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# Interviews Volunteers and Supporters

## The Rootveld Family



*Fred and Angie Rootveld, supporters from the beginning*

The Rootveld family consists of Fred and Angie Rootveld, Bobby's parents and Sarah Rootveld, his sister. They live in a picturesque rural area called Tusveld in the vicinity of the city of Almelo in the east of Holland.

Fred has lived in Tusveld all his life, his mother ran a manege in that area, his father worked as a journalist and established his own local paper Ruiten Drie. As a teenager Fred was given responsibility for the pop music page in that paper. Concert visits and interviews with well-known bands incited him to become a professional musician. Being a member of the Dutch group David Copperfield Style he decided to study classical guitar at the then Twente Conservatory and graduated under Louis Ignatius Gall.

During his study he had the dream of establishing a private record label. After meeting his wife Angie the two of them realised this dream, resulting in the Ivory Tower record label and studios, working as a balanced team ever since. Besides a number of pop-productions, amongst others the blues formation Flavium, Ivory Tower specialized in productions in the Dutch language and local dialect from a number of Dutch provinces. Additionally the Rootveld family members are on tour with their variety and cabaret shows in the local dialects of Twente, Drente and West-Friesland.

**Ivory Tower Records, that is Fred and Angie Rootveld, entrepreneurs in humor and music, (grand)parents and great example for Bobby Rootveld. Please tell us something about yourself. What's your name, where do you live, what's your current occupation?**

**Fred:** (laughs) I would say, read my book *Dairy of a Record Label Boss*. Available in Dutch under ISBN 9789048437849.

**Let's start with a few questions for Fred. At what age did you start playing an instrument, and which instrument was the first?**

**Fred:** I started pretty young, at the age of seven or eight, at the local school of music with the so-called General Musical Education, in Holland known as AMV. There I learnt for instance 'singing with gestures', for do, re, mi etcetera according to the method of Willem Gehrels. Playing the recorder was compulsory, apparently the general thought was that if you master the recorder, you can play all instruments. I disliked it, if I had wanted to play it, I could, but most of the time I did not want to. So I accidentally 'lost' the recorder somewhere in the house before going to the lesson.

**Which person or event made you decide to dedicate yourself to your current main instrument?**

**Fred:** It started with my father's local magazine Ruiten Drie in Almelo where I managed the pop music column (i.e. gathering news via interviews and concerts and writing the articles). In this way I got in touch with a singer and I thought it a good idea to become his manager (I was no musician) so we started a band together.

Unfortunately the bass player took off because he got involved in a shotgun marriage. So I bought a bass guitar on the Friday because we had a performance on the Saturday. Quite a coincidence! If we had been able to find a good bass player, I would never have touched the strings. But we had no one, so I had to think of something to solve the problem. I could play four songs and for the rest of the show I put my amplifier volume down to zero. It was fun, because afterwards the organiser of the concert complimented us on the nice sound of the *organ*. Not bad for a trio with guitar, bass and drums!

**So you made a good start in practice. Yet you wanted more. How did you enter the conservatory?**

**Fred:** It was quite obvious that I needed more to keep going in the music business. You can play the few songs of the band repertoire and for the rest you know nothing. Because I was starting to produce records and wanted to write songs, I felt that I should study music. When one of the band members decided to enrol in the conservatory, I found it a good idea to give it a try too and I succeeded in passing the entry exam. In the end our complete band landed at the conservatory.

**Which teacher influenced you most? Which aspect of your play benefited from this?**

**Fred:** I had two important teachers for the guitar, Dick Hoogeveen and Louis Ignatius Gall. Both boosted my playing skills in their own way. Dick Hoogeveen was a very strict teacher, he taught me lots of technique and discipline. Louis taught me to perform, he had a more relaxed style of teaching. I personally got the impression that at times Louis did not emphasize technique sufficiently with his students. Because I had had a few years with Hoogeveen, however, technique was no problem for me.

The most important teacher for me was Theo Willemze. He taught me how to think as a musician and create music accordingly. It was a real eye-opener, being in his class, experiencing his enthusiasm during his music theory lessons, he was an inspiring teacher.

**What is your favourite classical guitar piece?**

**Fred:** My favourite is, against all odds, *Tango en Skai* by Roland Dyens. I find it such a brilliant piece! When I heard Bobby play it for the first time, I said: 'Boy, what did you bring home there!' It appeared that Louis had assigned this piece to all his students. I started to play it too. It's such a

fine piece of music, it's hard to explain, it appeals to me from Measure One until Measure Last. I have other favourites too, but *Tango en Skai* is the hit! Dyens wrote it when he was as drunk as a fiddler.. Brilliant song!

**Let me guess your favourite composer now!**

**Fred:** Yeah.. I like to play Dyens' music. Another favourite of mine is his arrangement of *E/ Choclo*. I had a silent hope that I could persuade him to arrange a well-known Dutch tango as well, *Ole Guapa* by Malando. Well, he promised, but he has not started yet, so I made an arrangement myself.

I have a real liking for this tango, it was arranged and played by the famous tango/rumba band of Malando (the pseudonym of Arie Maasland). The Malando band still exists, and has exactly the same sound as in the Forties and Fifties. Their arrangements of tangos are music to my ears!

**At what age did you perform for an audience for the first time? What was the occasion?**

**Fred:** My first performance was with the rock band (later Copperfield Style) in 1969, I was about twenty. Only then I started my conservatory study, and only then I hit the stage with a classical guitar.

When I was younger I did other things, I loved football and assisting my father with the Ruiten Drie magazine, those were my main hobbies. Music started later. In the sixties I saw a reportage of the conservatory in Arnhem and I was thinking: "That would be great for me", I even dreamt of it at night. Later I got the chance to enter the conservatory despite my long hair and big mouth. After my admission I said to myself: "Let's study and make the best of it, if I do not make the most of it, I'll probably never get the chance again!" So that was the start of a diligent and passionate study of music.

**You made quite a number of recordings and CDs. How did you experience recording and listening to the result?**

**Fred:** Ah, in the beginning you are quite content, then after more careful listening you say: 'it's bullshit!' and if you play it again after a few years, you admit: 'It's really not too bad!'

What I liked best in the studio that I was doing it all by myself: composing and playing all the instruments. I did the orchestration for a lot of singers all by myself, I started with the drum part and taped and mixed all instruments on top of it. That was the best: sitting high and dry in the studio on my own without endless discussions with fellow-instrumentalists.

**What was the most challenging CD you ever recorded?**

**Fred:** That challenge came when I started producing and recording with the singer Han Wellerdieck. He had a voice that resembled Julio Iglesias, so in that case you need an Iglesias-like orchestration which requires a kind of 'enlarged' sound. Consequently sometimes producing the tape for a single song took me a week with a lot of puzzling concerning the suitable instrumentation and sound. Particularly playing all the instruments alone requires some skill build-up. To be able to make a massive arrangement, you have to count well, you have to achieve the perfect timing and so on. It takes practice, but once you acquired the skill, things become much easier.

**Which CD do you consider a monument?**

**Fred:** ;-) Yes, every record that I made! Unfortunately sometimes you get a rude awakening later!

**Angie:** Well I do not share your opinion! You made a number of top quality hits with the songs of Han Wellerdieck.

**Fred:** We made a lot of good productions, but we also produced some less refined but still effective material. The odd thing is that this 'lesser' material often sells best!

We made a single from a song of one of our LPs with *Pinkeltje* stories. We thought it would be a smash hit. At the same time we produced a single that would be the last one we would ever make with the singer Jantje Koopmans if it did not sell. The A-side of this single was *Den Echten Duivenboer* (The genuine pigeon fancier). On the B-side we re-used a song from one of Koopman's previous LPs, *Rode Rozzen* (Red Roses).

We sold 80.000 Koopmans singles, but no one wanted to buy the *Pinkeltje* song. Explain it to me! This single was Koopmans' last chance, we would pull the plug if it did not reach the charts. Miraculously it became a great hit in The Netherlands, so we could extend the cooperation for a number of years!

**Time for a few questions for Angie. When you met Fred, you landed in the world of artists, Fred played in a rock band, started a Conservatory education and was establishing Ivory Tower Records. How did you experience this?**

**Angie:** Well, I originally came from a small village in the province of Drenthe. A really small village, there was not much to do, we had an elementary school, a football club, a gymnastics club and a brass band.

**Fred:** And just one mobile supermarket.

**Angie:** When I met Fred, quite a world opened up to me. At home we hardly made far-away holiday trips. When we had vacation, we made a bicycle trip to a larger town in the region, or we went to the woods nearby, or a café with a playground. When I got to know Fred, I was just sixteen, the world became a much bigger place! For instance I had Chinese food for the first time!

**Fred:** Yeah, that was the beginning of the adventure of our lives!

**Angie:** I got used to it pretty fast!

**Your private record label is a commercial enterprise in which you adopted a clear role. Please tell us more about that.**

**Angie:** I did all the administration and made contact with the record shops. I had a list of about 120 record shops that I called up every week at the same time, about half an hour before they got a call from the charts -the Top 40 and the Top 100- just to remind them of our record productions. In those days the chart position was determined by information from the shops, such as sales records for a particular single. I got lots of pleasant contacts in the record retail world! That was absolutely necessary, without regular contacts and positive reviews you had little chance to land in the charts.

**Fred:** And even then the charts forgot about us sometimes. But we had sufficient proof to convince them to give us a rating.

**Angie:** Administration also included order management and billing, packing and shipping of the orders and all the paperwork and tax declarations. Obviously there were the domestic chores like cooking for everyone as well.

**Later on together with Fred you started the cabaret ensembles Twente Plat, Drenthe Plat, Brabant Plat, Friesland Plat and West Friesland Plat. What was your role in the ensembles?**

**Angie:** In the beginning I did not appear on stage. I did accompany the group, however, I sold the tickets before the show and I worked as the light- and sound engineer during the performances. Outside performances I was busy with public relations, making posters, managing the ticket orders and so on.

**Fred:** From the moment that I decided to create a humoristic act in the show, we did it together.

**Angie:** Yes, we were together on stage for the shows of *Twente Plat* and *Drenthe Plat* and currently also with *West Friesland Plat*.

**Fred:** In the first edition of *West Friesland Plat*, many years ago, the other guys did not want her to join in, until we designed an act in which a lady was essential for the performance. In the present setup, however, she's a regular and esteemed member of the troupe.

**In the process of the cabaret performances you play various characters. Which character is your favorite?**

**Angie:** My favorite character is the ‘false singer’ with the fatal hand bag and the sharp comments towards the band. I did the act during one season. Bobby played the organ and Fred the cajon. I had to sing completely out of tune and out of time and did my dancing likewise. That’s a challenge indeed! In the mean time I had to grumble at the musicians that *they* did everything wrong.

**Fred:** We received some comments about her from the audience afterwards: “She cannot sing at all!” They had not noticed that it was all made up!

**Angie:** On stage I was quite a hazard for the musicians with my flying purse! Anyway, it was a success and there was a good laugh from the audience. Except for one occasion on which the audience kept dead silent, they were convinced that I could not sing at all and could not laugh about it. They should have known better, because I participated in the entry song! Yes, I would like to play that character again, I really liked the act.

**A question for the both of you: Your cabaret ensembles perform in the dialects of the Dutch regions Twente, Drenthe, Noord Brabant, Friesland and West Friesland. That’s remarkable. How did you grow into this genre?**

**Fred:** I wanted to make a dialect show because my parents used to go to the *Wierdense Revue*, a famous show that started in the Fifties and went on until 1997. When we started our record label Ivory Tower we were looking for productions with sales prospects. We asked the *Wierdense Revue* if they wanted to make records with us, but they refused. Then I met Fons Platenkamp and we established *Twente Plat*, a show with humorous acts in the Twente dialect.

It became such a great success, that I extended the formula to other regions in Holland where dialect was still part of the daily life. We thought big and sometimes we could even publish twenty-two LPs with dialect shows in the autumn. I recorded the shows in the spring and made the final mix and the cover design. Then we went on holiday while the tapes went to the gramophone press company and the cover design to the lithographer and printer to be ready at the end of August, so we could start sales. If sales did not go well, I became my own salesman to offer them to shops and wholesalers.

**Touring with ensembles involves a lot of travelling across the country. You already did so when your children, Bobby and Sarah, were little. How did you manage?**

**Fred:** In the beginning Angie did not come every time, she stayed home babysitting. Later the kids stayed with grandma when we were on stage. When the kids were about twelve they went with us, selling tickets and managing the light and sound on stage.

Then we started to create acts where we needed some extra players, just for acting funny, without texts. So we asked the kids, Bobby and Sarah, to help us out. They loved to and thus they became part of the group. The next season they did some more: they joined in with the songs. We had a special act where everyone had an extra member in a prepared outfit and sung a song to it, the act was a huge success!

**Angie:** The kids were very active in making original additions to the acts!

**When they grew up, gradually Bobby and Sarah became members of the cabaret ensemble. In fact within the ensemble you were parents and peers at the same time. How did that work out? How did you share responsibility for the acts and the program?**

**Fred:** We have never been involved in the strict role pattern of parents and children, we have always been friends. We had more camaraderie than generation gap, we did a lot of things together. If Bobby had a football match, we were there, it did not matter how late we came back from the shows. That is obviously a challenge if you return at three o' clock in the morning from a show in the west of the country.

We were together and we cooperated, we have always been friends and that's the way it still is today. OK, you can have arguments sometimes or have other views, but that's not the point. In the cooperation within the family, everybody senses what is necessary to do, nobody has to play the manager. We are a team. I guess that it has helped that we have our own company with deadlines and all that. The team adapts to it, everybody knows what to do, no discussion required.

**Angie:** The kids and we are colleagues as well. We have the opportunity to give feedback to each other about the acts and the performances, because we are not bothered by authority issues. So we discuss things that go wrong without reserve, it's vital for the quality of the performances.

The kids were very active with own ideas too, so they got freedom with designing their own acts. Bobby writes his own conferences and I still remember Sarah's fantastic black light act that she designed herself, including the costumes and background music.

**Fred:** We considered it important to give them a free hand, that's the way that you develop best. The same like my father did when he assigned me the pop column in his magazine: "It's all yours, make it work!" he said. And I did, he did not have to step in a bit.

**Angie:** Yes, Fred is right and we keep thinking that way, even if their direction they took in life was not as we expected. For instance Sarah has a web shop now and sells lots of creative material and fantasy art. Fred did not agree in the beginning, but it is the direction she chose and we support that. Sarah is very successful in that branch, selling her wares all over the world.

**Fred:** Bobby has developed in his own way too. It's a joy to watch him organizing things, he shows agility and a sense of purpose with the Kulturhaus and the festivals. His combination of music, theatre and humor is a successful formula.

**Bobby follows Fred's footsteps as a guitarist, performer and entrepreneur. How does that feel?**

**Fred:** Well, what should I say, if he had chosen another profession, I would have been pleased too. Yet I enjoy seeing that he is successful with his enterprise and music career. Apparently (laughing) he inherited some from us!

**What was your initial feeling when Bobby announced that he wanted to create Kulturhaus NIHZ?**

**Fred:** If he wants to, he should do it.

**Angie:** I was thinking: 'What a good idea'!

**Fred:** Initially I had some doubts, particularly because of the originally intended location in the German countryside . That was in the middle of nowhere and it could not be reached by public transport. When he decided to do it in Nordhorn instead, I became more positive, that's a larger town with more possibilities such as public transport, hotels etcetera.

I was positive about the idea, but there were arrangements to be made. Well, we made those arrangements. But it remains a tough business, the attendance is not sky-high these days. Fortunately there are sold-out concerts as well.

**You both helped a lot with all the festivals, both in Twente and Nordhorn. Fred, what is your main role during the GFN?**

**Fred:** Working pretty hard for three days and having a lot of fun.

Angie, you are the mainstay of the catering during the festivals. What's the average number of guests that you prepare breakfast, lunch and dinner for?

**Angie:** It's hard to give an average, I have cooked for twenty guests and I have cooked for seventy people. I remember that we had more guests than ever with the Louis Ignatius Gall festival and last year at the GFN during the final evening. Because it is not always clear how many guests will be there, you have to improvise to serve additional guests.

**How do you prepare the catering and logistics for a festival?**

**Angie:** Bobby thinks of the menu in advance and takes care that the ingredients are there. Usually in the morning I start baking the muffins, preparing the sandwiches, making meatballs and cooking soup, all for lunch. When that is ready there is little time to relax, because dinner has to be prepared in the afternoon.

**What's the most stressful time in the kitchen?**

**Angie:** Particularly with large pans for rice and pasta, timing is quite important. In that case cooperation is key, and that prevents things from getting real stressful. And when dinner is ready it gets very crowded with people carrying pans, bowls and bottles downstairs. And obviously they return with these attributes after dinner to prepare for washing the dishes. It's a pleasant crowd of helpful people!

**Do you remember what was the most popular dish during the festivals?**

**Angie:** It depends a bit on the kind of festival. At the guitar festival people eat much more than for instance at the recorder festival. My home made potato salad is very popular, as well as the Jewish dish with eggs in tomato sauce with salad and Pita bread. Pasta is less popular.

**Fred:** Ah, they devour it the same way as the other dishes!

**Angie:** Maybe, but I am not a pasta lover myself, so...

**Fred:** Me neither!

## The Anido Guitar Duo: Annette Kruisbrink and Arlette Ruelens



*The Anido Guitar Duo, Annette Kruisbrink and Arlette Ruelens. On the wall: Arlette's exposition of tempera paintings.*

Annette Kruisbrink and Arlette Ruelens, also known as the Anido Guitar Duo, have played an important role supporting the Nordhorn Guitar Festival. Annette Kruisbrink and Bobby Rootveld first met in the time that he was involved with the Twente Guitar Festival. Since then Annette and her partner Arlette have been welcome guests and supporters of the events in Kulturhaus NIHZ. They give a hand with concerts, master classes, jury participation and festival chores each year.

Annette Kruisbrink is one of the most prolific Dutch contemporary composers for the guitar and a guitar teacher. Arlette Ruelens is a guitar teacher and figurative artist. Together they form the Anido Guitar Duo and give concerts in Europe and beyond.

### **Interview with Annette Kruisbrink**

**Annette, Please tell us something about yourself. Who are you, where are you living and what's your current occupation?**

My name is Annette Kruisbrink, I am a professional guitarist and composer. I live in the town of Zwolle in The Netherlands. My days revolve around music: studying the guitar, composing, playing recitals and teaching guitar and composition. Together with Arlette Ruelens I have established the Anido Guitar School.

**At what age did you start to play the guitar?**

I started to play when I was thirteen.

**Which person or event made you decide to dedicate yourself to the guitar?**

Initially I played the piano and had taken piano lessons for a few years. When I was twelve, my father passed away suddenly and I completely lost interest in the piano lessons. However, my brother and the girl next door both owned a guitar, and at times I could give it a try and play it. I really enjoyed it and when I was thirteen I used my savings to buy a steel-string Western guitar. I started to play and to write songs at the same time.

**Please tell us something about your musical training. Where and with what teachers did you study?**

I started to play the guitar as an autodidact, using the book 'De Nieuwe Gitaarschool' (The New Guitar School) by Johan B. Kok. I got the book from a distant uncle (I have been grateful to him for that gift ever since).

During the last year of the secondary school I decided that I wanted to go to the conservatory, the nearest one being located in the town of Zwolle. I made an appointment with Pieter van der Staak, who was the guitar professor there at the time.

Completely unaware of customs and conventions, but with an open mind, I entered Van der Staak's classroom with my western guitar. Just before I wanted to start performing a number of my own pieces, he asked me if I needed a foot stool. I had no idea what a foot stool was and what purpose it had, yet I did my utmost not to show this, so I answered with a brave face: 'No, I will do without!', putting my right foot on top of my left one (which is in fact the wrong way round).

I guess that it was a ridiculous display, but obviously Pieter saw potential with me. He advised me to buy a Spanish guitar and take lessons with Ruud Lokhorst, a third grade conservatory student who taught at the School of Music in my then residence, the town of Emmeloord.

In fact I did not start the conservatory before I was eighteen, after I graduated from the Athenaeum. With Lokhorst I learned the basics of classical guitar playing and I studied about seven repertoire pieces. After a year I was admitted to the conservatory!

I studied six years with Pieter van der Staak and took a lot of master classes with amongst others John Duarte, Leo Brouwer, Stepan Rak, John Mills, Toyohiko Satoh, Jörgen Rörby, Dick Hoogeveen, Gonzalez Mohino, Hubert Käppel, Michael Tröster, Arnaud Dumond, Giancarlo Chiopris, Paolo Paolini, Frans van de Boom, Blas Sanchez and Jerzy Zak.

**Which teacher influenced you most? Which aspect of your play benefited from this?**

Obviously this is Pieter van der Staak, because I studied with him for a long time. He has educated and inspired me. Under his guidance I went through a lot of technical exercises and guitar methods. If you, as a guitarist, study lots of technical skills at a young age, you will benefit from them all your life. I think it is interesting to summarise all methods that I studied under Van der Staak:

- First the (24) *Diatonic Major and Minor Scales* with fingerings by Andrés Segovia and Pieter van der Staak's *Scales in Thirds*.
- Emilio Pujol: *Escuela Razonada de la Guitarra*, parts II and III.
- Matteo Carcassi: *25 études*, Opus 60.
- Julio S. Sagreras: *Lezioni de Chitarra*, books 2 - 4.
- Mauro Giuliani: *24 Etudes* opus 48
- Mauro Giuliani: *Metodo per chitarra* (Edition Eduardo Caliendo).
- Francisco Tárrega: All his *Preludes* and *Etudes*
- Mario Castelnuovo Tedesco: *Appunti, Preludi e Studi per Chitarra*, part 1.
- Fernando Sor/Andrés Segovia: *20 Studies for the Guitar*.

- Abel Carlevaro: *Serie didactica para guitarra*, parts I - IV.
- Bruno Bettinelli: *Dodici Studi*.
- Stephen Dodgson & Hector Quine: *20 studies for guitar* (books I and II).
- Heitor Villa-Lobos: *12 études*

**Who are your favourite concert guitarists?**

My favourites? Guitarists that know how to tell a fascinating story by means of their play and succeed in touching my soul. I will not mention any names, I do not want to miss anyone! ;-)

**What is your favourite classical guitar piece?**

It is difficult to restrict myself to a single piece! Thinking about favourites, I'll start with a work of music that originally has not been conceived for the guitar, the *Chaconne* by Johann Sebastian Bach, from his *Second Violin Partita BWV1004*.

Yet I would like to mention a number of remarkable and innovative pieces. In my opinion *Las Seis Cuerdas* by Alvaro Company is a very interesting work from the last century. In its first movement Company uses a separate staff for each string!

I consider *Partita für Gitarre oder Cembalo und Orchester op. 55*, composed in 1949/1950 by the Hungarian composer Jenő Takács (1902-2005) one of the most beautiful guitar concertos ever written. I have a very old recording of this work that features a guitar part that is masterly played by Hermann Leeb (1906-1979).

Special and unsurpassed until now, I find the minimal music compositions for two guitars by the duo Vincent Le Masne / Bertrand Porquet on their LP *Guitares Dérives*. Thinking about that genre I would like to mention a favourite composition by myself: *60+*, as far as I know the first (and possibly only) consistently minimal music piece for solo guitar.

**At what age did you perform for an audience the first time? What was the occasion for that performance?**

As a teenager I regularly performed with my younger sister, playing and singing our own self-made songs. I was thirteen and my sister seven. We hit the stage during festive occasions and we participated in song festivals. My first performance on the classical guitar was when I was eighteen. At that time I often joined in with concerts of the local School of Music.

**How did you get an interest in and a passion for composing music?**

I learned music at my mother's knee. At home we heard the sound of classical music all over the place. My mother used to play the piano for a few hours a day. As a kid I sat down with my ear against the piano and later when we got a grand piano at home, I was listening to my mother's music on the piano, laying stretched out under the instrument.

After I started playing the piano myself at the age of eight, I soon started to compose my own short pieces for the piano. When I bought my guitar I changed to writing songs for two voices with guitar accompaniment. Later, during my guitar study on the conservatory, I was composing for solo guitar and guitar ensemble.

Once I graduated from the conservatory, I decided to specialise and took composition lessons with Alex Manassen at the Zwolle Conservatory.

**Doubtlessly you work on assignment. Did you have assignments that opened up new ways of composition or inspired you tremendously?**

Until now I have composed about 350 works. Obviously I am familiar with composing for the guitar, but I also got assignments for compositions for string quartet, choir, orchestra and piano, for instance.

The assignments do not open new ways in particular, but the special ones lead to greater depth in the art of composition and thus expand my knowledge and skills. The special assignments were for little-known instruments such as the English Concertina, the Ondes Martinot and the Carillon. Another assignment that took some study in a less familiar playing style on the guitar was a work for finger style guitar and mandolin ensemble.

**You are composing music that is intended to be performed. In between composition and the final musical performance there's always the interpretation of the player(s). Did you ever hear a performance of your work that made you think: 'Yes, this is what I meant from the beginning!' Which composition gave you this impression?**

When I hear someone play my compositions, I often cannot tell if what I hear is 'what I meant from the beginning'.

Obviously when I am composing myself, I have the work clearly in my mind. I can play my compositions for guitar myself and consequentially hear them 'live' too.

Yet, as soon as a composition is released (literally 'set free'), for instance by publishing it, I leave the interpretation of the piece to those who play it. Naturally these interpretations will differ, depending on the level, the comprehension and the character of the performer.

If musicians come to me to play my compositions for me, I try to connect to the way the player is experiencing the piece at that time and attempt to start from that point of view to improve the interpretation. At the same time I drop a hint about the way that I would play it myself. However, I have no intention to prescribe it to the player to perform it my way, but merely want to demonstrate that there are multiple interpretation options.

**Did you ever hear a performance of your work that was a pleasant surprise for you concerning the interpretation, even though it was different than you had in mind yourself?**

Yes, I experience that quite often! Let me mention a few occasions that come to my mind:

Pavel Steidl's performance of my composition *Faon* for the guitar was a pleasant surprise for me. He played it so well and beautifully, he actually added something to the piece that turned it into something magic for me. Another pleasant surprise was a player who performed a composition exactly the same way I like to play it myself. She was Véronique van Duurling, playing my *Homenaje a Andrés Segovia*.

At the premiere in Aachen, Germany, of my composition *Alamanda* for finger style guitar and mandolin ensemble, the guitar part was played by Adam Rafferty, a genuine finger style guitarist. I knew the guitar part through and through, but I found his interpretation far better than my own 'classical' approach.

I remember another premiere at Aachen in 2014, at the speGTRa festival (I was connected to this festival as composer in residence). At that occasion they played two pieces for the first time: *La Canción Desesperada* (on texts by the Chilean writer Pablo Neruda) for guitar and mixed choir and my composition *Concerto Breve* for two guitars and string ensemble. Both performances impressed me deeply, particularly *Canción Desesperada* was incredibly moving. The performance earned a long standing ovation from the audience.

I wrote *Preludio a un Momento di Silenzio* for Carlo Marchione. I gave the composition to him while he was giving master classes in the town of Zwolle, my residence. He interrupted his class and immediately started to play the piece *a prima vista* and - incredible but true - almost flawlessly and in the right tempo in front of the students and teachers present. It was definitely no easy piece. It was a pleasant surprise indeed!

**Over the years the number of guitar competition events has grown significantly. What is your opinion about competition in music? Does it serve the quality of music, or is it counterproductive?**

I am not certain if the element of competition is always leading at a *concours*. True, the literal meaning of the word *concours* is competition, yet I never experienced these events as competition in the sense of winning and losing.

If you want to make yourself heard as a musician nowadays, with so many people being in the position to study, play and perform music, competitions are positively a good option to proceed in your musical career and professional development. Competitions provide students with the opportunity to perform a programme with utmost concentration, they provide them with a target for thorough and detailed study.

I am a jury member for many competitions and I did not get the impression that the main goal for the candidates is winning the match at all costs. I noticed that they participate to be able to perform, to learn from it and to experience how they have grown as a guitarist. Generally speaking the candidates are very intent on the highest possible quality of their performance rather than on the most successful competition tactics. If you are a winner, that's a gift. If you do not win, you still gained a great and useful experience.

Winning competitions is no guarantee. On the contrary, it is just a step forward to a musical career that requires hard work and concentrated study to be successful.

I am no advocate of the high cash prizes that you can win at some professional competitions. In my opinion these prizes are quite likely to lead to a competition with an emphasis on the word *compete*. I prefer prizes that are directly useful for the musical career of the winner, such as concert opportunities, a CD recording or a number of free master classes. That is what I particularly like about the prizes at the Nordhorn Guitar Festival, they help the winner shape his or her musical career.

A special prize in Nordhorn is a composition that is written for and dedicated to the winner. The last three years I have had the pleasure to compose this prize. In this way I composed *Reflexions* for the winner Justyna Sobczak in 2013, *Toccata* for Jakob Bangsø who won the 2014 competition and *Tarantar* for Andrija Lazarevic in 2015.

My opinion concerning prizes also applies to amateur competitions. As I said, a competition is a great opportunity for young people to aim their efforts in playing music at a special occasion. One of the most pleasant competitions for the young where I appeared as a jury member was the Haydn Music Festival. There I did not see any trace of contest. On the contrary, it was one big musical party, complete with toy balloons and festoons.

**Did you ever participate in a competition? If so, what were your impressions?**

Yes, as I mentioned before, as a teenager I participated in talent scutings. I remember that I found it quite exciting. Later I participated in an audition for a concert series in The Suite in Amsterdam with the Zwolle Guitar Quartet. An audition is slightly comparable to a competition. I particularly liked the preparation for this occasion, rehearsing a piece and cooperating towards a common goal.

As a composer I have submitted works to composition contests quite often. Obviously the nature of these contest is quite different from guitar competitions.

## Interview with Arlette Ruelens

**Arlette, Please tell us something about yourself. Who are you, where do you live and what's your current occupation?**

I am Arlette Ruelens, I come from Belgium, but I have been living in The Netherlands for a long time. I am professional musician. In the morning I study and practice the guitar, in the afternoon and the evening I give guitar lessons. I use the time that is left to practice my second profession, which is painting.

**At what age did you start to play the guitar?**

I started at the School of Music at the age of seven with general music education (amongst others basic music theory and score reading). After a year I was allowed to choose my instrument. At that time I would have loved to play the guitar, but I was advised to start with the banjo because I was too small to hold the instrument. I played the banjo till the end of my primary education and at the age of twelve I started playing the guitar.

**Which music teacher influenced you most? Which aspect of your play benefited from this?**

I started my guitar lessons with a violin teacher, because there was no guitar teacher in the Belgian village where I lived. At the end of the year I had to play a public performance that served as the exam for my music lessons. Gisèle Sikora was a member of the jury and after the exam she asked me if I liked to take guitar lessons with her.

Her school of music was ten kilometres away from the place where I lived. Every week she came to pick me up for the guitar lessons and afterwards she brought me back. She was an immensely motivated teacher and a versatile musician who played the guitar excellently and additionally excelled on percussion and accordion. She wrote a number of compositions, for guitar and other instruments. Unfortunately she died of cancer at the age of fifty four. She has definitely influenced me the most.

After my secondary education I went to the Academy of Arts in the Belgian town of Hasselt. I kept playing the guitar and additionally made a start on the cello. When I moved to The Netherlands, I continued the cello lessons, but in the end I missed the guitar too much. I started to take private lessons with Jacob Vlijm. He asked me why I did not consider a study at the conservatory. It was a good question indeed, so the following year I started my guitar study at the Zwolle Conservatory.

**At what age did you perform for an audience the first time? What was the occasion for that performance?**

My first performance for an audience was the public examination of the school of music in Belgium. I was about thirteen then.

Over the years the number of guitar competition events has grown significantly. What is your opinion about competition in music? Does it serve the quality of music, or is it counterproductive?

I think the competitions caused an immense progress in the technical level of guitar playing. Just like with sports, the competitive element boosts technical performance. But there is more to it, if candidates succeed in adding sensitive and musical playing to this amazing technical baggage, then they are really worth noticing!

**Did you ever participate in a competition? If so, what were your impressions?**

No, I never participated in a competition.

**Besides your guitar study, you completed an education in figurative arts. Please tell us something about your experiences.**

I studied the art of painting in both free art and monumental art at the Academy of Arts in the Belgian town of Hasselt.

For my works I mainly use acrylic paint and tempera on paper. I mostly create abstract shapes in light colours, highlighting them with lines and curves. I start from the void.... just watching the white paper in front of me. Sometimes a colour emerges in my mind that becomes the main colour of the painting, sometimes there is a movement that requires expression. Then it is a matter of searching for harmony until the work is 'completed'.

**What was the most challenging assignment for a painting that you got?**

Two assignments stand out: a wall painting in a school in the Belgian town of Hasselt and the décor for a procession in the streets of Sint Truiden, also in Belgium. Additionally I had a number of interesting expositions, with my exposition in Kulturhaus NIHZ as a highlight.

**You made quite a few cover art designs for the CDs of the Anido Guitar Duo which you part of yourself. How do you turn the musical expression into an image?**

It is in fact the other way round. I search matching impressions from my existing paintings and took fragments of them that in turn match the atmosphere of the music and the theme of the CD.

## **About the Anido Guitar Duo**

**And now as a conclusion a few questions for the both of you, about the Anido Guitar Duo and your involvement in the Guitar Festival Nordhorn.**

**You have named your duo after the guitarist and composer María Luisa Anido, a famous student of Miguel Llobet. Why did you choose her name?**

In 1995 we officially started playing together as a guitar duo. During a rehearsal we were thinking about performances: if we wanted to hit the stage with our freshly practiced programme, we would have to think of a name for our duo. During this very rehearsal, Arlette recounted a guitar festival in Belgium in the castle of Alden Biesen, that was organised by the guitarist Raphaëlla Smits.

On that occasion Raphaëlla played an audio cassette that contained a recording from the guitarist María Luisa Anido. All present were very impressed, some were moved to tears. Annette was captivated by the story, but she had to admit that she had never heard of Anido.

And there it was: the idea to name our duo after this Argentine guitarist, we would call ourselves the Anido Guitar Duo.

**You have met María Luisa Anido in person. Please tell us some more about that occasion.**

After our decision to name our duo The Anido Guitar Duo, we wanted to ask official permission from this Argentine *Grande Dame de la Guitare* to use her name.

Raphaëlla Smits told us that she lived in Barcelona. After a search of a year we found out that she lived in an old folks home in Tarragona, a town almost a hundred kilometres south of Barcelona. Annette called the reception of this home and she got María Luisa on the phone in person. The conversation was a bit difficult because of Annette's beginners-Spanish, but we succeeded in making an appointment with her. We decided to play for her if the occasion arose and both practiced a solo work from her oeuvre, a pleasant job because she has composed a number of delightful works for the guitar. As a special addition to the programme that we planned, Annette composed *Escripto para María Luisa Anido* for two guitars.

We booked a flight and went to Tarragona. Anxiously we travelled to the old folks home with our guitars and reported at the reception on arrival. We were requested to take a seat in the public room downstairs while the receptionist would inform Anido that we arrived. We took a seat on a couch and every time an old woman passed by we wondered if she might be Anido herself.

All of a sudden a stately appearance entered the room. We were certain right away: there she was! She was so different from all the other old people, she was a real lady (with pink mascara!), a real artist, full of dignity. She took a seat besides us with some reluctance, apparently waiting to see which way the cat jumped.

All of a sudden she noticed our guitar cases and said 'Come with me!' We went upstairs with her, to her room. There she gave Annette a chair and took a seat on the bed, together with Arlette, and ordered Annette to play.

Annette played Anido's composition *Preludio Campero nr. 3* and immediately got a master class. Anido completely revived, she appeared to be a passionate teacher. Next Arlette was up with her performance of Anido's *Lejania*. What a great experience to have lessons in her own compositions from this celebrity that was eighty-eight years old at that time!

We played and talked all afternoon. Anido had very little possessions left. She did still have a guitar, a Yamaha, but she did not play anymore. In her small room were a bed, a TV, a table, a chair and a closet. On the wall we saw a portrait of Che Guevara.

When we asked her how she spent her days, she answered 'meditating!' At the end of the afternoon we heard the sound of a bell. That was a sign for the occupants of the house that it was dinner time. Anido, however, responded with 'No me gusta nada', meaning 'I don't like to'.

Two of her former students, who had become teachers at the Tarragona Conservatory, came in to pick us up. They had spontaneously organised a recital for us in the concert hall of the conservatory.

They told us the following story about María Luisa Anido: One year before, when she was still living in Barcelona, she was very active in teaching. Students from all over Europe came to her for lessons. Unfortunately the neighbours were not happy with it and they started to bang the walls and complained about the visitors. Their attitude forced Anido to stop teaching. This was a dramatic let-down for her, her life did not make sense any more. She had no money and hardly any possessions. The students decided to invite her to Tarragona and pay for her room.

Two days later, on the 15th of December 1995, we played our concert in front of a full house, with of course María Luisa Anido as a guest of honour. After we performed *Escripto para María Luisa Anido*, the composition that Annette wrote just for her, Anido spontaneously emerged from the audience and came up the stage to embrace us. It was an unforgettable encounter!

Concerning the reason why we travelled to Tarragona, asking permission to use Anido's name for our duo: she was very honoured that we wanted to name our guitar duo after her!

Half a year later she passed away on the fourth of June 1996.

**On which occasion you decided to establish your guitar duo?**

There was no single moment that we made the decision to form a duo. We played for some time in a trio together with guitarist and teacher Margreet Lubbers from the town of Heerde, close to Zwolle. In the long run things had watered down a bit, so in the end we continued as a duo without ‘official termination’ of the trio.

**How did you get to know Bobby Rootveld, the organiser of the Guitar Festival Nordhorn?**

We first met at the Twente Guitar Festival in the town of Enschede. Bobby had asked Annette to participate in the jury of the guitar competition. After the competition we had dinner together. We got into a conversation about all kinds of interesting subjects. It was a very pleasant encounter, some of the family of Bobby and Sanna were present too. This was our first acquaintance with a very friendly and sociable family.

**What was your motivation to support this festival?**

When Bobby and Sanna started their own guitar festival in Nordhorn, we were invited to play a concert during the first edition, to give master classes and to participate in the jury of the competition. We were impressed by the high quality of the organisation, the number and skill level of the participants, and the pleasant atmosphere. From the beginning we were very kindly disposed towards the festival. Thus we are pleased and grateful that we are welcome each year.

**What is your experience with the atmosphere at the Guitar Festival Nordhorn?**

It is quite unique that the complete festival including master classes, concerts, competition, workshops, lodging, having meals together and recreation (amongst others a table-tennis table, a central bar with nice coffee and pie and the evening bar in the rest room) takes place in a single building. This creates a pleasant atmosphere, interesting conversations and strong ties between participants. Everything is well scheduled, enabling festival participants to attend multiple events from the programme.

**You have met a large number of professional guitarists at the festivals and spent a few days with them. During such periods often something funny or surprising happens. Please tell us some anecdotes.**

The Australian luthier George Ziata was the main sponsor of the first Guitar Festival Nordhorn. The first prize of the professional competition included one of his hand-built guitars.

Every day of the festival George exhibited his three guitars that he brought all the way from Australia and everyone who liked to do so could try them. One of the three guitars would be the first prize, the others were for sale.

During the first two days of the festival we had not had the opportunity to give the Ziatas guitars a try. On the last day however, Annette had a half-an-hour break and went to George to test all three guitars. She became instantly enthusiastic about one of them, a well finished spruce top guitar with a bright and powerful sound. The guitar was nice to hold and had a well-balanced sound.

Fortunately George did not intend this specimen as the prize guitar for the competition, for Annette considered the guitar a perfect instrument for Arlette. Arlette had been in search of a new guitar for a long time, but until that moment she had not been able to find one that really suited her. This Ziatas, however, was really made for her! Annette immediately took off in search of Arlette. Hastily she scoured the building, afraid that the guitar would have been sold before Arlette could give it a try.

In the meantime Arlette had a little break too and decided to take a look at George's guitars. She instantly fell in love with the spruce top model and hastily took off in search of Annette to tell her that she finally found a guitar that matched her! The final outcome was that Arlette has bought the Ziatas and plays it with a lot of satisfaction ever since.



*Annette, Arlette, George Ziata and the new guitar!*

Another one! During breakfast time we usually were not the first to enter the dining room. A good start with a cup of coffee was quite welcome to wake us up, but the Espresso machine was quite complicated. Fortunately there were always people around to help out, preparing a cup of coffee for Annette.

One day, however, in a miraculous way Annette was the first one to enter, so there she stood in front of the Espresso machine with a questioning look on her face. How do you operate such a machine? After she pressed a few buttons, some indicators on the machine lighted up. Annette took this as a sign of a successful operation and sat down for breakfast. Meanwhile the machine made some affirmative simmering.

The simmering, however, took quite a long time and got louder and louder. Slightly alarmed, Annette decided to take a look...!

Shock! The whole table was flooded, there was water all around. Fortunately Fred Rootveld emerged as the ministering angel. 'Never mind, take a seat and relax, I'll clear things up', he said and prepared a delicious cup of coffee for Annette after he had successfully tackled the flood.

**We have heard a number of great concerts during the festivals. Which concerts did you consider to be world class?**

We have had the opportunity to listen to a lot of beautiful and varied concerts.

The ones that stood out for us were amongst others the concerts by Pavel Steidl, Gaëlle Solal, Alberto Mesirca (both his solo performance and the one with the violinist Daniel Rowland) Roland Dyens, the Real Duo (mandolin and guitar), Duo SoloNeo (flute and guitar) and the Klemke Gitarren Duo.

**You have been members of the jury during many of the competitions. Do you remember players that gave you the impression ‘he or she is going to fly high’?**

Generally speaking, the skill level of the participants at the competitions of the Nordhorn Guitar Festival is quite high. In other words, many players already have flown quite high to be able to play a competition programme so surprisingly well.

That's fantastic, obviously, but it is no guarantee for a bright future as a musician. There is more to a successful career than a sound technique and an extraordinary interpretation. You need a good stage presentation, you must be able to provide a full evening's programme, you must be a good promoter of yourself and quite a lot more that you need to learn ‘on the job’.

Guitar Festival Nordhorn helps the competition winners in this respect, offering not only prize money, but also ‘profession oriented’ prizes such as a good guitar, concert opportunities and CD recordings.

**You have both given a large number of master classes. What is your impression of the level of the students nowadays?**

The good thing about the Guitar Festival Nordhorn is that it is open to conservatory students, professional musicians as well as amateurs. The amateurs get opportunities for master classes too.

Consequently as a teacher we met all kinds of students with different skill levels. Most advanced players perform quite well, yet there is ample opportunity for instruction and refinement of the pieces, e.g. to achieve a well-finished performance in front of an audience.

It is pleasant to notice that all master class students, whether they are amateurs or professionals, are very intent and eager to learn.

### **Henk Olden**



*Henk Olden, Flamenco Guitar in the Lounge!*

Henk and Martin Olden are twin brothers, Martin is the father of Sanna Rootveld – van Elst, hence Henk is her uncle. From the beginning both gentlemen have been volunteers and supporters of the GFN and show up regularly at concerts and events in the Kulturhaus NIHZ.

**Please tell us something about yourself. What's your name, where do you live, what's your current occupation?**

I am Henk Olden, I live in Amsterdam and I am currently retired. A perfect opportunity to play the guitar, to arrange music and make compositions myself.

**At which age did you start playing the guitar?**

I started playing when I was 19 years old.

**Which person or event made you decide to dedicate yourself to the guitar?**

I listened to a record of the Spanish flamenco guitarist Sabicas (the artist name of Agustín Castellón Campos). For me it was an indelible impression. That was the way I wanted to play the guitar myself! Obviously I did not realise myself how much effort it would take to master it at that level.

**Please tell something about your musical training. Where and with what teachers did you study?**

I have studied classical guitar with Rob Bakker for about one and a half year. Later on I became an autodidact. Additionally I followed a course in music theory that included subjects such as harmony, analysis and solfeggio.

**Which teacher influenced you most? Which aspect of your play benefited from this?**

Rob Bakker was a very good teacher for me. I tried other teachers after him, but their approach did not appeal to me, so I left each time. In Spain I played with young flamenco guitarists for many years, their way of playing was an eye-opener and completely changed my style. I have learnt a great deal from them.

Three years ago I met a student of Andrés Segovia -Jorge Ariza (according to his wife he was a very strict teacher at the Madrid Conservatory) - who was very pleased with my style of playing. He encouraged me passionately to leave the confines of my study and bring my play to the audiences again.

**You made a special study of Flamenco music and regularly visited Spain for that purpose. The concept of *Duende* is very important in Flamenco. Please say something more about this.**

*Duende* is hard to define clearly. In Spain I was present at informal Flamenco meetings with a very high quality of playing, the guitarists being mostly professional. Their music was great, I guess during these meetings there was a sense of *Duende*. The *Gitanos* themselves, however, refrain from the term.

**Who are your favourite Flamenco guitarists?**

Obviously Sabicas (Agustín Castellón Campos), Tomatito (José Fernández Torres) and Vicente Amigo. I also like the play of a few of my Flamenco friends, they are not world famous, but they play tremendously well, for instance Ricardo de la Juana. He is the embodiment of flamenco, not only in his play but also in his life style. I really like the young Paco de Lucía, but later on his play became too perfect. In my opinion Flamenco should be a kind of raw cry, a passionate exclamation.

**Who are your favourite classical guitarists?**

Obviously I like the ‘oldies’, Andrés Segovia, Julian Bream etcetera. Pavel Steidl was a revelation to me, during his recital I had the same sensation as with the informal Flamenco meetings. At the Guitar Festival Nordhorn 2014, Gaëlle Solal surprised me a lot. The way that she started the *Chaconne* from the D Partita by Bach just like that, that was great!

**What is your favourite guitar piece?**

It is hard to make a definite choice. I like to play *Recuerdos de la Alhambra* (with the flamenco tremolo) and Spanish music with an Arabic sound, with the dreamy atmosphere. I also love the *Prelude* to the *Second Lute Suite* by Bach, just to name another guitar genre and style. I could easily mention over a hundred beautiful pieces that all appeal to me in a special way.

**At what age did you perform for an audience the first time? What was the occasion for that performance?**

Rob Bakker encouraged me to play before an audience right away. I was 19 at the time and I had been playing the guitar for just half a year.

**Did you ever make recordings and CDs? If so, how did you experience recording and listening to the result?**

Yes. Recording requires an awful lot of concentration. If I listen to the result right away, usually I don’t like it. Later my judgement becomes more mild.

**You were an active guitar player, playing before audiences. Where have you appeared so far?**

In the eighties I used to perform in The Netherlands, solo or in ensemble formation. In Spain I performed in restaurants but I also appeared on stage with official recitals. Sometimes people asked me to play while I was in the audience. In July 2014, I played a solo concert in India. All went well and it was a tremendous experience for me.

**Being a guitarist, you have been involved with the ensemble Bel Cante for a while and even recorded a CD with it. What are your experiences with your role in the ensemble?**

I prefer ensemble playing above being a soloist. It is a pity that the artistic vision of the members of Bel Cante appeared to be too different.

**What is your opinion about competitions? Do they have a positive influence on the player or do they distract the players from the essence of music?**

I have made a few attempts at playing in competitions. I found out that I did not like the atmosphere of *who is playing better than...* that is part of a competition.

**What do you like best: Playing before an audience, or playing before a jury in a competition setting?**

Playing before an audience, under the condition that I get the opportunity to become part of the music. It’s a great experience if you notice that the audience shares this musical unity.

**How did you get the idea to subscribe to the Guitar Festival Nordhorn?**

First, Sanna and Bobby are my family and second, I love the guitar.

**What are your experiences with the atmosphere on the Guitar Festival Nordhorn?**

The atmosphere is informal, a bit like you are amongst relatives. And quite importantly, we have all one thing in common: our love for the guitar!

**You met a lot of professional guitarists at the festival. What are your experiences?**

The obvious and interesting fact is that whatever you discuss in Nordhorn, the guitar is always there. I experienced the same in Spain, I have friends over there that I have known for years, you talk about everything in the world, but very often you return to the main subject: music on the guitar.

**How did you experience the master classes? Which teacher impressed you most?**

I only attended three master classes, in most cases I had direct questions about a particular piece as the subject for my class. In many cases a master class is too short to cover everything. In Spain I was lucky to be able to discuss pieces with other guitarists for hours, both in words and on the instrument. In the Flamenco academy that I used to visit, I was always welcome for questions and hints concerning the pieces I played.

**What are your impressions concerning the contact with the other participants?**

I really enjoyed the contact with the other participants. In particular during the evenings that I served as a barman, socialising was easy and enjoyable.

**Which workshops did you attend? What were your experiences?**

I attended Bobby's workshop on stage presentation. It is good to learn how you establish contact with the audience when you are on stage.

**You were closely involved with the catering at the festival, which is at times quite an adventure with a large number of participants. Do you remember any anecdotes from the kitchen?**

I remember that I was called for breakfast duty unexpectedly and without briefing after I had been on bar duty until four o' clock in the morning. Literally everything went wrong that morning and I felt miserable. Fortunately the participants understood and kept a relaxed atmosphere.

**Would you recommend the festival to your friends and relatives?**

Absolutely!

**Martin Olden**

Martin and Henk Olden are twin brothers, Martin is the father of Sanna Rootveld – van Elst, hence Henk is her uncle. From the beginning both gentlemen have been volunteers and supporters of the GFN and show up regularly at concerts and events in the Kulturhaus NIHZ.

**Please tell us something about yourself. What's your name, where do you live, what's your current occupation?**

I am Martin Olden, sixty nine years old, I work as a psychologist and philosopher, and I organise and teach courses in philosophy. I live in the town of Zutphen. My big love's name is Joyce. We're not living together. And, not insignificant, I am Sanna's father and Bobby's father in law.



*Martin Olden, in action with French chansons*

**At which age did you start playing an instrument. Which instrument?.**

At the age of twelve I have learnt myself to play the guitar a bit, mainly chords for song accompaniment.

**Which person or event incited your interest in music?**

In the elementary school we had music lessons and class singing. My voice attracted attention, I was often asked to sing the melody solo in front of the class, probably because I quickly knew the melodies and had a nice voice. Later Henk, my twin brother, and I did an audition for singing in the boys' choir in Bach's St. Matthew's Passion. We performed for many years with this choir until our voices started to change.

In the secondary school we had music lessons as well. In this class we had to do a speaking engagement about a musical subject. In my first talk I discussed *Rhapsody in Blue* by George Gershwin.

**Please tell us something about your musical training. Where and with what teachers did you study?**

I have never had music lessons for an instrument. I did attend singing lessons.

**Which teacher influenced you most? Which aspect of your play benefited from this?**

I had my singing lessons with Riet Jonasse for more than fifteen years. She significantly improved my recitation skills and diction. This was a great aid in my teaching activities, because I could use my voice in a much better way.

**Who are your favourite classical guitarists?**

Alberto Mesirca, Marcin Dylla, Paco de Lucia, Klaus Renzl (surprisingly good and a big laugh!). And my absolute top favourite is Pavel Steidl!

**What is your favourite guitar piece?**

Too many to mention! I do mention the *Chaconne* by Bach, *And you go to Ithaca, too?* by Pavel Steidl, the *Sonatas* by Scarlatti on guitar. But I also like the music from the movie *Paris, Texas* by Ry Cooder.

I do not restrict myself to guitar music, I also like music for the North African Oud and the Indian Sarod or Sitar.

**You are closely involved with the Question Filosofie foundation in the town of Zutphen as an instructor and course leader. One of the courses discusses the relation of Philosophy and Arts. Please tell us something about the role of music in this course.**

On behalf of the Question Filosofie foundation we organised conferences, lectures, courses and excursions about the subject Philosophy and Art. At the conference about Philosophy and Music one of the main subjects was to learn to achieve the patience (to take time) to listen to the music intently and observe what is happening within you.

In the process of one of the lectures I described the theory of emotions in the 17th century, which seems to be related to the theory of effects in Baroque music.

Another workshop dealt with the question of how a composition is conceived. Jan Bijkerk composed a piece for Sanna and Bobby and described how he worked. Later on the day they rehearsed the piece with him as an illustration.

Music can express something that words (including lectures about philosophy) cannot. Yet you always need words to exchange thoughts with others about the very nature of music.

**A popular ‘requirement’ for music, just like for art in general, is that it ‘must be beautiful’. What is your vision on this requirement as a philosopher?**

In India people have another requirement that is mine too: music must touch you, it must be able to move you. That may be quite emotional. An Indian singer integrates all kinds of emotions in his song. For an inexperienced listener like me it sounded awful in the beginning, yet I was moved by this music. Jeff Buckley sings *Calling You* and it really makes my soul cry. Great music, but would you call it beautiful?

**Some politicians consider particularly classical music as elitist and ‘a hobby of the Rich’ and immediately cut budgets for it. What is your opinion on this attitude as a philosopher?**

It does not seem right to me to more or less ‘dispose’ classical music as elitist. In the present time there is a trend that everything has to be presented in easily digestible chunks. In itself that is not wrong. Yet you are definitely missing something if you do not know anything about classical music.

Classical music requires effort, you have to learn to listen to it. Then you will be surprised how beautiful the *Requiem* by Mozart is, or a String Quartet by Beethoven. This music stays beautiful over time. I have heard the *St. Matthew’s Passion* for the first time when I was ten. Since then I have heard it often. Still after all these years, to me, the opening choral is one of the most beautiful pieces of music that I have ever heard. Amazing that I have sung this music as a kid!

**You have dedicated yourself to French Chansons for a while and performed them in public as well. What does attract you towards this genre?**

In fact I did not perform officially in some place. I make music for pleasure. Doing so, I sing songs by Bob Dylan and Randy Newman, but also chansons by Jacques Brel and Jean Ferrat.

The most important thing for me is to tell a story, express an emotion, when I am singing. Consequently I must know the meaning of the lyrics. I learn the text by heart and recite the text over and over again. Until I have the feeling that it is ready for performance.

**Which French Chanson do you consider the best of all times? What do you find special about this song?**

That is *Ne me quitte pas* by Jacques Brel. That's the raw emotion of a man that is broken-hearted and wants to do everything, even being the shade of her shade, the shade of her dog, if only she does not leave him. A superb chord progression and marvellous French lyrics.

**Who is your favourite chanteur (;-) Roland Dyens explained me the difference between Chansonnier and Chanteur, so Chansonnier is not the correct word)? What does appeal you the most?**

I don't know... Jaques Brel and Edith Piaf. I am also crazy about some songs of Stromae.

**At what age did you perform for an audience the first time? What was the occasion for that performance?**

That was when I was eight years old. I was standing on a chair (we had a very large family) and sang a Frisian song that I learned at school. It was a frightening experience, but the song went all right. Somebody made a recording of my singing, I did hear it afterwards, but alas... I have no idea where it has gone.

**Did you ever make recordings and CDs? If so, how did you experience recording and listening to the result?**

I only made recordings for my singing lessons with a cassette recorder. I have never presented them to the world!

**What is your opinion about competitions? Do they have a positive influence on the player or do they distract the players from the essence of music?**

Guitar competitions? I do not participate because I hardly play the guitar. If you want to be a professional musician, I think it is a perfect opportunity to get experience with your nerves and stage fright. Also participating in a competition enables to work goal-oriented on a piece of music to the level that you can perform it before an audience.

I also think that you should not focus too much on winning, being the number one, too much. Participating, taking part is important too. I have seen such quality amongst participants. It is hard to believe that they all travel wide and far to come to this little music hall in Nordhorn!

**How did you get involved in the Guitar Festival Nordhorn?**

Well, as Bobby's father in law I just got into it automatically. I decided to give a hand at the festivals, being unaware of the fact -I am joking!- that I need a few days afterwards to relax.

My twin brother Henk, guitar lover and player of Spanish music, is a volunteer with the festival too. Twins do raise surprise and confusion, we are quite used to that. But it was a real fun experience that in 2015 one of the participants wondered: 'that guy does an awful lot of work!' It was not before the end of the festival that he found out. There were two guys, identical twins, that actually - he got that quite right - got cracking.

**What are your experiences with the atmosphere on the Guitar Festival Nordhorn?**

In my opinion the atmosphere is nice and informal. It is fun to associate with the participants. However, for us there is a lot of work to do, so we do not have time the chat all day. As a family we step in if someone is needed for bar service, selling CDs, cutting vegetables for dinner and so on.

Our complete family has made friends with Nandini Sudhir and her mother Pallavi. We have been their guests in Bangalore in India, this year they will visit the festival again. I am looking forward to it!

**You met a lot of professional guitarists at the festival. What are your experiences?**

Before the festival starts, we have dinner with all the artists present in the kitchen. We chat with most artists. Some chats develop into more contact, for instance with Alberto Mesirca (a friend of the family and musician in residence), the Italian Real Duo (it was not exactly a chat, because they only spoke Italian), with Pavel Steidl (we had a nice conversation about Holland and Prague) and with Nutavut Ratanakarn (he came up to help in the kitchen). And then there was Jim ten Boske, guitar teacher, composer and an old friend of Sanna and Bobby. The contact with Annette and Arlette is so obvious that I almost forget to mention them. I guess that for many artists the domestic and pleasant atmosphere is a welcome change to concert halls and cheerless dressing rooms.

**How was the contact with the participants of the festival?**

At the festival, I have contact with the participants of the competition anyway, because I support the competition management, bringing the competitors to the practice rooms for playing-in and escorting them from the practice room to the concert hall.

Considering the strict timing of the competition, this is an accurate job: the players have exactly fifteen minutes playing-in time in a practice room in the basement, I am there right in time to pick them up to make sure they start in the concert hall on ground floor in time. We have two practice rooms, so at times the schedule requires multiple actions in just two minutes.

During my job I come across surprising contacts and funny things. I remember a finalist that had injured his finger just before the final round. I came with a detergent, but instead he dipped his finger in a glass of Vodka! He did win the festival with it! Others ask me to keep their smart phones and wallets during their performances.

After the preliminaries, five participants reach the finals, for the others the competition is over. Hearing candidates playing-in, I find many players quite good, yet sometimes the jury decides otherwise. Some participants consider themselves utterly failing if they (think that they) are not amongst the first five. I think that's a real misconception. If they come to me with this bad feeling, I always try to nuance things. I do not know anything about their results, about their ranking, but I do recognise it when players just need to talk about it, and in my role of competition support, there I am.

The competition for amateurs is quite different in atmosphere: it's much more personal. Sometimes I meet people who play before an audience for the first time, participants may be very nervous or even be in a cold sweat. I attempt to set them at ease and help them with the little practical things like a tissue to dry their hands.

Some participants are quite arrogant and treat me like a kind of servant. It is interesting to observe all these different kinds of people that participate in the competitions.

During the night there is a lot of fun amongst the participants in the bar, a good laugh, improvised songs and guitar playing. Not for me, currently I make sure to get a good night's rest, (laughing) I guess it has something to do with my age (69) and serving breakfast in the morning requires early awakening! It's a pity a little bit, since I miss the incredibly pleasant musical after-party.

**You were closely involved with the catering at the festival, which is at times quite an adventure with a large number of participants. Do you remember anecdotes from the kitchen?**

For me the catering involves serving breakfast and cooking (amongst others with Angie). Cooking can be a bit stressful for us, because the meal has to be ready in time and... did we prepare sufficient food for everyone? As you might know the kitchen is not designed for large dinners. The cooker has sufficient burners for a small family, but with those large pans... At times it looks like everyone needs to be around the cooker and oven at four o'clock -at that time the cookies for the evening concert are being prepared as well- so it's a real crowd in the kitchen. Generally speaking the atmosphere in the kitchen is OK. Luckily artists drop by to lend a hand with tasks like cutting vegetables or dish washing.

The breakfast is ready at eight o' clock sharp. Yes, it's early indeed! If the first guests do not arrive before half past nine, I sometimes think: 'I wish that I had slept half an hour longer.'

Sometimes little accidents happen. Once the rice was burnt, it was a huge pan. To our relief, we noticed it in time: Angie and I scooped out the unaffected white rice in two other pans. Fortunately the taste was not spoilt, nobody noticed it during the meal.

A few years ago during the last phase of the cooking, we got the announcement that there would be an additional ten guests. Well, it was hard work to prepare an extra pan of vegetables with dinner time looming.

Very often people drop by in the kitchen to help preparing the food and carry pans and crockery downstairs and after dinner up again. In sum, the kitchen is a joyful and sometimes very crowded place where we often have a good laugh.

**Would you recommend the festival to your friends and relatives?**

I am doing so all year. Obviously. I consider it a great festival.

Just one thing: I am no guitarist myself. Yet I find it a great pleasure to meet all those enthusiast guitar freaks! I am very pleased that I can make a contribution to this great initiative by Kulturhaus NIHZ.

## **Mathijs van der Kolk**

The guitar teacher Mathijs van der Kolk discovered the Guitar Festival Nordhorn as the perfect opportunity for his students to get in touch with competitions, and every time he accompanies them for coaching and encouragement. He liked the festival so much that he has become a partner.

**Please tell us something about yourself. What's your name, where do you live, what's your current occupation?**

My name is Mathijs, I live in the town of Zwolle and I am a guitar teacher in the town of Zwolle, and the village of Hardenberg and its surroundings.



*Mathijs van der Kolk, guitar teacher and coach*

**At which age did you start playing an instrument. Which instrument?**

I used to visit a certain Patrick often when I was about six years old. He and his brother Robin both played the guitar. I was a regular (guitar) guest with the neighbours as well, they had borrowed a guitar from a girl that did not do anything with it, so I got the opportunity to give it a try myself. It's a funny coincidence that the daughter of this girl now is one of my students!

**Which person or event incited your interest in music?**

It was back in the seventies of the last century when I saw a documentary about Flamenco on TV, showing a guitarist that made a sound impression on me. Later on I found out that it was Diego del Gastor.

In my early teenage years I used to listen to heavy metal a lot and I noticed that many of the best bands used cool classical guitar intro's. The step towards listening to music by Dowland (Bream's performance!) appeared to be a small one, when I was 15 years of age I listened to Dowland's music every day after I got home from school. The music by Ennio Morricone appealed to me as well, my father had stirred my enthusiasm for his compositions.

**Please tell us something about your musical training. Where and with what teachers did you study?**

I studied classical guitar at the Zwolle Conservatory (currently ArtEZ) with Jacob Vlijm, who had been my guitar teacher before. I attended master classes with amongst others Alvaro Pierri, Pavel Steidl, Darko Petrinjak, Nigel North and Hopkinson Smith.

At a later stage I made study of Flamenco with the music by amongst others Maya, Barraquero and El Pisao as examples.

**Which teacher influenced you most? Which aspect of your play benefited from this?**

I have two teachers that influenced me.

First Alex Timmerman, the author of *De Mandoline en de Gitaar door de eeuwen heen* (this translates as *The Mandolin and Guitar through the Ages*), a historical essay about these instruments. At the Conservatory he taught the subjects of Methodology and History of the guitar. For me, his lessons actually brought the history of the guitar and its music to life!

Second Pieter van der Staak. His incredible drive, enthusiasm and historical knowledge have remained a great example for me over time.

I have had the privilege to speak with him a few times, well, actually he was speaking and I was all ears. I only had to mention a single name and he responded with a deluge of anecdotes. Julian Bream, for instance, visited Van der Staak regularly, so there was ample opportunity for news exchange from the guitar world.

I myself and the classical guitar in Holland in general have a lot to thank him for. He for instance initially organized *De Zwolse Gitaarweken*, the international guitar festival in the town of Zwolle. In those days it was the very first classical guitar festival in Europe.

**Who are your favourite classical guitarists?**

Julian Bream remains my top favourite after all these years. Obviously the flamenco guitarist Paco de Lucia is high on my favourite list too. I like many, many more players, but I guess that a list of them would grow absurdly long!

**What is your favourite guitar piece?**

That is hard to say, it is connected to my mood of the day!

**At what age did you perform for an audience the first time? What was the occasion for that performance?**

I was 15 years of age, I accompanied Johanna Klaasen who was singing at a school party.

**Did you ever make recordings and CDs? If so, how did you experience recording and listening to the result?**

Yes. I made a recording for YouTube. If you playback via this medium, however, most of your tone is lost. I remember a remark by Tom Kersten at the Nordhorn Guitar Festival 2015: 'You take a lot of effort to optimise your tone and timbre for the recording, but when you play back on YouTube all this effort is lost, you just don't hear it. To add insult to injury most PC 'listeners' have those average little speakers, so it's a waste of effort for the guitarist!' I guess he was right, so I just removed my own recordings from YouTube.

**What is your opinion about competitions? Do they have a positive influence on your musical development or are they merely an adventure?**

I guess both, the positive influence and the adventure. I have missed that in the period before I went to the Conservatory. If I was able replay this period I would definitely participate in competitions. I consider it pure gain if one of my students wants to participate in a competition. I immediately want to coach him, it's just like I am participating a bit myself. Great fun!

**What do you like best: Playing before an audience, or playing before a jury in a competition setting?**

I like both!

**How did you get the idea to subscribe to the Guitar Festival Nordhorn?**

I do not remember, I guess I found out via Bobby Rootveld, I knew him from the Conservatory, he took a course in composition with ArtEZ.

**What were your expectations of the festival?**

Different from what I found out being there. I thought it would be like the festivals that are organized in these huge (conservatory) buildings, that was what I was used to. The atmosphere, however, appeared quite pleasant!

**How did you experience the participation in the competition by your students?**

For them it's an invaluable experience! And another thing, if a student has plans for a study at the Conservatory, this festival kills two birds with one stone, because there is someone around that teaches at the Groningen Conservatory (Sabrina Vlascalic) and is very willing to provide practical hints and advice.

**Please tell us something about the preparation for the competition with your students.**

There is a lot to do in preparation for a competition! I pay attention to the selection of the pieces and the way you build a programme. I go through the rehearsal methods, the way that you make a planning for the preparation and I practice practical things like time estimation to prevent excess of allotted time during the competition.

**What are your experiences with the atmosphere on the Guitar Festival Nordhorn?**

I found that a pleasant and relaxed participation is key on this festival. To be in a competition is more important than winning it. The master classes about the competition pieces are the most important events. After a preparation like this, most students are able to play their pieces quite well.

**You met a lot of professional guitarists at the festival. What are your experiences?**

Very positive! Sabrina Vlaskalic is a very practical lady! I was allowed to play on Tom Kersten's guitar (it was a shame that he wanted it back). Seeing Pavel Steidl after all these years was fun too!

**What is your opinion about the organisation?**

Well organized! The right people on the right job. A flexible and no-nonsense attitude, but always aiming at the pleasant and harmonious atmosphere.

**What is your opinion about the facilities of Kulturhaus NIHZ (food, drink, lodging)?**

Food and drink were top class, but this Shoarma place around the corner.. well that's a ritual indeed! Last time one of my students wanted to drop in for a bite even on the way back home, it was his third time!

**Would you recommend the festival to your friends and relatives?**

Positive!

### **Thomas Peperkamp**



*Thomas Peperkamp, playing his own compositions at GFN 2014*

The guitarist and composer Thomas Peperkamp belongs to the staff of the GitaarSalon Enkhuizen, a thriving guitar podium in the old town of Enkhuizen in the western part of Holland, that has connections with the Brava TV channel for the registration and distribution of the guitar concerts.

Thomas visited one of the first editions of the Guitar Festival Nordhorn and saw the great potential for partnership. Since the beginning the GFN and the Gitaarsalon cooperate, for instance a recital in the concert hall in Enkhuizen is part of the prize for the professional competition in Nordhorn.

**Please tell us something about yourself. What's your name, where do you live, what's your current occupation?**

My name is Thomas Peperkamp and I live in Blokker, in the vicinity of the town of Hoorn. I have a private guitar school in Badhoevedorp, a suburb of Amsterdam. I have always earned a living with music-related professions. I have many interests and like travelling and adventure.

**At what age did you start playing the guitar?**

I remember that I was about eleven years old when I started my first explorations of playing the guitar. In those days I lived in a village called Winsum in the northern region of the province of Groningen. A friend of my father had left behind a guitar in our house. It just sat there in a corner, waiting to be played. At times I tried to make some noise with it, but I was still too young and playful to spend a lot of time with the instrument right away. Ultimately I started guitar lessons with a guy from my village, Richard de Jong was his name. He became my first guitar teacher, he taught me chords and exercises from the guitar method of Ilja Croon.

**Which person or event made you decide to dedicate yourself to the guitar?**

One day I went to the library in our village Winsum and browsed through a collection of records that you could borrow. At a certain moment I came across a record in a colourful sleeve with music composed by Agustín Barrios Mangore and played by John Williams. This event was a life changer for me, because from the very moment that I placed the stylus of my gramophone in the first groove, I was hooked and I was sure that I wanted to play this music myself!

**You are a professional guitarist. Please tell us something about your musical training. Where and with what teachers did you study?**

Of course I have had a number of guitar teachers and I learnt from everyone. Yet I have discovered quite a lot of knacks myself and most of the time I spent with self-study.

I attended two schools of music, one in the village of 's Heerenberg and one in the town of Doetinchem. There I followed lessons with Ton Hacket and Paul Schagen. After we moved to the town of Hoorn, on the recommendation of Wim Pfister I started a study in Amsterdam. I began a part time music study on higher vocational education level because I was too old to be admitted to a conventional conservatory study. It was one of the many detours that I took to achieve my goal. An education with state exam was an option to proceed my study and enhance my musical knowledge.

I have followed guitar lessons with Esther Steenbergen. The most important thing that she taught me was a critical and precise self-observation of the technical aspects of my play. With her I have gone through a lot of guitar repertoire. I learnt most, however, from my musical friends and my travels to master classes in the musical and guitar scene.

**Which teacher influenced you most? Which aspect of your play benefited from this?**

I think that David Russell influenced me most via the master classes that I could spend with him. He has a very practical solution for every issue readily available, solutions that sound extremely well on the guitar! Particularly his inventive fingering proved to be a revelation for me! He taught me that I should never indiscriminately adopt a given fingering without carefully analysis of its effectiveness.

**Who are your favourite guitarists?**

Julian Bream John Williams and David Russell

Currently there are so many great guitarists that I should mention as well, but then the printer cartridge would be empty before I mentioned them all. I have had the pleasure to include many of them in a beautiful concert series at the GuitarSalon in Enkhuizen via a programme that I designed as a fellow-founder of the Salon..

At the moment there are many more good guitarists than listeners that value their music and consequently appear in the concert halls.

**What is your favourite classical guitar piece?**

*Un Sueño en la Selva* by Agustín Barrios Mangore! And of course *La Catedral*, also by Barrios. This choice is obvious because Barrios' music incited my passion for the guitar.

They are not the only ones: Currently for me every new piece that I play on the guitar is a favourite!

**At what age did you perform for an audience for the first time? What was the occasion?**

My very first performance was at a school party and I made my first appearance with *La Catedral*.

Did you ever make recordings and CDs? If so, how did you experience recording and listening to the result?

I have made two arrangements for Feico de Leeuw, who recorded a CD together with his children's choir *De Wielewaal* in 1997. This was my first professional recording. Later I contributed to a CD compilation for the three year's anniversary of the GitaarSalon. I recorded an own composition titled *Admiration* and we made a live-CD *Thomas Peperkamp and Friends* that we recorded at the GitaarSalon.

**You are a composer yourself and work in a pleasant and accessible style, as I heard with one of your concerts. Did you ever make plans to share your work, which is publishing it? Would you try to find a publisher or would you publish on your own?**

As long as I played the guitar I have been improvising and composing. Often I had little confidence in my own work, I was wondering if it were good enough, if it would be accepted by an audience. That particular concert that you heard in Nordhorn was my very first concert that was completely dedicated to my own compositions. It was a genuine debut and a courageous dive at the deep end!

To my great joy it was a fine concert and all went well. I have received a lot of warm and encouraging compliments from Annette Kruisbrink and Jim ten Boske. The lutenist Ben Salfield made very positive comments on my work as well! I was so relieved and pleased that my compositions were received so well.

I am grateful to Bobby that he provided me with the encouragement, the confidence and the opportunity to make my debut on such a high level with such a highly honoured guitar audience. After the concert a few guitarists requested my compositions in order to play the music themselves and I gave them a few of the scores. It was a great sense of satisfaction! For me this concert was one of the highlights of 2015!

**Do your compositions have a central theme? What is a source of inspiration for you?**

Composing or 'designing' music is no ordered or regulated process.

A musical idea may pop up all of a sudden, but maybe you will never use or elaborate that idea. It's like scribbling on a piece of paper... I discard many ideas because I cannot realize them right away, but on the other hand it may happen that all these fragments suddenly fit together like Lego bricks. In that case things proceed fast and I actually write something that I can use and play.

Often my first idea is a section in the middle of the final composition, it is quite seldom that I start with Measure One and proceed from there. Before the moment that the composition is completed, I often already know its title.

Inspiration? Well everything can be an inspiration for me, I do not tie myself up.

**What do you consider your best composition up till now? Please tell us something more about it.**

That's a difficult question... the best composition is the one that you can change freely any time you like as soon as new views and ideas emerge... a kind of fluid composition... haha, don't get me wrong.. but I think if you fix your music, often you will be kept prisoner by your own composition. Like playing *your* music in *your* concert in *your* way (which often differs from the publication of your composition in print) and finding out that the audience does not thank you for that.

**You work for the GitaarSalon, a small-scale high quality podium for the guitar. How did you land there?**

There is some previous history to the idea of establishing the GitaarSalon. In 1991 I visited the Guitar Festival of Great Britain as a participant, and for the first time I met all my guitar heroes and attended their master classes. The contacts that I got there over the years inspired me to create a place in The Netherlands after the model of the English Guitar Societies.

The perfect opportunity to organise this failed to arise quite a long time, until I had a talk at the kitchen table with Pieter Nanne Groot and presented the idea to him. The idea appealed to him and one year later he enthusiastically announced that we could start the GitaarSalon! It was the beginning of a great time of promotion of every kind of guitar music and in the mean time we put together a lovely team with lots of talent to make the GitaarSalon a special place.

**What is your opinion about competitions? Do they have a positive influence on the player or do they distract the players from the essence of music?**

I think that competition in music is of all times. For instance the ‘duel’ between Händel and Scarlatti in London in 1708! However, is Händel *better* than Scarlatti? I always have trouble with people starting comparing apples and oranges. If that becomes a standard for competition in music, I have the feeling that the best musician will not always win and the same applies to the music that is played. I guess competitions are there to attract attention and maybe listeners. However, the most important question is, what do you have to offer as an *artist*, what is your artistic story? That is a vision that you need to develop yourself, and that vision makes the real difference.

**What do you like best, playing in front of an audience, or a jury in competition setting?**

The most important is to play beautiful in your own mind and make the attempt to shape the phrasing of the musical sentences as clearly as possible, so that each audience can follow it like an exciting story and cannot wait to hear the next phrase! In that case it is hardly important for whom you are playing.

**How did you get in touch with Guitar Festival Nordhorn?**

Via the GitaarSalon I became friends with Bobby and Sanna who played a concert with us. I already cooperated with the Twente Guitar Festival, when Bobby still was in its board, and after he established a festival at Kulturhaus NIHZ, I have been involved with Guitar Festival Nordhorn from the very beginning. One of the prizes for the professional competition was a recital in GitaarSalon Enkhuizen! Consequently I have been a jury member from the beginning too.

**What were your expectations of the Festival?**

I always go to a new event with an open mind, so in fact I did not have expectations. With this mind-set you are seldomly disappointed.

The first edition, however, was special from the start and I do find it one of the most pleasant and well organised festivals that I have ever attended. The atmosphere is informal and friendly and the location is neatly arranged and cosy.

**What are your experiences with the atmosphere of the Festival?**

It is pleasant and cosy, we have lots of fun and often a good laugh!

Because the location is not quite large or impersonal, it is more easy to strike up a conversation that provide a good impression about the artists that are performing there. Anyone that visits this unique festival and approach participants and artists with an open mind will take home lots of beautiful memories and experiences!

**Did you have pleasant contacts with the artists?**

Oh yes! I got acquainted with all artists that played at the Guitar Festival Nordhorn and I made good friends with some of them.

**What is your opinion about the organisation?**

The organisation is like a warm bath! Bobby, Sanna and their family make the festival into something extraordinary and special. GFN is a warm guitar family that I like to visit to get up steam.

**What is your opinion about the facilities in Kulturhaus NIHZ (food, drink, lodging?)**

My opinion is that the organisation takes good care of their guests, always advise and assist people and help wherever they can. There is a table tennis table and in the evening it gets mighty cool with lots of guitar playing with the new friends. There are enjoyable and interesting conversations that, over a glass of beer, wine or soda, create a friendly and easy-going atmosphere. Everything feels relaxed and you have the opportunity to be completely yourself amongst friends.

**Would you recommend the festival to your guitar friends, colleagues and relatives?**

Definitely yes! It is a lovely festival with a great atmosphere and excellent facilities! Obviously I already made a lot of recommendations and have brought it to the attention of many people.

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