

Re-tuning my Guitar



Shortly after the time that I got my Kwakkel guitar, my teacher -who possessed a Kwakkel too- suggested that the guitar sounded better if you tuned it slightly lower than the standard 440 Hz reference related tuning.

In that time, I did not have a guitar tuner that supported a change of the A4 reference, I worked with a tuning fork and why should I buy a special and more expensive tuning fork for a little experiment? I did not, a clear demonstration of my Dutch frugality.

Later I bought a guitar tuner that enabled to set the reference-A lower and higher. At that time, I did not use this function, the A4 remained at 440 Hz.

At a certain time, I read an article about the reference tone 432 Hz and the story around it. An A4 of 432 Hz would resonate with natural frequencies and provide a gentler sound.

"Let's give it a try!" I thought and adjusted my guitar tuner to A4=432 Hz. To my astonishment and surprise the article turned out to be right: The guitar had a warmer sound and the sharp edges of the higher tones had decreased considerably. The sound did suit my play better and I experienced a bit of encouragement during playing. It looked like that the sound connected to my sense of playing pretty well. Extraordinary!

Tuning the guitar by ear remained quite well possible. At first, I was thinking that tuning would be more tedious because one gets used to the pitch. It was no problem, tuning strings using the beat between strings was as usual.

After I changed my tuning reference (in this case tuned down) I started to examine the whereabouts of the standard A4. I found quite a number of theories, most of them quite far-

fetcher. There was even a conspiracy theory that the Nazi's would have wanted to set the 440 Hz because of the effect that music tuned this way would cause people to be worked-up and more aggressive, while the 432 Hz tuning would cause peace and ease at heart.

Very interesting indeed, yet at the moment I have found out that it sounds nice, that it's pleasing to my ear. For me that's the motivation to give it a try. Possibly the postulate that 432 Hz stimulates the musical intuition holds a bit of ground for me, because I feel encouraged by the sound to play with more expression. So, at the moment I tune my guitar @432 Hz.

Because I use my Kwakkel guitar mainly for solo repertoire, a tuning that differs from the standard is no problem. For playing together (with all that use the standard tuning), I use my Contreras guitar that is tuned @440 Hz.