Guitar Festival Nordhorn 2012

School Outing

I guess you will remember. The sense of tense expectation you had as a school kid before the first school outing. How will it be, where are we going? What's the best place in the bus? Will it be enjoyable and will the bullies keep quiet this time? Are we going to the Zoo? Or a recreation area? The lunch box will be ready, maybe with some extra sweets as a surprise...

It was a pity that my first school outing experience was spoilt by chicken pox. Bad luck! Anyway, fortunately many "school outing" moments heave followed ever since.

Guitar festivals are school outing moments for me. I have them from 2006, since last year even twice a year. This year has a special, I will be participating in the amateur competition for the first time!

Thus, I drove to the German town of Nordhorn on the morning of Friday April 27th with this pleasantly exciting sense of school outing. I was on the road quite early this time, because I would lend a hand with the intake of the participants.

Spring came late this year, most trees had their buds not opened up yet. Yet the promise of lush green was on all branches. It was quiet on the road, even though it was an ordinary Friday. Preparation for the spring break, maybe?

The old and trusty Scandinavia route was still there, despite the fact that it has currently been degraded to the insignificant N342. At the border you may notice, however, that it is still a popular trucker's stopping place, here you can park for free to spend the night. It is strikingly lively with the supermarkets at both sides of the border. Apparently, the old DDR slogan *über der Grenze scheint die Sonne – the Sun shines at the other side of the Border* – is valid for both parties!

Nordhorn was dozing quietly under a watery sun. The cleared Niehues empire looked just like last year. I guess the current economic crisis does not encourage large building projects. The bare plains where looms used to rattle in the textile factories now are the domain of rabbits and field voles.

I turned off to the Marktstrasse and was surprised to find a parking space near the school in bright daylight. I parked just besides a car with a Dutch license plate. I was wondering where its driver came for.

I picked up my stuff. Guitar, my bag with water, bread and Ergoplay, and another bag with books of the DOS Amigos Homepage Collection. I was allowed to sell them at the festival. Wait and see (via Internet the sales are zero, I guess that's the consequence of the *free downloadable content* of the site).

The Mittelstrasse, the address of Kulturhaus NIHZ, is not far from there. That's the location of the crime scene. There it is going to happen again!

Guitar Festival Nordhorn 2012!

The Festival

The Nordhorn Guitar Festival is a three-day event, comprising master classes, concerts and the competition in two categories. One category is intended for professionals and conservatory students, the other serves ambitious amateurs. Because of the lack of subscription, there were no workshops this year.

This time the participating musicians were Thomas Müller-Pering, Alberto Mesirca, Nutavut Ratanakarn from Thailand, the Klemke Gitarrenduo (Samuel and Laura Klemke), the Anido Guitar Duo (Annette Kruisbrink and Arlette Ruelens) and *last but not quite least* Roland Dyens!

The first day is reserved for the master classes, the preliminaries for the profi/student competition and the concert by Thomas Müller-Pering. Day Two is dedicated to master classes, the amateur competition, and the concerts by Nutavut Ratanakarn, the Klemke Gitarrenduo and Alberto Mesirca. The last day brings again master classes, the finals of the profi/student competition and the concert by Roland Dyens.

A festival like this requires a lot of organisation, from public relations to preparation of the food. Kulturhaus NIHZ gets lots of help from the Rootveld family (Fred, Angie and Sarah), Liz Day from Switzerland and all kinds of people that lend a hand during the festival. A glimpse behind the scene taught me that this band of volunteers provide an important contribution to the success of the festival. People, Hats Off!

Day One

Thomas Muller-Pering

Intake

This year I offered my help to the organisation, because many hands make light work as they say. An event for which some extra help comes in handy is the intake of the participants. Normally it is rush hour close to the beginning of the festival.

This year there were many subscriptions for the Cat. 1 competition, thirty-five conservatory students had applied for the struggle for the great prize.

The festival has subscription rules. Of course, a participant must have paid the entry fee. Further he has to submit the scores of the music for the preliminaries and possibly the finals in duplicate in advance, preferably by mail. That’s necessary for the

organisation of the competition, it for instance enables to make the jury binder in advance.

Practice and theory appeared to differ slightly. Only a few participants had mailed their music in advance. The other people apparently wanted to save on stamps and presented their scores on their arrival at the Kulturhaus. A few others waited to pay their entry fee until they were at the intake desk and tried to pay in large denominations.

One of the participants that did not show up afterwards went too far, he only wanted to send a PDF score by email, Kulturhaus NIHZ should print it on their own printer. Obviously, that was possible, rightfully against a printing fee. The irritated reaction of the participant was out of proportion, particularly considering the number of sheets of the score involved.

During the intake, the festival management acted leniently and settled matters. My role in this process was accepting and categorizing of the scores, while Bobby handled the subscriptions and the payments.

In this way, I met all participants and had a quick look at their music. Just like last year they came from all parts of the world, with the comment that most of them study guitar in Europe. So not everyone arrived with jetlag after an exhausting intercontinental flight.

With this amount of subscriptions, the accommodation in the Kulturhaus NIHZ did not offer sufficient space, so the hotelkeepers in Nordhorn had a good weekend too!

I guess as usual, most participants arrived after 10 ‘o clock, the official opening hour of the festival. Fortunately, all subscriptions were completed and all payments were done before the start of the preliminaries, and the jury could use their book of scores!

Preliminaries Competition Cat. 1

As I wrote before, this year was a good one for the Category 1 competition, the battlefield of the professionals and conservatory students. There were 36 subscriptions, finally 33 guitarists stepped up for the preliminaries. It was a mega session for audience and jury that started at noon and would continue until six, dinner time.

The first prize was quite attractive. In the first place, it included a Ziata guitar from the Australian luthier George Ziatas, a powerful instrument with modern carbon fibre bracing. Part of the prize was also a CD recording and production with Samsong Productions. We already heard the prize-CD of last year’s winner Pavel Kuhkta, and I found it an excellent result, so this prize is worth the effort. Last but not least, the first prize had some cash prize attached. Obviously, the second and third prizes were not forgotten, yet they were a bit less substantial. The winner takes a lot in this case!

In order to judge the contestants, a jury was available that consisted of the professionals that contributed to the festival. Part of the jury included a delegation from the Gitaarsalon from the Dutch town of Enkhuizen. Kulturhaus NIHZ and Gitaarsalon

Enkhuizen often cooperate. Quite a strong jury, but that's no luxury with this number of participants.

Monika Mirnar broke the ice in these pretty long preliminaries. A tense moment! She played an old acquaintance that I had not heard for a long time, *Capricho Arabe* by Francisco Tárrega (1852- 1909). With a warm swing in the bass line she took the hurdles of the playful scales and took her time for phrasing. At times, she strove too much for cliff-hangers, yet she neatly passed the finishing line.

Konstantin Shimulin stayed in the nineteenth century with *Les Soirees d' Auteuil* by Napoleon Coste (1805 - 1883). He started the piece with a slightly muffled sound for the modest and charming melody. Later he put some more fire in his play, yet the dynamics were just insufficient to bring the passion in the *Scherzo*.

Andre Weyers made a good start with *Saudade Nr. 3* by the star of this festival, Roland Dyens. He started with a powerful and dynamic approach. Unfortunately, the swing passage that marks this piece was less successful, it was just too slow to become happy. He bounced back in the right tempo in the last repeat.

Nobuhiro Uchimoto launched his quest with *Etude 12* van Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887 - 1959), the dreaded *squeak and squeal study*. Technically it is a difficult piece, that's quite clear by observation, but musically the piece does not captivate me.

He would have captivated me with his next piece indeed if he had played *Recuerdos de la Alhambra* by Francisco Tárrega clearer, now his melody was rather vague. That's the risky business with a guitar hit like this, you know every cranny and nook of the piece and you expect a more than perfect performance because it is so well-known. In that case every little slip is quite (and maybe a bit too) obvious.

Martin Zimny strove for the prize with *Sonata III* by Manuel Ponce (1882 - 1948). Concerning architecture, it is a quite complex piece that requires a clear approach to be understood. Zimny played neatly with a beautiful sound at times, yet he failed to clarify the large structure of the piece. In that case as a listener I more or less took off.

Ozan Uygur had the ambition to reach the finals with Bach. I heard his interpretation of the *Prelude* from *Partita Nr. 3 BWV 1006* a number of times before, like last year in Nordhorn, and I sensed his tense relation with this piece. His play was affected by the complexity of the piece as well as his haste to present it in a virtuoso way. Yet he passed the finish in a much more convincing way than last year!

Glauber Rocha went into Spanish mood with *Fandanguillo* by Joaquín Turina (1882 - 1949). He had an original approach concerning the tambora's on the guitar. After a bit tentative start, he made his way well with the driving dynamics of the piece.

Simon Wildau Nielsen came all the way from Denmark to participate in the competition. He had two pieces on his music stand. First, he played *Segoviana*, the tribute to the great Andrés by Darius Milhaud (1892 - 1974). It was a wild and chaotic piece that in its compositional disarray made high demands on the player.

In my opinion, it was quite OK that he returned to Domenico Scarlatti (1685 - 1757) in his second piece. The *Sonata K14* appeared a very virtuoso piece with the main challenge to separate the melody runs from the thrills. Unfortunately, the player did not completely succeed to do so.

A nice introduction by Aktas Erdogan was his very friendly announcement, an important aspect of the presentation that many players forget about. That stroke the right note for the music, the first movement from the *Sonate* by Antonio José (1902 - 1936). This Sonata is an extensive work that is built up from quite a number of coherent motives. At least, the player should stress this coherence. Erdogan's play was a bit unsettled, at one moment he played a bit flat, at another moment his tone was beautiful. Unfortunately, I missed a clear presentation of the musical architecture. Such a pity, because the piece flourishes if it is made clear to the audience.

David Sanchez flung Bach into the fray, the *Prelude* from the *Third Suite BWV 1009*. After a slow intro, he arrived at the fugue section and played it with power and confidence. At that very moment, someone started throwing around some stuff with quite some noise. Fortunately, it did not bother the player. I sincerely hope that this was no attempt to psychological warfare. If it were so, I consider it quite puerile!

The second female candidate was Alice Ducoin from France. She played a special build guitar with a solid top and the sound hole in the side. A nice technological feature! She presented herself with Bach too, just like the previous candidate with the *Prelude* from the *Third Suite BWV 1009*.

The comparison was interesting! She excelled with a beautifully phrased prelude and made the fugue look easy. For the first time, I got a "On to the Finals!" feeling.

Chiawei Lin stepped up. He started energetically with *Etude Nr. 2* by Heitor Villa-Lobos. Well, well quite a scale avalanche without any slip. A perfect technical demonstration, yet for me less interesting in the musical sense.

Lin compensated for the musical aspect quite satisfactory in his second piece, the *Turija* by Federico Moreno Torroba (1891 - 1982). He played it as a romantic piece, like an early morning mist, interpreted with a clear sense of purpose. I got the "On to the Finals!" feeling again!

The next candidate Mikkel Egelund Nielsen came from Scandinavia, I had already met him last year here in Nordhorn. He took two pieces with him on stage.

First, he played *Entrance for One* by the Danish composer Poul Ruders (*1949). Despite the name of this piece, this contemporary work was totally inaccessible for me. It was technically demanding, anyone could see. But sometimes with pieces like this I wonder: why all this effort for such a result? Again, Domenico Scarlatti came to the rescue, a *Sonata in G* (one of the 555, I guess). Nielsen played it without repeats because of the jury's stopwatch. Oooops, thrill after thrill and nothing in between. OK, it is Baroque indeed, but unfortunately all these ornaments took away the swing from the music.

Blazej Sudnikowicz was one of last year's finalists. This time he tried to reach the victory platform with his first step, *Tombeau sur la mort de M.Comte de Logy* by Silvius Leopold Weiss (1687 - 1750). Well, that was a really good step! He played the piece with expression and drama without getting bogged down by extravagant ornaments. The transparency of the melody was excellent. Yet I found his interpretation a bit faster than what is standard with this piece, which affected the sad atmosphere at times.

Wojcech Dabrowski selected a more contemporary work, *Divertimento* from *Aquarelle* by Sergio Assad. Dabrowski did paint a watercolour with his timbres indeed, but he gave up a bit of the fervour that is required by this piece too. Well, never mind, it is a demanding piece indeed!

Kunhwa Lee has been a contestant in various competitions in this region, amongst others here in Nordhorn last year. This time he presented two movements from the *Third Violin Sonata BWV 1005* by Johann Sebastian Bach. He played the Largo with a beautiful melodious tone and a well-polished question-answer game. The *Allegro Assai* became a dazzling arpeggio show in which the interaction between voices and the dynamic variation were well performed.

Romain Petiot showed with the first movement from the *Sonata* by Antonio José that it is quite possible to add coherency to this extended piece. He painted his sections interestingly with various sound palettes.

Jakob Bangsø appeared with two pieces. The *Sonata K32* by Domenico Scarlatti was a nice transparent starter with a clear aria sound. Then it was time for no-nonsense passion with the *Fandango* from *Tres Piezas Espanolas* by Joaquín Rodrigo (1901 - 1999). Bangsø played it elegantly in an exultant mood with a clear drive. The virtuoso sections were flawless although at some points he sacrificed music for technology.

The next participant - Jaime Velasco Ayensa – virtually was not there. To clarify this, he had not reported with the competition management in time. Just after his planned start time, somebody knocked on the window and there he was, with bag, baggage and guitar on the street. He muttered something that resembled "lost because he had taken another route from hotel to Kulturhaus".

The jury by courtesy permitted that he could still start. He unpacked his stuff in quick movements, started to play and performed well. It was an extremely atonal piece with by the looks of it a lot of technical challenge. Just after he got started right, his own mobile phone started buzzing. After silencing this device, he started all over. Consequently, he went over his time, which of course was not permitted in the tight schedule of the preliminaries, so he was disqualified. Quite right, because a professional attitude – following the competition rules and arriving in time – is part of the judgement of the jury.

As a consequence of this unexpected intermezzo, audience, players and jury were on edge again. Yiannis Giagourtas tried to exploit this with a reprisal of *Fandango* from *Tres Piezas Espanolas* by Joaquín Rodrigo. Comparison can be fun, but has its disadvantages too. Giagourtas' interpretation was a bit more awkward and heavier, with

at some places slightly less balance between melody and the dance-like accompaniment.

Johannes Bauer appeared with an old acquaintance and top hit from the seventies: *Asturias* by Isaac Albéniz (1860 - 1909). In the beginning his tremolo was slightly unbalanced, yet he recovered at the end of the piece with the repeat of the starting theme. With a surprising *forte,* he concluded the piece.

Fabian Freesen has been a participant on various editions of the Twente Guitar Festival, and now he plays here in Nordhorn. He started with a bit of impressionism, an arrangement of *La Fille aux Cheveux de Lin* by Claude Debussy (1862 - 1918). He made a nice performance that would have made Debussy proud. He combined technical aspects with music in *Etude 7* by Heitor Villa-Lobos. The cliff-hangers in the piece were very exciting. Again, a sense of the finals for me here.

Isaac Albéniz returned in the first round by Marcos Flavio. *Sevilla* this time. I heard a virtuoso piece with sufficient room for lyricism at the required spots.

Oman Kaminsky Lara was an old acquaintance from the finals of the Twente Guitar Festival and Nordhorn Guitar Festival 2011 alike. He had decided to impress the jury with two pieces by Bach, *Allemande* and *Gigue* from the *Suite BWV 996*. He played the *Allemande* in a very calm tempo, it almost came to a standstill. It provided some time for the elaborate and original thrills. The *Gigue* brought much more contrast in tempo, but slightly lacked some variation in sound.

Rolf van Meurs performed with a piece by Luigi Legnani (1790 - 1877), the playing partner of Niccolò Paganini. Legnani's best known work is the set of 36 *Caprices* in all major and minor keys. Van Meurs played three of them. In my ears, the last *Capriccio* was the most interesting.

The *Sonata Op. 47* by Alberto Ginastera (1916 - 1983) has been a popular piece amongst conservatory students for a long time. Yet for the preliminaries the piece is too long. Consequently, Agustin Nazzetta played the two corner movements only: *Esordio* and *Finale.*

Nazaretta played the music with a lot of dynamics, but just failed to take sufficient risk to make the pieces spectacular.

Martin van Hees started with an original announcement to tell something about the composer Roderik de Man. Then he played *Dulcamara*, a piece with alternating sweet and sharp almost wry sound. The meaning of *Dulcamara* is "bittersweet" indeed! He played this technically demanding piece with an interesting exiting atmosphere and with a surprisingly relaxed attitude. The swinging section with the complex rhythms invoked a bit of "worth the finals" enthusiasm with me!

Juan Carlos Arancibia met the challenge with the *Fandango* from *Tres Piezas Espanolas* by Joaquín Rodrigo. I already heard this piece twice, nice for comparison.

Concerning approach and play, Arancibia ended in between. Hurry and a casual slip stressed the fact that Rodrigo did not write easy music.

Augustin Pesnon put a very weird piece on his stand: *Ostinato* by Patrascu Catalin Stefanescu. In the sense of music this piece was pure horror in my ears, yet Pesnon's guitar technology was top of the bill. In my opinion, his technique could have brought him into the finals, yet his choice of repertoire did not appeal to me at all.

The composer Manuel Ponce (1882 - 1948) was a versatile artist. Besides many in his day contemporary pieces he composed an almost real Sivius Leopold Weiss paraphrase that puzzled the musicologists for years. Camillo Sauvalle played his *Theme Varie et Finale*. The piece itself was a perfect technological showcase, yet I found it a poor composition with reference to music. Well, that's Ponce's fault, isn't it?

Mr. Schyptschov stepped up with a piece that he called a *Sonate* by Dusan Bogdanovic, at least I got that. Well, whatever it was, to me it seemed that the composer was completely off-target in this piece. What a hideous piece of… yeah what? The guitarist could not improve this impression with his play.

We concluded the preliminaries in the classical style. Maxime Bedeneau first played *Sir John Smith His Almaine* by John Dowland (1563 - 1626). He approached the piece in style but permitted some inaccuracies to slip into the divisions. His second piece a *Vals* by Miguel Llobet (1878 - 1938) darted along joyfully. An accidental slip of the player did not damage the musical idea.

Finally, the marathon session of the preliminaries was history. The jury started negotiating and I was looking forward to some dinner, a nice portion of wraps!

Concert Thomas Müller-Pering

Thomas Müller-Pering (*1958) is a German guitarist of (;-)) my generation (I was born in '57). When I was writing this section, and looked up a few things about him in Wikipedia, I suddenly remembered where I had read his name before.

I have a CD by Manuel Barrueco that contains songs by De Falla and Danzas Espanolas by Granados. A soprano had joined in for the De Falla songs and Thomas Müller-Pering played *Guitar II* with the Granados pieces. That was back in 1991.

It's a bit weird CD from EMI, with the name of Manuel Barrueco in capitals on the sleeve and the names of the equally important ensemble players somewhere in the very, very small print inside the booklet. I guess that's called marketing.

Thomas Müller-Pering opened the concert series of the Guitar Festival Nordhorn on Friday night.

Before the music started we got the result of the preliminaries of the profi/student competition. The finalists were Chiawei Lin, Blazej Sudnikowicz, Jakob Bangso, Fabian Freesen and Oman Kaminsky. A prepared guitar with marked ping pong balls was used

for the draw. A clear Lotto association (the “balls” machine after Studio Sport on the Sundays, long time ago).

Time for the concert!

Thomas Müller-Pering made a start in the Romantic Era. *Romanze* from the *Bardenklaenge* and *Elegie*, both by Johann Kaspar Mertz (1806 - 1856). Because I love Mertz’ music, I was curious. He played the pieces neatly and without slips, but in some way the romantic idea, the emotional movement, was not there. Maybe it was not obvious to me, because as a listener I had an afternoon of guitar marathon behind me. I guess I was just tired.

Back to Baroque we went, with the daring exploit by Johann Sebastian Bach, the *Chaconne from the Partita Nr. 2 in D minor BWV1004*. If I watch someone playing this piece completely by heart, I always wonder about how they are doing it, 16 minutes Bach in one piece! I decided to raise the issue during my master class.

The last piece before the break was a contemporary piece with a title that translated as *Following the Clouds* by Konstantin Vassiliev. It was contemporary indeed, yet it included nice atmospheric moments and funny rhythms. Müller-Pering played the piece with a colourful approach.

After the interval, he returned to the Romantic Era with three pieces by Miguel Llobet (1878 - 1938), *Romanza*, *Mazurka* and *Respuesta*. Llobet’s music is characterised by a lot of virtuosity and a joyful note at times. Unfortunately, I missed that little bit of expression and force to turn this music into a treat. Llobet’s music with all the frills would have greatly benefitted from a bit of festivity, but alas…

Müller-Pering’s last piece was the *Sonata* by Antonio José. This time we heard all four movements, *Allegro Moderato, Minuetto, Pavana Triste* and *Final*. I wrote before that being able to keep track is very important with pieces like this. Well, Müller-Pering’s interpretation did help to understand the architecture of the piece. Consequently, listening to the complete *Sonata* became a lot of fun.

After the applause, we heard a little encore and that was the end of the first day of the Nordhorn Guitar festival 2012.

Apart from the *après-concert*, of course!

Day Two

Klemke Gitarrenduo

Competition Cat. 2

The second day of the festival brought the amateur competition for players above 16. Three participants stepped up, Agnes Mika, Johan Isselstein and undersigned.

That was a bit awkward for the journalism. You cannot play the guitar and write a report at the same time. Therefore, you'll find a contribution of Bobby Rootveld below, that I translate and publish by his friendly courtesy in Italic font.

Suddenly I read my own text in the report by Mark de Gooijer. Mark used to write an audience review of every contestant of the competitions, but in this case, he was going to play in front of a jury himself. Therefore, I will write an eyewitness report of this competition round.

The competition for amateur guitarists on this Saturday afternoon had three contestants. The first one to step up was Agnes Mika.

Agnes Mika is a student from the guitar school of Annette Kruisbrink and Arlette Ruelens. She made a sound and neat performance and showed a great sense of musical detail. Particularly striking in Agnes' play were the powerful sonorous bass lines in the music by Leo Brouwer.

It was also obvious that Agnes Mika is playing guitar with pleasure, her delight showed from the music. That was quite different from my impressions of some of the conservatory participants the day before, they seemed to suffer badly from the pressure

of the competitive spirit. Agnes' stage presentation, a subject that is high on my list, was excellent.

Johan Isselsteijn was the second participant. This young German guitarist from the town of Gronau is considering musical education on a conservatory after he finishes his high school. I would recommend so indeed!

Johan played the well-known Caprichio Arabé by Francisco Tárrega. With an often played and well-loved piece like this, any slip or error is immediately obvious with everyone. Additionally, everyone has his/her opinion concerning the interpretation. Nevertheless, Johan Isselsteijn played the piece well and overcame his initial nerves in the progress.

Mark de Gooijer (the 'father' of this festival report) was the last contestant and his participation deserves an elaborate report.

I was looking forward to Mark's participation in the competition, I have known him for ten years by now and I found it marvellous that he ventured the tournament after all these years.

I still remember the first time that I met him, at one of my first concerts (even the first public performance I organised myself) in the synagogue of the town of Borne. Since then Mark and his wife have visited many of the concerts that I played or organised, and he has been a regular guest at the festivals that I was involved in.

I would call Mark a well playing guitarologist rather than an amateur guitarist. Sometimes I wonder if Mark has missed his vocation, he should have gone to a conservatory and dedicated his life to guitar music. In my opinion, he would have made a passionate professional player. I guess I should ask him some day why he has taken another turn in life, if he has missed the junction towards a musical career. ;-)

[Remark by Mark: I found this an interesting statement, so I wrote a Guitarity on this subject. Take a look on the DOS Amigos Homepage if you want to read it]

With respect to programme composition, Mark had the best choice of both the Cat. 1 and Cat. 2 competitions*. He brought a well-considered, balanced and tasteful set of pieces that formed a mini-concert. Additionally, he introduced the pieces with a humoristic explanation.*

This is the aspect of stage presentation that I value highly. Mark has been with my workshops stage presentation since 2006. Since then I have seen him progressing with his presentation and currently it has become one of his fortes during performance.

Mark played very musically with a nice timbre variation. At a certain moment nerves seemed to get the better of him, but he recovered in a formidable way and played the remainder of the programme with fervour and added a nice sense of swing to the last piece. Well done!

I was glad that I only had to support the jury with time registration, because the judgement of the three candidates was more difficult than the day before with the profi/student competition.

Bobby, thank you for your contribution!!

Concert Nutavut Ratanakarn

On their travels in the Far East, Duo NIHZ met the Thai guitarist Nutavut Ratanakarn during the Calcutta Guitar Festival. They became friends and he got an invitation for the Guitar Festival Nordhorn.

He stepped up with an extraordinary build guitar, it was a model without sound hole in the top. Instead it had an opening in the side that formed a curve. After some research, I found out that the guitar was built by the Korean luthier Kim Hee Hong.

Ratanakarn opened with a piece that was composed by HM the King of Thailand. The title of the piece *His Majesty's King Suite* gave the impression that it was a kind of Renaissance suite, but it was contemporary indeed!

The King of Thailand is a passionate jazz musician, so his compositions were jazzy indeed. The suite included five pieces. The first piece was joyful and reminded me strongly of the arrangement of *Blue Moon* by Laurindo Almeida. The second movement was a ragtime a la Scott Joplin. Piece three appeared to be a tremolo study with ballad like sections. The fourth piece offered an easy-going swing with a nice walking bass line. The last piece, a small Bluesette, the audience could cooperate a bit, clapping hands. Watching the player's hand movements, the King's pieces were far from simple. Fun listening!

Onward, with *Danza Brazileira* by Jorge Morel (*1931). This swinging piece has been in the programmes of many guitarists, with the interpretation of Badi Assad as a nice example. With this piece, Ratanakarn made a Latin mood!

His next work was the Baden Jazz Suite by Jiri Jirmal (*1925), a piece that is dedicated to the Brasilian guitarist Baden Powell de Aquino. The suite has the movements *Simplicitas*, *Berceuse* and *Rondo a la Samba*.

Simplicitas has a lyrical start and develops towards a flowing Samba rhythm. *Berceuse* is a lovely tranquil song that reflects a quiet romance. *Rondo a la Samba* is a feast of swing that starts in the bass and gradually spreads over the complete guitar. Easy-going and swinging along! Exactly the way Ratanakarn approached the complete suite.

Between pieces, Ratanakarn gave a lot of explanation. It took some browsing in the English dictionary in his mind, causing him to sigh: "I even sometimes do not understand myself!"

After the Latin sounds he took us back to traditional music from Thailand. A surprising experience! He played three pieces, a court dance with spontaneous improvisations, a

love song in tremolo technique and a folk song about bananas that every Thai can sing along. It was nice to hear that the Spanish guitar accommodated the eastern sound idiom well.

The Mexican guitarist/composer Ernesto Garcia de Leon (*1952) dedicated the piece *El Viejo* to Nutavut Ratanakarn. So, he had a good reason to play it. The piece was announced as an arrangement of a traditional Mexican folk song. Quite remotely this was true, a traditional theme was repainted with an acid sound and sharp dissonants. The piece did not appeal with me, even though the guitarist had a tough job playing it.

The last piece was *Koyunbaba* by Carlo Domeniconi (*1947). This piece is a kind of old friend for me from the first Twente Guitar Festival in 2006. If you hear a piece often and you hear it played well (I remember Robert Horna, for instance) involuntarily one starts comparing. Consequently, I found that Ratanakarn's interpretation missed some dynamic aspects and some clarity in the passage with the "Tangerine Dream" bass line. For the rest, it remained a spectacular piece.

Ensemble des Princesses de Cuisine

Man cannot live by music alone is a variation on a well-known Biblical quote that was applicable during this festival again. Therefore, the inner man was not forgotten. Kulturhaus NIHZ has a place to eat for guests, here you can get some hot meals and drinks.

This year the menu announced Wraps with stuffing and all attributes, a rice dish with special vegetarian sauce and *Pasta Speziale di NIHZ.* It is told that the well-known cook Gordon Ramsay heard about the latter recipe and immediately decided to introduce the dish under his own name in the Anglo-Saxon region.

Enjoying a hot meal, a nice opportunity to have some table conversation.

In some myths and legends, a good meal appears out of thin air. In daily life, however, the *Ensemble des Princesses de Cuisine* is necessary for this. At Kulturhaus NIHZ this ensemble includes three lovely ladies.

First, we have Angie Rootveld who wields the wooden spoon and soup ladle with passion in solo- and ensemble formation. She knows all spots in Nordhorn where you can buy good food against fair prices. Her experience of long years working with Ivory Tower Records comes in handy here!

Then we have Lyz Day who embellishes the pastry for the coffee before and after the concerts just as skilful as she does with the Scarlatti *Sonatas* on her harpsichord. Additionally, she recites the songs of Dowland during dish washing. Could that be a tradition from the castle kitchens in the Elizabethan era?

Last but not least there is Sanna van Elst who plays her part in the kitchen just as convincingly as on stage.

Ladies, it was great. I have had perfect and tasty meals during the guitar festival!

Wait a minute, we are not there yet! The kitchen is not the only workplace in the periphery of the festival.

Besides her work as competition manager, Sarah Rootveld managed the service desk and served coffee, tea and lemonades. Fred Rootveld provided support wherever needed and fulfilled a special role for Roland Dyens, I'll go into more detail about that later!

All of you, many thanks for your good job!

Concert Klemke Gitarrenduo

Just like last year, the concert on Day Two was a co-production. This time by the Klemke Guitar Duo and Alberto Mesirca

Normally I do not search the Internet for every name in the guitar scene in advance, so I did not know the Klemke Guitar Duo yet. Because I was curious, I made the search nevertheless. On Youtube I found various videos including one from 1986 that showed Samuel Klemke and his sister Laura playing a piece by Tielman Susato under direction of their father.

So, I was a bit prepared and looked forward to their recital. They did not disappoint me indeed!

First things first, however, which was the announcement of the result of the amateur competition. Agnes Mika was first, followed by Johan Isselstein. I had a fair third place in this field.

The seven movement *Suite No 3 BWV 808* by Johann Sebastian Bach was their appetizer. Quite an appetizer indeed! Immediately my memories went back to (the CD of) Presti/Lagoya duo that played some of the movements of this suite.

I was impressed. They played Bach quick and playful, sometimes it looked like a wink towards Scarlatti. Their interaction was well-woven in their arrangement of this suite, they often changed parts on phrases, which caused interesting variations in sound. They used both quick and slow passages to make music.

From Baroque to Impressionism is just a small step on stage. We heard two *Arabesques* by Claude Debussy, that were well arranged for guitar duo. The first one showed an interesting dynamic approach that even was a little bit better than with Bach. The second one brought a bit of humour and accurate timing. Delightful!

Long ago I had *Oriental*, also known as *Danza Espanola Nr. 2*, by Enrique Granados (1867 - 1916), on my music stand too, in the C major arrangement. The Klemke Duo took it quite a few notes higher, a tasteful arrangement with quick changes, just like the Bach suite. Played with atmosphere!

The Intermezzo from *Goyescas*, also composed by Granados, was a warm-blooded surprise after the lovely but modest *Oriental*. Here I heard the chord with the most warm sound in the complete concert! It was like basking in the sun!

If you play Granados as a guitar duo, Albéniz will not be far away. Both contributed to the movement of the Spanish School in their own way.

Their first piece was *Bajo la Palmera.* The Klemke Duo made it a solid performance with an extremely clear interplay in the quiet passages.

Cordoba is a piece that starts in a mysterious atmosphere and develops itself into a joyful dance with festive rasgueados. In this piece, the guitar duo arrangement beats the piano original! The Klemke Duo added something personal that caused an enthusiastic response from the audience.

This response motivated the Klemke Duo to play a nice encore, *Rappel des Oiseaux* by Philippe Rameau (1683 -1764). The little birds joyfully sang this concert to a conclusion. A good performance!

Concert Alberto Mesirca

Alberto Mesirca is a welcome guest in Kulturhaus NIHZ and has played a number of concerts here. I remember his last year recital in the same location with the first festival.

Alberto started after the break of this evening's concert with a stand full of scores. There even was a world premiere amongst them!

John Dowland occupied the first part of the programme. A Praeludium served as an appetizer. With *Sir John Smith, His Almain Mesirca* repeated Dowland's tribute of one of his patrons. Divisions with brilliant scales turned the piece into fireworks. Her Majesty the Queen, however, got the most beautiful piece *The Queen Elizabeth, Her Galliard* was Dowland's tribute to Queen Elizabeth I. Mesirca turned this piece into a tribute to music!

The heavily loaded music stand was very close to the edge of the stage and gravity was ogling. Consequently, the stand and its scores dropped to the floor after changing pieces. Alberto coped with this with a good sense of humour and musically became even more alert.

The music by Francesco da Milano was next. Milano's music is a specialty of Alberto Mesirca, witness the fact that he published up till now unknown music by *Il Divino* from the 16th century.

Ricercare XXV was a solid demonstration of the complex polyphonies of Da Milano's music. The *Fantasia La Compagna* appealed to me in particular, because I struggled with the piece and its F-sharp tuning myself. Mesirca spun the three voices of the piece into a beautiful fabric in high tempo.

We should memorize the theme of *La Compagna* for a moment. Dusan Bogdanovic had dedicated a composition to Alberto, a set of variations based on the theme of this Da Milano fantasia: *Tre Ricercari sulla Compagna*. It was an extremely contemporary piece that required deep thinking and listening to retrace the original theme. In this piece Mesirca showed his extraordinary skills with contemporary music.

Finally, without paper! he noticed joyfully when he started the section of the recital that he played by heart.

Now it was time for *Introduzione e Capriccio Op. 23* by Giulio Regondi. I had heard this piece played by Alberto Mesirca before, but this time it emphasized the growth in his playing skills that has been his characteristic for years. A romantic introduction with feather light quick improvisations turns into a Hungarian Rhapsody that would have made Franz Liszt proud! First class job by Mr. Mesirca!

Heitor Villa-Lobos did not fail on this programme. *Etude 11* started with a powerful theme that resembles Prelude Nr. 1. Then the piece becomes a labour of Hercules with short quick chords, powerful strokes and a tremolo section. It was no problem for Mesirca's skilful play and he gave music all breathing space required. It was likewise for *Prelude No. 4*, with that nice dreamily section in harmonics.

With all this beautiful music, a warm atmosphere developed between player and audience that clearly was inspiring.

Time for a diabolical dashing exploit, *Cappricio Diabolico* by Mario Castelnuovo Tedesco, a homage to Niccolò Paganini. This piece forms an almost fixed part of Mesirca's programmes, because he is a great lover of Castelnuovo Tedesco's music. Command of the material and love for the music. As a listener, you will hear that as the Voice of the Muse!

An overwhelming applause and a standing ovation were the appreciation of the audience for Mesirca's presentation and performance. Alberto Mesirca returned the favor with a little specialty of his –a *Sonata* by Domenico Scarlatti- and a piece of Mediterranean warmth with *Granada* by Isaac Albéniz.

A worthy conclusion to a monumental evening of guitar music. Samuel and Laura Klemke and Alberto Mesirca, *hats off* for you!

Day Three

Roland Dyens

Master Class with Nutavut Ratanakarn

This year my master classes were all on the Sunday. In the past, the Sunday morning had no events, a lunch concert being the first one. So in my mind I had all master classes in the afternoon.

I failed to study my schedule more closely. My first master class with Nutavut Ratanakarn was already at eleven. Because I took off from home a little late, I was not there at the moment. Because normally I am punctually in time, the organization was looking for me everywhere. I did appreciate, but I felt a bit guilty too. My apologies for the trouble!

Fortunately, I only missed half of my master class, so I was able to learn something any way!

As a result of my somewhat uneasily played *Praeludium,* Nutavut Ratanakarn had quite a lot of useful remarks, and of course some went back to basics.

First, he demonstrated the bowshot movement (tighten and release) that forms a kind of pretension on the string with strokes. This preparation was the same for apoyando and tirando, the difference was only the last phase of the stroke, with apoyando the finger

makes contact with the adjacent string, with tirando it does not. As a hint for melody performance, he explained the idea of “breathing from the score”. Just like wind players do, you can make breathing marks to synchronize your own breathing with the breath of the music. Further he made some remarks about the accents and a secure thumb movement.

Nutavut Ratanakarn appeared to be a sympathetic teacher with a good knowledge of technical and musical aspects

After my master class, Agnes Mika was up, so I had the opportunity to listen to her firm bass line that was one of her assets during the competition.

Master Class with Thomas Müller-Pering

I had heard enthusiastic reports about Thomas Müller-Pering from the last Valais Guitar Week, so I was curious.

This time I played *Les Clochettes* again, it’s a piece that takes less trouble to memorize than the Rung *Praeludium*. Thomas Müller-Pering had some very handy tips, particularly the result-oriented fingering, a kind of reasoning back to analyze the problem. I will give it a try for the other pieces!

As a final subject, I liked to know how he played those long pieces like Bach’s *Chaconne* of 16 minutes by heart. He had an explanation about this too, particularly about memorizing significant sections and turns in order to separate almost equal phrases.

His clear and structured explanations were obvious and remarkable. His remarks were to the point without excessive rhetoric. ;-) That’s good for memorizing!

Finals Competition Cat. 1

From a strong field, five candidates had made it to the finals, Oman Kaminsky Lara, Fabian Freesen, Jakob Bangsø, Chiawei Lin and Blazej Sudnikowicz.

The finals were recorded by BravaNL, a classical channel that can be viewed on TV via cable subscriptions. BravaNL often cooperates with the Gitaarsalon Enkhuizen, a Dutch initiative to promote (classical) guitar music. In the end, such a TV shoot is a nice piece of promotion for the finalists and the Kulturhaus.

Oman Kaminsky went first. It immediately became obvious with me that his play had grown since last year. His starter was an intensely sad *Elegie* by Johann Kaspar Mertz. This emotion effectively moved me. Het interpreted the piece well, making subtle differences between corresponding passages. Yet the piece at a certain time kind of perished in beauty.

His best piece, but considering his facial expressions also a heroic struggle with the Muse, became a *Sonate* by Leo Brouwer. The first movement *Fandangos y Boleros*

started mysteriously with a passage in harmonics. Then the sharp edge of conflict emerged, with a clear contrast between anger and quasi-tranquility.

With *Sarabande de Scriabin* he played a story that triggered my imagination. The quiet ending was fascinating.

La Toccata de Pasquini brought frantic and furious virtuosity, with at times the impulse of a gunshot like stroke of the bass strings. He skilfully extracted the essence of the melody form the violence of the notes. The tranquil middle section formed a surprising contrast, the thunderstorm passed and the last raindrops formed rings in the suddenly calm water. Not for long, however, because the next thunderstorm roared in.

Fabian Freesen took turns from Kaminsky Lara on stage. This time *Introduction and Rondo* by Dioniso Aguado (1784 - 1849). The transition to this music took some switching after the onslaught by Brouwer. Aguado takes ample time and notes for his introductions, so Freesen could exploit the effects and apply well-considered contrast. The *Rondo* had a traditional architecture, allowing Freesen to make good use of the quiet moments in the piece.

His second piece was the *Passacaglia* by Silvius Leopold Weiss. This is a kind of theme/variation piece. In this piece with its fragile tone, the guitar got out of tune at times and a little insecurity crept in. Yet the piece did hold.

Sevilla by Isaac Albéniz concluded his programme. Freesen started with a joyful approach of the first section with the rasgueados, sang the quiet middle section with a beautiful tone and finally escaped the consequences of a slip caused by a little insecurity in the end.

Jakob Bangsø represented the Scandinavian guitar world with the daring exploit *Passacaglia* from the *Tres Piezas Espanolas* by Joaquín Rodrigo. He kept the bass motif clear with a nice legato play, but in the virtuoso sections I just lost sight on this main theme, the melody seemed to drown a little bit.

Anyway, Bangsø was warmed up now for his last piece, the well-known *Sonata Op. 47* by Alberto Ginastera

He played the *Esordio* in a powerful way and took effective risks to bring the music alive. Well finished! Like any time, I hear this piece, the *Scherzo* reminded me of *Toccata* (also by Ginastera) as played by Emerson, Lake en Palmer. Bangsø exploited the musical effects. The calm came back in the *Canto*, and the player created a brooding atmosphere. The *Finale* was a worthy conclusion, Bangsø kept his finishing touch and integrated story in his interpretation.

Chiawei Lin was up. He started with a drive by means of the *Fugue* from the *First Violin Sonata BWV1001* by Johann Sebastian Bach. That was a positive listening experience, he played the piece transparently, put lots of work in the dynamics and give some spice to the melodies with a bit of vibrato.

Chiawei Lin's second piece was unknown to me, *Sonata Eroica* by Mauro Giuliani. This kind of Giuliani compositions requires a lot of virtuosity. Chiawei Lin met this requirement and played a nice piece in "Opera mode" with interesting cliffhangers on strategic spots. His phrasing was excellent, ;-) Even I could follow it!

His third piece was a composition that I knew by name, *Muerte del Angel* by Astor Piazzolla (1921 - 1992). It appeared an interesting arrangement that considerably deviated from what I remembered. Chiawei Lin played with a formidable tone, yet a little bit too fast to my taste. Fortunately, the lyrical middle section (as we are used from many tango's by Piazzolla) compensated this impression.

There he was, the last candidate Blazej Sudnikowicz. He started with a piece with unknown title, even the jury did not know because the score had no title indeed.

The finals were without pause, so I started to become a little bit stiff after 1 hours and fourty minutes on my chair. That affected my concentration and Sudnikowicz's quite contemporary piece could not captivate me at all. Horrible music!

Sudnikowicz played with a great technical skill and a good sense of finishing nevertheless. The piece gave me the impression of loose fragments without any cohesion, but I guess that's the fault of the composer!

After the contemporary adventure, Sudnikowicz went back to the prodigy child Giulio Regondi. *Etude Nr. 5* appeared a study in scale and chord combinations with a bit of polyphonic in the end. The story remained more or less the same, technically well played, but the composition did not captivate me.

With the last piece I missed the announcement, a slip in my ear! The piece looked Tedesco-like to me, it had a nice theme. Later on, the tam-tam reported that it was *Hommaje a Boccherini*, by Tedesco indeed. The arpeggio variation on the theme was a true demonstration of speed.

Conclusion: well played, but Sudnikowicz's choice of repertoire could not appeal me as a listener.

And now it's waiting for the jury assessment!

Concert Roland Dyens

This concert, and particularly the presence of Roland Dyens in the rural town of Nordhorn, has a nice story attached.

In 2008 Roland Dyens was a guest of the Twente Guitar Festival. Fred Rootveld, Bobby's father', who in those days was member of the *Equipe du Support* of this festival, had set himself up as the personal guide of Roland Dyens. The gentlemen, both trained guitarists, got along very well, with as a result the encore on the final concert of that year, *Tango en Skai*, "dedicated to Fred".

Both gentlemen kept in touch about ups and downs via email. Years later the idea arose to invite Roland Dyens for Nordhorn 2012. Fred Rootveld approached Roland, the two chatted about it and at a certain moment the matter was fixed up with complete satisfaction, Roland Dyens would travel to Nordhorn. A happy reunion of both friends was bound!

The reunion was pleasant indeed and Fred took care that everything was well arranged. The atmosphere of the festival appeared quite appealing for Roland Dyens.

For this last concert, the hall was so full up that extra heating was not necessary. Moreover, a camera team from BravaNL was there, that carried lighting equipment that made the temperature even higher.

The temperature was not the only thing that was high in the hall. The jury had had heated discussions about the results of the finals. After all they agreed on the ranking, Chiawei Lin was the winner, followed by respectively Oman Kaminsky, Jakob Bangsø, Blazej Sudnikowicz and Fabian Freesen. Chiawei Lin, congrats! And I compliment the others on their results!

After a lot of applause and the prize-giving it finally became quiet in the hall.

It's a tradition with Roland Dyens that he determines his programme ad hoc, based on the atmosphere in the hall and amongst the audience. To this end he plays an improvisation that has the function of a mood antenna. In this case it was an interesting mix of warm-jazzy improvisation on a number of Jazz standards.

With an ad-hoc concerto like this it's very nice to have announcements. Roland Dyens did so with fervour.

He continued with *The Wiz*, dedicated to his music publisher. I guess that this man is a true Sibelius wizard (Sibelius is a popular music scoring program), because part of Dyens' music is a challenge for notation. The piece appeared a Gershwin-like theme that reminded me of *It ain't necessarily so.*

Then he played a homage to his manager, *Angel's Boss*. Rapid runs developed into a warm Latin rhythm full of humour and with a clear wink!

Dyens did not forget the classics. He had arranged a few classical evergreens into tasteful guitar pieces. *Tango* by Albéniz, a piece by Tchaikovski and a waltz by Chopin. Considering his colossal left-hand stretches, the pieces were technically demanding.

At that time the temperature in the hall started to be bothersome. Dyens uses a lot of different tunings for the guitar and his strings protested a bit under these circumstances. It was quite a job, but in a professional way he put things right by tuning between passages and phrases.

It was time for some romanticism with *Albanera*, a searching and straying theme with mysterious modulations.

The next piece had some morbid humour: *Ultimo Recuerdo, Hommage a Tárrega et Barrios*. I remember that someone composed a piece on the last thoughts of Carl Maria von Weber, so the subject exists! Dyens played this tremolo piece with true fingerboard acrobatics. The last section made up the death scene, with a heartbeat that gradually fell silent. Weird piece!

Django Reinhardt (1910 - 1953) became immortal with his composition *Nuages.* Roland Dyens played it in a well-wrought arrangement in which he plays the complete jazz trio –bass, rhythm guitar and solo. Good job on a lovely theme in a relaxed swing.

Fernando Sor got Roland Dyens' tribute via *Le Calme*. A beautiful capriccio that Dyens played with a delightful tone and a clear melodious approach.

Dyens does a lot of travelling, so he has quite some experience with jet-lag. Thus, he composed *The Delight of Jetlag, a non-tribute to jetlag*. He started with a subtle tapping passage that developed into a complex arpeggio and returned to its starting point (the airport, I guess) via harmonics. Technically breath-taking, musically worthwhile!

With *Lamentos* (probably by Joao Pernambuco) he started working again with his one-man Jazz Trio on a Single Guitar, now in Latin Swing. He makes it sound soo easy and relaxed, but you have to possess incredible skills to play it this way along with him!

The same experience I got with a lovely and easy-going waltz that by the sight of it again required considerable technique.

Another time the Single Man Dyens Jazz Band stepped up with a solid piece of Latin that listened to the name *Carilhoes*. With rapid and flashy solo's, it surpassed *Lamentos* in complexity.

Also, the last song kept us in South America. It was Dyens' homage to the guitarist Baden Powell de Aquino: *Meditation a Baden Powell*. We heard an incredible number of techniques and tricks that gave the piece an extra dimension.

The race was run, the show was over. The audience tried to climb the chairs out of sheer enthusiasm.

The ovations were a prelude to a special section of the programme, the oncalls. In the first place, there was the modest and tender *Jael*, dedicated to his daughter. The piece was a *Berceuse* with all kinds of surprising virtuosities under the melody line.

After he finished the piece, Roland Dyens spoke some warm words of appreciation for the good time he had had at the festival. The atmosphere and the sociability had touched him.

And after that – just guess what! - he played his homage to Fred Rootveld, just like in Enschede some years past. Casually he suggested if Fred could help him a bit with *Tango en Skai*, because he had not played it for years (1922 or so, he said). Well I would not dare to do so without thorough preparation. Fred thought the same and declined modestly.

Of course, Roland Dyens showed that there was nothing wrong with his memory! *Tango en Skai* like only the maestro and composer can play it.

Which became the end of a historical night of music!

Next year Nordhorn 2013!