

Guitar Festival Nordhorn 2011

On a beautiful day in Spring...



On a beautiful spring day... - no, I will not continue with the lyrics of a famous song by the Dutch cabaret artist Leen Jongewaard *On a beautiful Whitsunday* – I left my ‘big girl’ behind at home (my ‘little’ girls already left home) and got into the car for a little drive to Nordhorn, just over the Dutch/German border.

It was great weather and all trees and plants had just discovered in the week before that it was high time to become lush green. The sun painted a beautiful palette of colours on the leaves in the woods along the road.

I followed the route of the ancient E8, the highway that took many trucks right through crowded town centres. Since then the road numbering has changed – the E8 now is between Turku in Finland and Tromsø in Norway – and there is the A1/A30, the new highway to Germany and beyond.

I passed Oldenzaal with its roundabouts (one of them is notorious for sideslips) and headed for Denekamp along the Paasberg. At that point, you are on the dead straight road that seems to connect the church towers of Oldenzaal and Denekamp. Dead straight? Not quite. Just before Denekamp I met the consequences of modern town planning, thoroughfare is prohibited in the centre of town and you have to follow a long and winding bypass.

I reached the old canal between Almelo and Nordhorn and passed the deserted customs offices at the border (this peace and quiet is caused by the Schengen Treaties). Only the cigarette booth and the international supermarket seem to reflect the motto *Ueber der Grenze scheint die Sonne*.

Willkommen in Deutschland.... My sense of excitement became stronger, compare it to what you feel just before the school outing as a kid. I was on my way to the first edition of the Guitar Festival Nordhorn.

I drove straight ahead, crossed the railway and went right in the direction of the old NINO, the long-declined imperium of textiles tycoon Niehues in Nordhorn

Nordhorn is no unfamiliar place to me. My mother in law used to go there to buy cloth at the NINO for her sewing class participants. Besides Nordhorn used to be an attractive destination when the petrol was still pretty cheap in Germany.

We went there, often with my mother in law and the kids, for refuelling, some shopping at Kaufhalle and Klaas und Koch, and coffee with sandwiches at the Vechte Restaurant. At times, we gave the children a dime to operate the Rotamint (a well-known German gambling machine), provided the old lady was not there that trusted all of her change (?) to the machine's hungry slot.

Unfortunately, now in the United Europe everything is equally expensive everywhere, so our petrol trips are past.

In the distance, I saw a remnant of the NINO imperium, a high factory building with two towers that has a new name now: *Kompetenzzentrum Wirtschaft*. In its neighbourhood Kulturhaus NIHZ was situated in a quiet street. This would be my destination for the next three days.

I found a free (!) parking place for the car and walked with guitar and bag half a block from there.

Finally, I felt quite prepared for the very first Guitar Festival Nordhorn!

Day One



Edsart Udo de Haes

Master Class Arlette Ruelens

There is always one master class at the earliest possible time. This time I was the lucky guy. Master class at Friday 10 am, actually the opening hour of the festival.

My teacher this time was the Belgian guitarist Arlette Ruelens. Together with Annette Kruisbrink she forms the Anido Guitar Duo that would perform at the festival too. She practices her art not only on the six strings, she's capable with the paintbrush too.

As a subject for this festival I had prepared a *Sonata* by Paganini, known as *Manuscript 87*. The piece starts with a relatively slow *Minuetto* and ends in style with a much faster *Rondo*.

I needed to acclimatize a bit first. That's a kind of standard effect that I have experienced with many master classes before. Currently it is just a mild form of stage fright that takes about two lines of music to subside, of course a bit dependent on the tempo of the piece. High tempo requires longer acclimatization.

After I played the *Minuetto* including a self-made cadenza, Arlette Ruelens revealed herself as a musician with a subtle sense of style and detail. We worked on a number of fingerings and interpretation issues.

There was sufficient time left to go through the *Rondo*. Apparently, I was not aware of the timing, because I played it much faster than I originally planned. It went all right without hurry induced stumbling!

Yet this piece required some improvement concerning alternating strokes (yes, it's a weak spot), fingerings and interpretation choices. I left the class with some useful notes on the score and a bit of homework!

Workshop Flamenco

The guitarist Edsart Udo de Haes represented the flamenco style at this festival, the ancient traditional Spanish style that gives a prominent role for singing and dancing besides the guitar.

I knew Edsart Udo de Haes by his workshops a few years ago. At that occasion, I found out that flamenco was not my style (I remember that my finger nails got worn off after half an hour of rasgueado practice), yet I learnt to listen to this music better than I did before after his instruction and concerts. One of the causes are his to the point introductions about his music. In this way, you hear more about styles like *Granadina*, *Buleria* and *Solea*.

I was a bit late after my first master class master class, so I could not join in. Yet I saw a few ladies from the (small) group of amateurs at this festival working diligently with rasgueado and quintuple tremolo.

Ziata's Guitar Competition Cat. 1

The Guitar Festival Nordhorn features a competition that enables guitarists to measure themselves with colleagues on stage under supervision of a competent jury.

The original intention was to organize a competition on conservatory student/professional level (traditionally indicated with Cat.1) and on amateur level (guess what the Cat. number will be). The number of entries for Cat. 1 was so large, however, that there was no room left in the schedule for an amateur competition. Three days is not such a long period.

:))) Will I have to enrol for the amateur competition next year to improve on this?

Now I am touching a distinctive issue, with this first edition the students/professionals were quite a majority. The number of amateurs (including myself) was a mere 4 against 30^{1st} Category entries. This affected the attendance with for instance the evening concerts. A bit of a pity, I guess.

Many students/professionals apparently join competitions on *Hit and Run* basis, i.e. "*No place in the finals? Off we go!*"

It looks like a trend nowadays. Competitions yield useful (and sometimes frustrating) experience combined with exposure and network. Particularly the network, the fragile fabric of sometimes accidental contacts, may provide you with a stage, recording or a Maecenas in the future. Competitions and travelling take time, however, and many want to and have to study too. Apparently, this brings some haste in life.

OK, back to the reality of the competition. Every year I find it spectacular to see how people dedicate themselves to their instrument and music, against the winds of time, against all governmental nagging against "left-wing hobbies" as the main reason of our current right-wing government for cuts of culture budgets. They all work with heart and soul for the Muse, hoping she will once smile!

There were 30 entries, in the end 25 people appeared on stage. Quite a number, I remember a few past festivals with 20 guitarists in the preliminaries at most.

Seven jurors were available to assess the playing technique and musicality of the competitors. They were Alberto Mesirca from Italy, Johannes Möller from Sweden, Annette Kruisbrink and Arlette Ruelens of the Anido Guitar Duo, Edsart Udo de Haes - all guitarists - George Ziatas, luthier and finally Lyz Day, harpsichordist and educationalist.

The timing was strict and the breaks were well organized, because assessment is an exacting business.

As a service for the report, I got a list of participants with names and pieces in advance. That was quite useful for the quick notes. The list also offered some data for a study on the age brackets. Most of the participants were in the group 20 – 30 years, with one extreme: 59! Apparently, this competition is attractive for senior conservatory students and guitarists who have just graduated.

Together with the list, I got the request to participate as a public jury *hors concours*. To help me adjudicate I received a scoring form with categories that had a humorous and quite clear description. The score of 100 points, the absolute maximum, was described as “The New Segovia”.

To be honest, I am not waiting so much for a new Segovia. Quite a number of contemporary guitarists have surpassed him in technique, style and expression. I admit, however, that this would not have been possible without his pioneering. His historical significance for the guitar, guitar music and guitar compositions is beyond discussion. As long as you put his play and sound in the perspective of his days, you’ll consider him as a man of consequence. Despite the quirks he had at times (just ask Manuel Ponce and Heitor Villa-Lobos).

Marcos Flavio was the first one to hit the stage. He started with the *Allegretto* from the *First Sonatina* by Federico Moreno Torroba (1891 - 1982). He played the joyous piece with a powerful and varied tone and got me in the mood with his enjoyable approach. Until he played his second piece, *Estudio 2* by Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887 - 1959). Heitor, what are you doing to me! A true scale nightmare, difficult for both player and audience...

During his play, this first candidate already showed me that the size of the hall –not quite spacious - caused a lot of sound to arrive with the audience. For some players this appeared to be a disadvantage, a robust touch literally could outplay the audience.

Juliane Bergemann started with the romanticism of Johann Kaspar Mertz (1806 - 1856), one of the two *Romanzen* from *Bardenklängen*. I immediately noticed why I like this music when she succeeded to touch my heart with her tone. Don’t be afraid, that was not lethal.

Her next piece appealed less to me, it was the *Toccata* from *2 Suggestions* by – I hope I spell it right, because Internet did not help me – a certain S. Betous. The piece had a very bitter sound, which did not alter the fact that Bergemann played it well.

Raphael Ophaus played a *Rondo* by Dioniso Aguado (1784 - 1849), a quite virtuoso piece. Unfortunately, the guitarist overstretched the virtuosity a bit too much, with a clear risk of slips.

Pavel Kukhta made a good start with *Paisaje Cubano con Fiesta* by Leo Brouwer (*1939). The *Paisaje* breathed tranquility and the *Fiesta* was a feast. Well played with lots of atmosphere and contrasts. He continued with Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887 - 1959). I’m not sure how I got this, but since I have heard all *Etudes* by Villa-Lobos in a single evening concert, I started to more or less dislike them. *Etude 12* is the ill-famous Squeek and Screech *Etude*. I did not like the piece, but I liked the technical performance and finishing.

For a while, the stage became the domain of Judith Beschow. She played a piece of old (I have heard Robert Horna play it many times on my lessons) the *Songe Capricorne* by Roland Dyens (*1955). She started the atmospheric piece very well, but she just failed to take the necessary risks in order to express the fervour in spots where the composition demanded this.

Florian Moritz started with a piece in baroque style, an *Allegro* by Georg Philipp Telemann (1681- 1767). His tuning was remarkable, with a capo on the first fret. Moritz played Telemann quite virtuoso, a bit too much to my taste.

His finishing became audibly better in his second piece, the *Cadenza* from the *Concert for Guitar and Orchestra* by Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887 - 1959). Villa-Lobos composed this work for Segovia. The latter, however, refused to play this piece until Villa-Lobos added this *Cadenza* as a challenge for the guitarist. Yes, Segovia was not the easiest person to get along with. In this piece Moritz made me forget the impression with the Telemann piece, he played well and added the right contrast.

Philipp Stahl brought back an old memory with me, the *Sonate in A* by Anton Diabelli (1781 - 1858) that I played myself many years ago. He played the *Minuetto quasi Scherzo* from this Sonata. *Scherzo* does not mean *Allegro* by definition. Unfortunately, Stahl played it so and consequently the piece became too much of a hurry. *Prelude 2* by Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887 - 1959) was his second piece. After a good start, he completely drowned out the guitar in the fast arpeggio section. That was a shame!

Leva Baltmiskyte presented a musical version of a creepy story by Edgar Allan Poe, the *Usher Waltz* by Nikita Koshkin (*1956). It is a waltz with a quite cynical sound. She expressed the cynicism well, but unfortunately her play was a bit chaotic at times.

Idit Gold was next. She is the oldest competitor in this competition, with a lot of experience in the guitar business, as it shows from her web site. My admiration for her courage to take up the cudgels against all young guitar gods and goddesses of this afternoon!

When she started playing I almost automatically thought about the guitar divas of old, she played with a presence and volume that would have made Olga Lowina proud. Oh no, Olga is only known in Holland, so for the international audience I would say that she would have mad Ida Presti proud.

With this approach she struck up with *Prelude in D* from *Cello suite Nr. 1 BWV 1007* by Johann Sebastian Bach (1650 - 1750). She remained in the Baroque era with *Prelude & Rondo* by Henri Purcell (1659 - 1695). She played the music with power, flair and a casual slip.

Mrs. Gold made room for Veronique van Duurling. She set the tone with the *Mozartvariations op. 9* on Mozart's *Es klinget so herrlich* from *Die Zauberflöte*, as we all know by Fernando Sor (1778 - 1839). To prevent problems with the stopwatch, she left out the less significant repeats. She started the *Introduction* in an original way –maybe a bit too fast- and played a nice lyrical tone in the variations.

Elliot Simpson ascended the small stage and played a *Prelude* by a composer that was utterly unknown to me. That's no surprise considering my slightly minor interest in the contemporary repertoire. Despite the fact that he breathed a bit too much in tennis mode during his *Inner (and outer) Game of Music*, he presented a nice piece of music with a clear structure. That's quite important for an amateur listener to contemporary music like me.

The next candidate - Ozan Uygur – looked familiar to me. One of the past festivals maybe? He started full of ambition with the *Prelude* from *Lute Suite BWV 1006* by Johann Sebastian Bach (1650 - 1750). In the last few years I have seen quite a few candidates that slipped up on this piece. Ozan Uygur played it neatly up to the last measure. No Killer-Bach this time!

Maria Gordillo played a well-known piece, *Sevilla* from *Suite Espanola, Op. 47* by Isaac Albéniz (1860 - 1909). She played with passion but could not prevent from getting caught in the trap of the little slips. I guess that's the danger of passion indeed.

Marcus Sich had Astor Piazzola (1921 - 1992) on his programme, *Milonga del Angel* to be specific. He played the arrangement technically correct, but I slightly missed the melancholic swing and the sustain of the slow accompaniment

Domenico Scarlatti (1685 - 1757) was the subject of Mikkel Nielsen, two *Sonatas* with unspecified Kirkpatrick number. His first one was so *overthrilled* that I lost contact with the musical structure. Technically smart, musically less interesting for me. Fortunately, this improved in his second *Sonata* that required retuning of even two strings!

Katrin Endrikat entertained us with *Sevilliana Op. 29* by Joaquín Turina (1882 - 1949). She filled the hall with sound during the loud sections, at the cost of a little inaccuracy with some musical transitions.

Kunhwa Lee strove for the prizes with the last two movements from *La Catedral* by Augustin Barrios (1885 - 1944). He interpreted the *Andante Religioso* clearly with a nice tone and added some interesting emphasis in the *Allegro Solemne*.

Luigi Legnani (1790 - 1877) is known as guitar virtuoso and accompanist of Niccolò Paganini who was pushed a bit to the second place by the latter. Yet he composed quite a number of works that clearly demonstrated his virtuosity. That also showed from *Fantasia Op. 19*, played by Eline Hofstra. She followed Legnani's example, but at times I failed to follow the connection between sections of the *Fantasia*. There were some illogical pauses (rests?) and some sections did not fit together.

Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887 - 1959) seemed to be Raúl Gutierrez' favourite, he played *Etudes* 11 and 12. Both were heaaavy studies that caused me some trouble to assess that the notes he was playing were actually the correct ones. I think I have had it with the *Etudes* by Villa-Lobos since that heavy concert in which they were all passed the review. One thing was quite clear, the volume of his guitar sound was overwhelming.

Lore Raus was an old acquaintance from the then Scharpach Competition in Enschede. She played movements from *Whirler of the Dance* by Carlos Rivera. It is a contemporary composition which has its technical requirements for the player. Lore had to find her way in the beginning, but after a while she performed the complex musical texture very well. In the slow section she created a beautiful atmosphere.

Kirill Dudinsky dedicated the first section of his performance to *Valse Nr. 3* by Augustin Barrios (1885 - 1944). His technical approach was fine, but the musical aspect became a bit underexposed because of his formal approach "Valse is Valse, one, two and three" and the superficial phrasing. Then he switched to Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887 - 1959) with *Etude 12*. His rhythm was OK, I got the piece. Just a shame of the slips in the fast runs.

For a change, Matt Peters had prepared just one single piece. When I noticed that it would be *Etude 11* by Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887 - 1959), I could not help a deep sigh. *Another one, again!* Until he started *playing!* Where other candidates performed a *study*, Peters brought

music! I liked his interpretation very well, he knew how to play the piece. No false virtuosity, just musical expression!

Renata Arlotti came with a piece that I had not heard much, the *Suite in modo Polonico* by Alexandre Tansman (1897 - 1986). This is a contemporary piece with the structure of a baroque suite. Besides old dance motives, Tansman also used traditional Polish dance forms. The piece has quite a number of small movements, *Entrée, Galliarde, Kujawiak Mazurka, Tempo de Polonaise, Kolysanka 1, Reverie, Alla Polacca, Kolysanka 1* and *Oberek Mazurka*. I did not count the movements, I admit. She played the *Suite* assertively and extracted the music from the notes with a warm tone.

Hitoshi Miyashita played variations on a well-known baroque theme, the *Variations sur La Folia* by Mauro Giuliani (1781 - 1829). After the theme, the first variation came more or less as an unpleasant surprise, but bit by bit the performance became more beautiful.

Blazej Sudnikowicz was the last candidate of the afternoon. He played *Pavane on the death and resurrection of certain illusions* by a certain Witold Szalonek. I was glad that I could copy this loong title from the Internet. Sudnikowicz presented this contemporary work with a powerful intention.

25 participants! Quite a session! That particularly applies to the jury, I guess.

In the mean time I had filled in my score list. That was no easy task!

One of my problems was the way you compare your own playing skills to the ones of the person you are judging. I heard someone postulate that you would have to play much better than a candidate if you wanted to give him unsatisfactory marks rightly. I guess this restriction does not apply to a listener. Well, I am a bit of a guitarist and all candidates technically and often musically play much better than me. So I was quite moderate with my low marks, despite the fact that the listener in myself objected at times.

Another disadvantage of judging is a slightly greater focus on problems during playing. During writing of this report I found an increased sensitivity fort his. Well, it did not get out of hand, although I resemble a reviewer at times.

I did notice, however, that the players who told a story with their music got high scores from me. It did not matter whether they played classical or contemporary. Contemporary that triggers my imagination and tells a story appeals with me, even though this genre is not my favourite.

My scores remained in the range 70 – 90, most around 80 and a top score on 90. I am curious if my scores and those of the jury correspond!

Dinner Time!

A separate topic for a special service of this Guitar Festival Nordhorn, the creature comforts and a roof above your head.

One of the logical essentials of a visit to international events is the arrangement of a sleeping place and meals. If you are lucky, you have family or friends around for the stay. In most cases, however, you will have to find a hotel or youth hostel and restaurants in the vicinity.

Particularly for hotels you must walk the town in the dead of the night. That's a shame if you want to sit and talk after the workshops and concerts and enjoy a glass or two, possibly

enriched with a few percent of alcohol. Nordhorn is not different, even though the town centre is just a walk of 15 minutes away from Kulturhaus NIHZ.

For this purpose, Kulturhaus NIHZ has a staying facility with about ten places. Sufficient capacity for the weekend workshops. In many cases the stay is included in the workshop price.

There is a dormitory for the participants and separate rooms for the instructors. It is clear that you have to make some arrangements for making your toilet - there is a schedule for the shower - but with many gentle sheep in a pen that should be no problem. Good for the team building, provided nobody is snoring at night!

A place to sleep alone is not sufficient to survive. That's the reason why Kulturhaus NIHZ takes care for breakfast, lunch (soup, sandwiches and meat balls) and dinners.

It was very nice that I could get a meal there. Driving home and back to Nordhorn alone again would take an hour and the schedule did not allow for that time. Well and fish and chips for three days in a row...

The ladies in the organization - Angie, Sanne en Lyz – were quite busy to prepare the homely yet nourishing meal. Besides provisioning and cooking that included carrying pans, crockery and cutlery downstairs vice versa and the dishes (OK a dishwasher does the job but it still requires loading and unloading!)

Vegetarians could have their meals too!

Day One had a menu with Mexican Wraps with fresh salad, minced meat melange and a vegetarian mix. Of course, the chilli sauce was there! Day Two offered a Menu Hollandaise with baked potatoes, fresh salad with finishing and hamburgers in meat- and vegetarian variants. Day Three provided Pasta, a nice exercise for my Maltese pasta mode (fork-only).

There was the nice social aspect of eating together. A good opportunity to have a chat and get acquainted.

A good move, arranging for the meals!

International Guitar Night

As a start, the first concert night brought the results of the first round of the Ziatas Competition. Pavel Kuhkta, Elliot Simpson, Ozan Uygur, Kuhnwa Lee en Blazej Sudnikowicz had qualified for the finals.

Only gentlemen again (just like last year)! Where are the diva's? If it were up to me I would have liked to vote Renata Arlotti for the finals. Well, after all it's up to the jury to decide...

This Friday night was announced as International Guitar Night. Correctly! The Anido Guitar Duo (Netherlands/Belgium), Edsart Udo de Haes (Netherlands), Duo NIHZ/Alberto Mesirca (Netherlands /Italy) and the Duo Jouve/Perroy (France) would present themselves briefly. I was looking forward to a night with lots of variation.

Unexpectedly another nationality was added. Arlette Ruelens unfortunately had to cancel for this night and consequently the Anido Guitar Duo was replaced by the Swedish guitarist Johannes Möller (who lives in The Hague, by the way).

That's a good professional attitude, stepping in ad-hoc like this! For himself he saw an upward tendency, he had come as a listener, was asked for the jury, becoming a super-listener, and now he could perform on stage "at the other side of the medal".

I had never seen nor heard of him before. Yes, I admit, I should have kept my eyes and ears open because he was last year's winner of the famous Guitar Foundation of America competition. You don't win that for nothing, it is a world arena! So I had a nice opportunity to hear him play.

Möller plays and composes from a very young age. At the age that I designed my first fantasy maps on a sketchbook, he composed full-scale compositions that found recognition with the audiences. Currently he travels around the world, this time in the company of his wife, the Argentine guitarist Laura Fraticelli, so they form an ensemble in all respects!

Many of his compositions have a spiritual and mystical bias. Many contemporary music connects to the chaos, disorder and bitterness of the modern times (that's called *engagement*, I learned as a teenager when I was busy in German class with the works of Bertolt Brecht en Wolf Biermann). Möller's work is less affected this way. He appears strongly influenced by meditative music, particularly from India. Additionally, he rather plays warm and sometimes daring harmonies than the bitter dissonances.

He immediately demonstrated this with an own composition - *Song to the Mother* – that unfolded as a ballad in contemporary but non-experimental sound with a slightly mystical atmosphere.

He had a brief story with most of the pieces, just like with *Whispered by the Wind*, a musical story about inspiration that was regained after having being lost for quite a while. It's a good thing that inspiration may return!

This sounds familiar to me as a writer, the section *Writer's Block* on this site is a clear illustration of the struggle for inspiration. ☺, Yes, this is a kind of self-advertisement. Internet lives by the grace of links!

He put the capo on the fourth fret and started to play the whispering of the wind in intricate arpeggio patterns with contemporary sound, mostly melodious, at times more or less contorted by passion in the literal sense of the word. A few turns strongly reminded me of pieces like *Koyunbaba* by Domeniconi.

With his next piece, Johannes Möller went back in time in multiple respects. *Sueno en la Floresta* by Augustin Barrios (1885 - 1944). The beautifully phrased tremolo play immediately connected me with the first time that I heard this piece played live, by Robert Horna at the very first Twente Guitar Festival, back in 2006.

Möller's last piece was an own composition, *Ananda* – a pupil of Buddha, the name has meanings between joy and rapture – with a melody based on Indian Raga's. The music was peaceful and exotic, an improvised melody on a fixed bass and chord pattern with striking chords in harmonics. This peace breathed a calm spiritual atmosphere too.

After this unexpected start, it was time for fireworks in another dimension. The flamenco guitarist Edsart Udo de Haes played passionate and lyrical flamenco full of improvisations in a palette of techniques. He played a potpourri of forms like *Granadina* and *Solea* and caused an enthusiastic mood amongst the audience.

Third to hit the stage were Duo NIHZ together with Alberto Mesirca. I must say that the stage was quite full at that moment (☺). Sanna, Bobby and Alberto played a number of Klezmer melodies and Chassidic Dances, presenting the joyful section of their repertoire.

The last ones to report were the members of a guitar duo, Jeremy Jouve and Judicael Perroy. In the guitar world, they are known as The Paris Guitar Duo, so it is not difficult to guess where these guys come from.

They took off with an arrangement of a composition by César Franck (1822 - 1890), a not yet published work with the movements *Prelude, Fugue en Coral*. César Franck is primarily known because of his organ works and religious music. Yet he composed quite a bit of piano pieces, with this arrangement as an example.

Jouve/Perroy played an attractive sound in the characteristic impressionistic idiom with extended chord textures.

In South America, Radames Gnattali (1906 - 1988) arranged many pieces of Brazilian popular music in a classical style. His *Retratos* were named after famous popular musicians in Brasil. Jouve/Perroy played the *Retratos* for Ernesto Nazareth and Anacleto de Medeiros. The first piece was a skilfully arranged ballad with beautiful turns and a casual outburst of pure joy, the last piece appeared to be a dazzling waltz.

As the clincher our French friends played a nice piece of opera from the nineteenth century. In those days it was impossible for many people to visit opera temples like the Scala in Milan personally. Musical arrangers found the perfect market opportunity with opera arrangements. In this way you could play your beloved areas and overtures yourself, or have someone play it close by your residence.

In this way Mauro Giuliani (1781 - 1829) arranged an extensive repertoire of Gioacchino Rossini (1792 - 1868) for guitar duo and guitar solo (the well-known Rossinianas).

Jouve/Perroy played the Overture from *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, a very orchestral piece with many opportunities for dazzling virtuosity. They played it well and thus we ended with a bit of *A Night at the Opera!*

(;-)) How was it? *Mama mia let me go, mama mia let me go, magnificoooooh!*

Oh no, that was another (royal) *Night at the Opera*, I guess!

Day Two



Anido Guitar Duo: Annette Kruisbrink en Arlette Ruelens

Workshop Stage Presence

The Workshop Stage Presence is a fixed subject in all guitar festivals that I attended last years. This workshop by Bobby Rootveld deals with two important phases in a recital, coming on and leaving the stage. The two corners of the triptych Performance.

Coming on is a first acquaintance, for both the player and his or her audience. Here you create a contact that forms the basis for the reception of your recital. Leaving the stage is a kind of goodbye ritual. The audience can show appreciation, the player will accept it gladly and the parties separate in a pleased mood.

The workshop method is a regular concept, one of the participants comes on, tells his or her story, plays a piece and leaves the stage. Follows a comment round of the workshop leader and the other participants. Often the 'victim' repeats the show a few times, applying the remarks made.

The goal of the workshop is the awareness of a few aspects while coming on and leaving the stage. It is a reassuring thought that you can actually *practice* (and improve) coming on and leaving.

Very important (so be aware...) is that you *know* what you are going to do and say. Coming on can be a perfect preparation to start your play in an optimal fashion. Coming on may

provide you with rest and concentration time. Essential is here: Grant yourself (and the audience) some time! If you want to tune the guitar first, do so, but take a clear moment of rest between tuning and playing.

Special attention this time for (eye) contact with the audience. Many persons consider eye contact scary or rude, as if looking straight in the eye corresponds with undressing. A (friendly) eye contact, however, maybe is more important than a handshake, because it works at a greater distance!

It was fun to see how coming on and leaving of various participants gained confidence after a few iterations. With some nice pieces of music as a side-effect. The hour was gone before we were aware of it!

Concert Jeremy Jouve

The afternoon concert of this day was for Jeremy Jouve. I remembered his name from the Naxos CDs. After his duo play of last night's concert I was quite curious about what and how he would play today.

He started with a *Tiento Antiguo*, a free-form prelude by Joaquín Rodrigo (1901 - 1999). *Tientos* originate from the Renaissance and were the Spanish equivalents of *Fantasias*. This piece sounded surprisingly warm, the sharp and piercing harmonies that are characteristic with Rodrigo were completely absent here. A good piece and well played!

Jeremy Jouve remained in the same era with a *Sonata* by Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco (1895 - 1968). Some searching and listening on Youtube gave me the impression that it was *Sonata "Hommage a Boccherini" op.77*.

The *Allegro Con Spirito* had lots of humour and good spirits. After re/detuning (I do not like that in the middle of a piece) the *Andantino* provided a quiet but very moving lyricism. Next the cheerful Minuetto danced along with a strong bass line. I would characterize the fourth movement - *Allegro Vivo* – as orchestral violence. Jouve's precise and flexible playing style was quite apparent in this piece.

Back it went to Joaquín Rodrigo. Jouve played the very first piece that Rodrigo composed for guitar, a sad ballad around repeated motives.

Dazzling arpeggios and a flamenco sound came on with the next piece by a certain Duplessis. Well, I could not understand the name of the piece very well.

Fortunately, my ears were back in the right place with the last piece, the *Jazz Sonata* by Dusan Bogdanovic (*1955).

The movements in this sonata have no names, they are simply indicated by 1, 2 and 3. The first movement reminded me of the piano jazz by Keith Jarrett. The second movement was easy swing with a lot of very interesting chords. The last movement was a sequence of motives around speedy scale motives. Also in this piece, Jouve excelled in tone and style.

Presentation Ziatas Guitars

George Ziatas is an Australian luthier of Greek origin who uses modern materials – like carbon fibre – in his designs and applies a unique curved back in his guitars, just like a violin, to enhance the projection.

He held a presentation about guitar design and building and described his reasons to construct the guitars the way he did and to use carbon fibre technology. All spiced a bit with dry Australian humour.

Besides guitars he also builds guitar cases that offer protection against shocks, vibration and atmospheric influences. As a consequence of the application of special foams, the cases are quite light-weight. Much of the production of his cases is handiwork, his wife is very skilled in sewing the lining (which is quite a complex form to realise in tissue).

After his lecture, there was some time for questions. I was curious about the facts and myths concerning humidity and the guitar. He had made some humidity measurements and the influence of atmospheric variations on the humidity in the wood itself. It was less interrelated than I thought.

Yet I'll keep using a guitar humidifier if the humidity drops below 30%!

An informative session after all!

Concert Anido Guitar Duo

The Anido Guitar Duo that consists of Annette Kruisbrink and Arlette Ruelens is named after after the Argentine guitarist and composer María Luisa Anido (1907 - 1996). Briefly before her death she personally granted the right to use her name for the duo.

María Luisa Anido was one of the few women that made it to the world concert stages with the guitar in the first half of the twentieth century. In her youth, one considered guitar playing a pastime for *Gauchos* (the Argentine cowboys) and the lower social classes, it was definitely inappropriate for well-educated women. Anido, however, persevered even though at a younger age she had to subject herself to chaperonage on her concert travels. Miguel Llobet was convinced of her guitaristic and compositional skills and even was her teacher for some time.

Annette Kruisbrink is a Dutch guitarist, composer and music educator. At the moment her work includes more than 350 compositions and this number is increasing. She composes in contemporary styles, which does not mean that she is merely occupied with experimental music. On the contrary, she is familiar with many styles within the genre and writes for solo guitar and ensembles with guitar, voice and other instruments. She marked up a few compositions for the recital against her name.

After the lecture by George Ziatas, the concert hall was closed for a while because of the rehearsals of the Anido Guitar Duo. Yet some exiting sounds penetrated as far as the coffee bar, something with samples so it seemed. Made me curious about tonight!

Well, evening it was soon enough. The Anido Guitar Duo started with *Comenius*, a composition in three movements, *Vestibulum*, *Janua* and *Atrium*. These are the phases of a learning process, vestibule, door and court yard, the core of the matter.

Jan Amos Komenský (1592 - 1670) alias Comenius was a Czech philosopher, theologian and educator. He wrote a large number of pedagogic works that were ahead of their time and hence hardly understood by his contemporaries, let alone that his ideas were actually practiced. This 'tradition' was more or less repeated with the contemporary Comenius Project, a Dutch state initiative to introduce the computer at primary schools in order to promote European cooperation between schools. Well, you know what often happens to ICT projects, don't you?

The piece was written in the *Organum* style, a mediaeval form of multi-part chant. The characteristic of this style is that the voices are parallels, dependent on the style the intervals between the voices may change in a piece.

The measure was composed according to the Golden Section. With the Golden Section, the largest of two sections is proportional to the smallest one like the sum of both bears proportion to the largest section. The outcome of this little problem is about 1.618. It appears that this proportion is quite common in nature.

To be fair, I was not sharp enough to recognize it in the music. ☺ Yet the concept is nice, a kind of Da Vinci code in the music!

Vestibulo had an extremely complex rhythm with extraordinary sound. The players for instance used a slide, just like with electric guitar.

Janua en Atrium more or less amalgamated. These movements were broad and ominous with a macabre atmosphere. The dead silence at the end certainly contributed to this.

After this interesting contemporary start we went back in time with the compositions by María Luisa Anido. The Anido Guitar Duo played a few arrangements from *Impresiones Argentinas*.

Boceto indigena appeared a characteristic Latin American melody (El Condor Pasa style) in a modern setting. Notable was the complex accompaniment. The piece 'extinguished' in peace, just to revive a bit in the end. *Triste Nr. 1* started and ended with a slightly veiled melancholy that embraced a little waltz. *Catamarqueña* was clearly characteristic again, but this time with harmonies that clearly reminded of Llobet's style. A speciality in this piece was the *Apagado* thumb stroke, a kind of pizzicato with sustain.

The remainder of the programme consisted of compositions by Annette Kruisbrink. *Escrito por María Luisa Anido* was a homage to the name giver of the duo, a piece in Spanish idiom with contemporary harmony. The tremolo accompaniment made the atmosphere of the piece.

Finally, we arrived at the piece that had cast its shadow in the afternoon, *Jungle Skunk*. In brief, it is an African story from Zimbabwe. A skunk walks in the jungle and lands in a village. The inhabitants do not like this and chase off the animal despite the penetrating stench caused by the animal.

In this piece all kinds of effects came on stage, from a knitting needle under the strings on the finger board to a bow and electronic samples with a Tangerine Dream effect. Everything contributed in its own way to act out the various atmospheres in the story. I guess opinions differ on this kind of music, but it was an exciting piece indeed!

The Anido Guitar Duo ended with a short homage to the queen (it was Queen's Day after all!)

It was an interesting concert that enabled me to hear some more experimental styles. Experiencing this was fun!

Concert Judicael Perroy

The French guitarist Judicael Perroy performed this night with a complete Bach programme. Usually that implies hard work for the musician!

First the *Second Lute Suite BWV 99*, with *Prelude and Fugue*, *Sarabande* and the *Gigue* with its *Double*. It is presumed that Bach composed this piece on his Lautenwerk ('Lute

keyboard'). That could be correct, because in some movements you do not have enough hands to cope with the complexity. Perroy skilfully played Bach's challenges.

The second piece was *Prelude, Fuga and Allegro BWV 998*, with its beautiful flowing Prelude, the complex fugue and the high-speed variation on the fugue theme in the *Allegro*. A joy to listen to.

The third piece was a world premiere, a transcription of *Partita Nr. 2 in C minor BWV 826* by the French guitarist Tristan Manoukian. It's a piece with a large number of movements, *Simfonia, Allemande, Courante, Sarabande, Rondeaux* and *Capriccio*.

The *Simfonia* became a bit of nostalgia for me! In my teens, even before I started to play guitar, I got acquainted with this piece under the name *Partita Nr. 2 in C Minor*, played by the Dutch pop group Ekseption. The band leader Rick van der Linden used to play the theme on ARP2600 synthesizer, with bass and percussion as accompaniment. I remember an interview with the bass player Cor Dekker where he stated that the rapid bass runs in Bach's music like the ones in *Partita* were quite challenging for him.

This *Partita* became this evening's major challenge for Judicael Perroy. He took up the gauntlet skilfully and was rewarded by an enthusiast applause.

As an appreciation, we listeners got a relaxing encore, the *Valse Criollo* by Antonio Lauro (1917 - 1986).

Day Three



Alberto Mesirca

Workshop Theatre Sport for Guitarists

The Workshop Theatre Sport for Guitarists is an extension to the Workshop Stage Presence. Bobby Rootveld designed and executed this workshop for the first time during the Valais Guitar Week. Its purpose is that guitarists start considering the stage as a place where they rightfully can play their game rather than feeling lost on a vast plain that causes agoraphobia.

To this end the workshop had two phases. First performing with your own personality, then performing with your instrument, the guitar, and the movement in music, in this case song and dance.

The first phase was a role-playing game. A couple is busy with breakfast and talks about the daily things in life. Near them are two actors that express the actual mostly hidden thoughts of the couple. That might enhance the conversation, or cause a funny contrast.

I played the husband and opposite to me sat my (played) wife Agnes, a Hungarian physicist that lives and works in Holland. ☺ That was a nice perspective for the breakfast discussion. To keep things exiting for everyone, our discussion was in international English.

The conversation lingered between taking out the dog, a stealthy method to get rid of this pet in favour of a cat, the dream of a *Unified Theory* (also known as *The Theory of Everything*, the holy Grail for physicists) and a burning love that did not change even after thirty years (although burning can be painful indeed).

The funny things were the reactions of the 'reality-thinkers' –Bobby and Lyz in this case – that reacted on the conversations in an original and funny way. Particularly my unspoken opinion concerning the dog and my passion for cats caused a laugh.

The second phase was meant to repeat this freedom and originality in the music on the guitar. Two of the participants, including me, had to play a specific atmosphere or mood on the guitar, two others would act out these moods.

That was quite successful, it was really a kick to do these things on stage just like that. Yes, that's an attitude to remember with an actual performance!

A good sport, this way!

Master Class Alberto Mesirca

After the guitar sport, I was quite warmed up for my master class with Alberto Mesirca. I dug up my *Sonata in E* by Paganini and played it completely.

I found it fun to have a specific piece commented by different teachers, because everyone has useful instructions for technique and performance. All you have to do is picking the best of all worlds. Sometimes, however, the instructions, particularly the fingering, are conflicting.

It was remarkable that I had no starter's nerves, a phenomenon that is quite normal for me. Sometimes you find a relaxing atmosphere from the start.

I remember this from my master classes with Yves Storms and Pavel Steidl. These guys have a natural calm on the one hand and possess a contagious enthusiasm on the other, that immediately calms your nerves. With other people, like Frank Bungarten, I needed considerably more time to shake off the awkwardness.

And that single time that I followed a master class as a member of DOS Amigos, the nerves did not go away any way. Well, looking back I would say that these nerves were the consequence of internal tension that already existed within the ensemble at that time.

Of course, Alberto Mesirca noticed my weak alternating stroke. He immediately suggested some nice practice in the piece itself. If I am concentrated on the alternating stroke, it is mostly OK. As soon as I "go with the music", however, I sometimes lose control of the alternating stroke. Because I am aware of that (and dislike losing control), I have a fair chance to drop out of the music.

Alberto's exercises came down to different time division of the notes in the runs. For instance, dotted eights and sixteenths rather than groups of two eighths, using both combinations. The awareness of my fingers became better indeed!

The time went pretty fast, so it was a good thing that a Rondo has thematic repeats. Consequently, we could discuss the complete piece.

An enjoyable Masterclass!

Concert Edsart Udo de Haes/Mario Garcia Blanco

The concert of the flamenco guitarist Edsart Udo de Haes and the flamenco singer Mario Garcia Blanco required special preparations. With flamenco singing and dancing the rhythm is usually added by stamping the feet. The floor of Kulturhaus NIZH consisted of concrete sections, so one suspected poor acoustics. So, the night before Bobby and his father were quite busy constructing a little wooden dance floor (long live the Makita).

The makeshift dance floor worked too well, Edsart Udo de Haes would need an amplifier to be heard during dancing of his partner. That was too much, so Mario Garcia Blanco would dance on the bare floor.

The acoustics of the hall made the concert a close and intimate happening.

Edsart Udo de Haes played a *Granadina* for a start. Then Mario Garcia Blanco joined in for a *Buleria*, the first occasion for the singer to make the rhythm with voice, hand and feet.

With the *Farruca* Garcia Blanco showed that the acoustics of the floor were OK, he danced with an impressive 'foot-percussion'.

The *Taranto y Cartagena* appeared to be a kind of Arabic lamentation. Just like Gregorian music, the words were stretched in the melody that much, that they lost their meaning. From the intonation, however, you could hear some *Duende* in the song.

The next piece -*Cana*, a *Solea*- was an improvised song with stanzas that bore no intrinsic relationship. I heard a nice musical theme that was accompanied with at times jazzy chords.

The *Allegria* brought the joy in the hall that corresponded nicely with the beautiful weather of the day. Everybody was enthusiastic, so Udo de Haes and Garcia Blanco returned to the stage for an extra *Ode à l' Amour* in Flamenco fashion.

It was a nice concert and the gentlemen made a good and well-balanced team!

Finals of the Competition

As I already reported, the winners of the preliminaries were Elliot Simpson, Blazej Sudnikowicz, Kuhnwa Lee, Ozan Uygur and Pavel Kuhkta. They would appear in the finals in the sequence I mentioned them.

Elliot Simpson opened the finals with the *Prelude* from the *Suite in D minor* by Santiago de Murcia (1673 - 1739). His approach of this piece was quite romantic, even to an extent that it seemed to be slightly "Out of Period". It sounded as a quiet contemporary work with a little swing in the end. Not entirely baroque!

His second piece became *Tellur* by Tristan Murail (*1947), a contemporary work that required a dynamic range that sometimes surpassed the range of his guitar. The title *Tellur* reminded me of the metal Tellurium, and yes, parts of the piece sounded like a steel mill in full action.

His presentation looked a bit too exuberant to me, particularly for the *Prelude* by De Murcia, it distracted me from the music itself.

Thus, a start had been made when Blazej Sudnikowicz climbed on stage. His first piece was *Variations on a Theme by Scriabin* by Alexandre Tansman (1897 - 1986).

This piece started with a nice and lyrical theme with well-played chords and a well-bound melody. The variations immediately followed, some clear, some only some experimenting with the harmonic fundament. Consequentially I got the feeling that the piece was a few variations too long. To bring back the concentration of the audience, a fugue was incorporated in the piece. Sudnikowicz played this musical puzzle in a clear manner.

Mauro Giuliani (1781 - 1829) was the next composer, in his role as opera arranger with *Variations on a Theme from the Opera Fanchon*, possibly the opera by the same name by Friedrich Heinrich Himmel (1765 - 1814). Blazej Sudnikowicz made a good show of the rapid intro. The theme sounded a bit dull, I must say, but it had something popular, I guess. Sudnikowicz played everything with thorough musical craftsmanship.

Kunhwa Lee appeared as number three. He played the movements *Largo* and *Allegro Assai* from the *Third Violin Sonata BWV 1005* by - guess who - Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 - 1750). After an easy going and tranquil *Largo*, he played the *Allegro* with a good voicing.

After the Baroque, it was time for a bit of Spanish sound. *Sonata I* by Joaquín Turina (1882 - 1949) with the movements *Allegro*, *Andante* and *Allegro Vivo*.

Kunhwa Lee played the piece with a beautiful tone and sense of detail and colours. Yet I missed some vigour and assertiveness. At times, his play was hesitant and detached, it almost came to a standstill. It was not before the third movement that he could leave this attitude behind. If he learns to master the music in a literal and figurative sense, he has the potency to be a top player.

A break was a moment of rest after an hour of intensive listening. Then the energy was restored for the last section of the finals.

Pavel Kuhkta took off with *Variations on Carnival de Venezia* by Francisco Tárrega (1852 - 1909). Here in Holland this tune is known as a Scouting song: *Mijn Hoed die heeft drie Deuken...* I found out that the melody belongs to similar songs in other languages.

The old Tárrega provides quite a challenge for the guitarist with this piece, an extended set of techniques passes review. I missed a bit of humour in the performance, although Kuhkta was the first to smile with specific comic turns in the music. He played the piece in a considerably high tempo. It really was a shame that this caused some carelessness in the rapid scales.

He continued with an old acquaintance, *Sonata Op. 47* by Alberto Ginastera (1916 - 1983). With a previous (Twente) Guitar Festival this piece inspired the player in such a way that he won the finals.

Pavel Kuhkta stroke up the *Sonata* fiercely and put a lot of energy in his performance. In the majority of the piece this was the best approach, apart from the rapid passages that became a bit fuzzy sometimes. He succeeded to keep the complete *Sonata* exiting, exploiting the effect of a cliffhanger in some passages. It is first-rate to be able to focus the attention of the audience on a single piece that long!

Ozan Uygur was the last in the row. Personally, I would not like that, I remember that I hated to be the last one with recital evenings. The wait makes you more nervous than the actual playing!

He started with *Invocación y Danza* by Joaquín Rodrigo (1901 - 1999). Uygur played with a nice and well-balanced tone. Unfortunately, he failed to connect the phrases in a convincing

manner, he had some hesitation in the transitions. Just sufficient to break the musical thread, alas.

Ozan Uygur played the *Grand Solo* by Fernando Sor (1778 - 1839) as his (and the) final piece. I must admit that for myself I do not consider this piece as one of Sor's best compositions. The piece is almost too long for the thematic material, all those repeats!

During playing, Uygur was seriously bothered by the change in tune of detuned strings. In the beginning, he succeeded in compensating for the physical behaviour of the sixth string *en passant*. Unfortunately, things got worse and worse and it became a challenge to play on despite the false strings.

I could sympathize with him. If I hear that my strings are out of tune, I involuntarily start to get annoyed. That's not the best thing for the concentration!

Finally, the finals were over. Time for the jury to start work. By special request I had made a score list too, I was curious about the differences and similarities with the scores of the jury.

Concert Competition Candidates

Traditionally the last concert night started with the results from the jury. 1) Pavel Kuhkta, 2) Blazej Sudnikowicz, 3) Kuhnwa Lee, 4) Elliot Simpson and 5) Ozan Uygur. Congratulations, Pavel!

Off the record... I was right with numbers 1, 2 and 3!

On the last concert night, there was room for a short performance of the candidates of the competition. Not merely the winner would play, the stage was also reserved for players that just did not make it to the finals but left a good impression indeed! A good idea!

Eline Hofstra opened with her *Fantasia* by Luigi Legnani (1790 - 1877). This time she played it like a light-hearted piece of a *Night at the Opera*. Quite a difference if the winning stress is gone!

Mikkel Nielsen had selected another piece than in his preliminary. He played *Hika* by Leo Brouwer (*1939). This piece was dedicated to the Japanese composer Takemitsu. The music included an atmospheric sketch in three movements; it started with a tender Japanese watercolour brush, shifted to sultry oils and returned to the watercolour brush in the end. Well played!

Blazej Sudnikowicz replayed his *Variations on a Theme by Scriabin* by Alexandre Tansman (1897 - 1986) and performed well.

The winner Pavel Kuhkta had the last word, or should I say the last piece? He played two pieces by Roland Dyens (*1955), to the massive joy of Fred Rootveld!

First was an arrangement of the well-known *Nuages* by Django Reinhardt. A relatively easy-going theme that brings the player all over the fingerboard in its jazzy variations. The second piece was an arrangement of the jazz standard *All of Me* by Marks and Simons. Pavel Kuhkta met all challenges that Le Dyens posed with the piece's technical acrobatics and remained jazzy up to the last measure!

Concert Alberto Mesirca

This festival was nearly at the end, but not before the last note has been played. The last concert of the Nordhorn Guitar Festival was given by the Italian guitarist Alberto Mesirca.

I have heard him play at a number of occasions from the time he started his concert tours, his growth over the years is clear to me and many others. So, I was looking forward to this concert.

Mesirca started energetically with the *Introduction & Caprice* by Giulio Regondi (1822 - 1872), the famous child prodigy from the nineteenth century. Fernando Sor even dedicated his *Souvenir d'amitié, op. 46* to him. Yes, what can I say? Mesirca played it dazzling!

The important English composer Benjamin Britten (1913 - 1976) has composed exactly one piece for solo guitar, the *Nocturnal after John Dowland*, dedicated to the guitarist Julian Bream.

The piece is a set of variations, followed by the theme, the ayre *Come Heavy Sleep* by John Dowland. *Nocturnal* is considered one of the most important compositions for classical guitar in the twentieth century. Eight movements, all called *Nocturnals*, lead to the Dowland theme.

It's a remarkable piece because the variations are rather *clues* to the theme than actual variations. Gradually it becomes more and more clear what the theme will be like, with *Nocturnal VIII Passacaglia* as the most obvious variation.

And then, finally, the piece opens up in the last theme *Come Heavy Sleep*. That is an emotional opening as well, because all stress and emotion of the piece suddenly ebbs away in a wondrously beautiful sadness that brings tears to my eyes every time I hear it.

The emotions I feel are quite dependent on my mood at that time. Alberto Mesirca succeeded in expressing and building the melancholic atmosphere so well, that this time the theme knocked me off my feet as an emotional tidal wave. I find it very difficult to exactly describe what I felt at that moment. It is such a discrepancy, sorrow and sadness at one end, and consolation and relief at the other.

Maybe Dowland's text will help to make things clear...

*Come heavy sleepe the image of true death;
And close up these my weary weeping eyes:
Whose spring of tears doth stop my vitall breath,
And tears my hart with sorrows sigh swoln cries:
Come and possess my tired thoughts worn soul,
That living dies, till thou on me be stoule.*

*Come shadow of my end, and shape of rest,
Allied to death, child to his blackfac'd night:
Come thou and charme these rebels in my breast,
Whose waking fancies doe my mind affright.
O come sweet sleepe; come, or I die for ever:
Come ere my last sleepe comes, or come never.*

Mesirca's third piece was a dashing exploit, *Variations on a Moldavian Hora* by Ian Krouse. It is a contemporary piece that requires to be heard a number of times before you get its point and can start appreciating it. Just like Domeniconi's *Koyunbaba*.

Fortunately, I had heard this piece before. Alberto Mesirca played it outwardly extremely composed and virtuoso, yet his performance spoke the message and the melancholy of the music in an outstanding way.

Alberto Mesirca is a votary of the music of Castelnuovo Tedesco (1895 – 1968), so his choice for *Capprichio Diabolico* was obvious. This piece is in the style of Niccolò Paganini, who was called *Il Diavolo* because of his incredible virtuosity on the violin.

Unfortunately, this nickname caused that Paganini was treated likewise after his death, the church denied him a decent Christian funeral and it took quite some effort to have him buried in consecrated ground.

The concept *Il Diavolo* – Diabolico – applied to the technical and musical demands of this piece indeed! Just try to hold on to the musical idea of a broad and slow melody line if you have to execute a series of 64th note runs up and down the fingerboard in an impromptu manner.

Alberto Mesirca brought a strong musical idea that completely integrated speed in the music, it was no more a cause in itself. I consider this an admirable and wonderful performance that even surpassed his execution in the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam!

After this heavy programme, it became time for a more relaxed repertoire, the music of van Frantz Casseus (1915 - 1993). Casseus did with Haitian music what Radames Gnatalli had done with Brazilian popular music, he integrated it in a classical and slightly intellectual structure. Much of this music was published by his pupil Marc Ribot.

Alberto Mesirca played *Congo, Rara, Petro* en *Yanvallow* and took the Guitar Festival to its end with this warm and joyful Caraibian sound.

A standing ovation was the convincing and rightful conclusion of this festival! A special concert with an extremely pleasant atmosphere that influenced Alberto Mesirca at his turn in a very positive manner, there was an interaction indeed!

Finally

Three days pass like a breeze in this way. Now I see the *Monday Morning Blues* coming. A normal phenomenon, of course, it is impossible to live in rapture all days.

Fortunately, we have a future to look forward to. Just take a look at the back page of the programme of this festival!

Next year more of this!