

Guitar Festival Nordhorn 2013

Blue Thursday



It happens sometimes... a day that inexplicably starts in a minor key. No, it was not caused by the weather. It did not rain (usually rain yields a bad mood with me if I have to cycle to work) even though it was quite muggy and unexpectedly hot, almost 20 degrees centigrade! Such a difference, the week before we still had night frost! I was not tired either, I had slept well for a few nights and for a change I had not been in surf mode behind the PC in the middle of the night.

What was the cause? Well, I guess that I felt a bit stressed. The day before I failed to play my competition pieces well, to be fair it was quite unsatisfactory, so I worried a bit about my performance. Today one of my colleagues fell ill behind his desk and had to be taken away to the sick bay (yes, we all grow older). Such an event immediately affects the group atmosphere. Later things appeared not as bad as they seemed to be, the guy had some flu on his organ of balance.

Anyway, on this blue Thursday afternoon I was in the car driving to Nordhorn in Germany with a weird sense of discomfort in my solar plexus. I had left work a little

earlier to be in time in Nordhorn and I had picked up some sandwiches at home on the run.

This year spring had started late and hesitantly. You could clearly notice this on the long and dead straight road between Oldenzaal and Denekamp in the eastern part of Holland. There was just a little touch of green on the trees and the leaves had not unfolded yet. The meadows were brown and dry and by the number of tree trunks along the road one could notice that lots of trees had been axed for the Easter bonfires in this district. Along the road I spotted piles of logs that had been removed from the woods. Forest maintenance or budget cuts on maintenance, that nowadays is the cause of the uncontrolled axing of trees and clearing of public gardens in many municipalities.

This year I was on the road at Thursday night rather than at early morning Friday. Cause was a little event that had been added to the three day's Nordhorn Guitar festival: the welcome party. I wanted to be there, because a warm welcome warms the heart and chases the blue mood. I could definitely use that today!

I went to Nordhorn early, because a festival like this always can use some extra hands. Tonight the first competitors would arrive with their sheet music, so there was work to do behind the show.

I passed the sign of *Spargel Arno –Asparagus Arno* in English- the well-known asparagus grower near the German border. It is the season for these vegetables indeed!

I sighted the sign *Willkommen in Deutschland*. The old border-crossing is defunct since the time that the Schengen Treaty became effective, it now only is the stopping place for the customers of an odd cluster of super markets and cigar shops. Just in case that causes you a headache: the old chemist is still there too. *Paracetamol* it reads on large letters on the sign above his shop window.

I passed the border and made my way into Germany. I can drive this route blindfolded, because all through the year the Kulturhaus NIHZ in Nordhorn is the scene of many concerts, workshops and other events, amongst others the famous Open Guitar Nights. My wife and I like to come there often!

Nordhorn did not change very much this year. The old grounds of Nihues' textile factories are just as barren as they used to be and the rails around the railway station are rusty. A few goods waggons have been parked on a dead track for years now and I don't think that they will ever leave there. I passed them by at the regular speed of 50 km/h. I spotted the *Heisse Kiste*, one of those characteristic German fish and chips stalls where you can buy *Bratwurst* and *Sauerkraut*. Just a few hundred meters to go!

I parked my car and got my bag from the back. No, I did not carry a guitar yet. My bag was sufficiently heavy because it contained my contribution to the prize of the amateur competition: two sets of music books that included the full DOS Amigos Homepage collection for solo guitar!

As soon as I arrived in the Mittelstrasse, I spotted a van of Radio Oost (the local radio of the eastern part of Holand) in front of Kulturhaus NIHZ. In the present time *media exposure* is invaluable, so Bobby Rootveld gave an interview about the festival plus a little demonstration on his antique Stoss guitar from 1819.

The interviewer was a quiet man. He asked to-the-point questions and left sufficient time for a decent answer. That was a relief indeed, because in many interviews you get the notion that answers are not important and are suppressed accordingly on present day radio and TV according to the mechanism: *Inter-view? No, My View Only!*

Bobby played *La ci darem la mano* on the antique Stoss, the well-known aria from *Don Giovanni* by Mozart. *Give me your hand* it means, a nice metaphor for the meeting of guitarists from many countries that will shake hands at this festival.

At Kulturhaus NIHZ, I had a joyful reunion with my festival friends, they were all there, Bobby Rootveld and Sanna van Elst, Fred and Angie Rootveld, Lyz Day from Switzerland, Henk and Martin Olden, Tommie Ros and a few other people that I know from my visits to Kulturhaus NIHZ.

Seeing them again definitely cheered me up. Rolling up some sleeves did help me too, I carried a large panful of tomato soup for the welcome meal to the dining room. These *Estudios de Voluntariado* would provide for some nice practice in this weekend.

My mood got an extra boost as a consequence of a remarkable encounter. One of the participants was Nandini Sudhir, a young guitarist that had travelled all the way from India together with her mother. Both recognized me from the DOS Amigos Homepage and were enthusiast about the music and my stories on this site. I was glad to notice that my site obviously is world famous!

My blues were gone, so now I could begin the festival in earnest! I made a good start with soup, a drink and live music in the festival bar!

The Festival

Since 2011 the Guitar Festival Nordhorn is a yearly event with great interest from inland and abroad, particularly in the guitar competition for the professionals and students. Considering the competition, winning this event is a great performance. Yet the amateurs have not been forgotten, they too have the possibility to contest. The amateur competition gets more participants every year.

The festival has accommodated quite a few greats from the guitar world, amongst them Alberto Mesirca, Denis Azabagic and Roland Dyens.

The festival is a three-day event with competitions, workshops and master classes. The first day is dedicated to master classes and the preliminaries of the competition for professionals and conservatory students. On the second day, we will see master classes, the workshop for stage presentation and the amateur competition. Finally, the

third day accommodates master classes, the workshop *Theatre Sports for Guitarists* and the finals of the professional competition. Obviously, every day has its concerts!

This year the musical team that made this possible consisted of Zoran Dukic, Reinbert Evers, Samuel Klemke, Stefan Grasse, Klaus Renzel, the Real Duo (Luciano Damiani and Michele Libraro) , the Duo Resonances (Frederique Luzy and Pierre Bibault), the Anido Guitar Duo (Annette Kruisbrink and Arlette Ruelens) and of course the Duo NIHZ itself.

These are the people that made the show. Yet behind the show there is a group of people for seemingly ordinary things like manning the bar, selling tickets, food management, transport of participants and all kinds of services. Kulturhaus NIHZ has been tremendously helped by Fred and Angie Rootveld, Sarah Rootveld and Dustin Hall, Martin and Henk Olden, Tommie Ros, Vasko and his girlfriend and many others that cooperated unselfishly. This year I had the opportunity to cooperate behind the show some more and my conclusion out of my own experience is: *Chapeau people, well done!*

Day One



Zoran Dukic

Paperwork/Master class Samuel Klemke

Today, the Friday of three days of guitar festival, I came in early to help with the reception of the participants of the competition. Upon arrival, the festival management checks if the candidates have paid the entrance fee and registers the music for the preliminaries and finals. Two copies are required in behalf of the jury.

Some submit the scores by mail. One of the candidates did a perfect job, he submitted a small bound package with title sheet that mentioned the name of the player and the

names of the pieces for preliminaries and finals. Extraordinary! No one gets in trouble if someone happens to drop the pile on the floor.

This procedure appeared an exception. In most cases you get a pile of photocopies with poorly readable page numbering and sometimes missing titles of the pieces, in all kinds of formats. If you mix that up or drop the complete pile on the floor by accident, you will have to cancel the competition if you are not able to solve the puzzle of the lost page sequences.

Others came in and brought the scores personally, and meanwhile had many questions about the competition, the lodging, the food etc. That caused a bit of chaos, I have to admit.

The identification of players and his or her pieces is of prime importance. We had to arrange pieces in the order of appearance at the preliminaries that had been determined by drawing lots the day before. Meanwhile the players were registered in order of subscription. I guess you get the problem?

So Bobby wrote the names of the players on the scores, I picked them up, added the sequence number within the preliminaries and piled things up. This process was interrupted time and time again, so it was very important to remain alert. Finally, the piles were stable and in correct sequence, so I stowed them away on a safe place where nobody could drop them on the floor.

In the same room where the competitors were received (the concert hall), Samuel Klemke held his master class. Agnes Mika had prepared the well-known Prelude in D by Bach (I guess it was one of her competition pieces) and both were working hard on it. I did not overhear everything (I had to concentrate on the paperwork), but Samuel had a keen eye for detail and taste, taught with humour and sang the melody lines with a well-trained voice to demonstrate their effect.

By the time the preliminaries were due, the music was piled up (almost) in the correct sequence. Fortunately, I had the presence of mind to make a note of the pieces in this pile in order to find out what the candidates would play in the preliminaries. Time was too short to create a typed list that I could use for the reviews. Unfortunately, my efforts appeared a snapshot, later on the pile was supplemented by the scores from the latecomers, so it would become quite a challenge to match the music to the player in the preliminaries!

Preliminaries Competition Professionals and Students

Thirty candidates were on the roll to battle for the finals in the preliminaries of this afternoon. In the end twenty-six guitarists hit the stage, four were absent without notice. Quite a turnout, so we were up to a marathon session.

This year finding out the names of the candidates was quite a puzzle. In one hand I had my list with pieces for the preliminaries with the sequence number that represented the order of appearance. A few were missing, because some people had submitted their

pieces 5 minutes before curtains up while others did not come at all. In the other hand I had a list of last names of candidates with a sequence number, their order of appearance.

To my great satisfaction, announcements were compulsory. Yet intelligibility was not guaranteed. I did not hear all first names clearly and I did neither have the presence of mind nor stenographic abilities to scribble them quickly. Fortunately, I got some help afterwards to add a personal note (i.e. first name) to this report. ;-) Bobby, thank you!

As a consequence of Bobby's contribution, I can detail a bit on the nationality of the players that had come here for the competition. Guitarists originated from Holland, Germany, France, Belgium, Poland, Russia, Spain, the United States, Vietnam and Korea. They all came to Nordhorn, this modest little spot on the world map. This festival has acquired quite a reputation indeed!

Time for the music!

The Spanish Rocio Lopez Jurado opened the competition with *Sevillana* by Joaquín Turina (1882 - 1949). She played in a clearly Spanish musical language and recounted the image of this old Andalusian city with powerful *Rasgueados*.

Rachel Schiff from the United States, the second one on the list, performed with *Homenaje a Debussy* by Manuel de Falla (1876 - 1946). She played this epitaph for the French composer Claude Debussy in a dignified and sad tone. Her finishing was fine, yet at some points the melody line was just too short to express the solemn atmosphere.

She apparently got an extra listener, because I heard something scratching on the door that resembled an animal. Could it be that Kulturhaus NIHZ has concert stowaways?

Rachel Schiff had a second trump card in her sleeve, *Alla Cubana*, a *Bagatelle* by William Walton (1902 - 1983). The piece appeared to have a weird complex rhythm that is hard to memorize because it is just different from the patterns that you expect in this kind of music. I guess that's the reason for a little slip that she recovered from right away. These *Bagatelles* are a challenge for guitarists, because Walton did not have practical knowledge of the guitar, he composed the pieces based on a card that showed where the notes are on the guitar. In that case you can meet quite some stretches indeed!

Tobias Juchem made an attempt for the finals with *Sonata K208* by Domenico Scarlatti (1685 - 1757). He played this "slow" sonata with a swinging bass line and a clearly developed melody. Then he offered an opportunity for comparison by means of *Bagatelle Alla Cubana* by William Walton. He played the piece at a strict rhythm and with some nice detail, yet I missed a bit of the tropical laziness that this piece should show.

Kyrill Dudinsky, an old acquaintance at the festivals, appeared with a contemporary work by the German composer Hans Werner Henze (1926 - 2012), the *Drei Tientos*. A

Tiento is a Spanish fantasy form from the Renaissance. This work required Dudinsky to play at a high technical level. His second piece was the good old *Etude 12* by Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887 - 1959), also known as the *squeak and creak study*. He turned this stubborn material into music, even though the rapid scale fragments provided some challenge to achieve this.

Marcin Kuzniar (a student of *Marcin Dylla*, so that will cause some funny dialogues during the lessons) played *Homenaje a Tárrega* by Joaquín Turina. He made a nice and vivid performance in clear Spanish sound with interesting phrasing...

Ekaterina Vasilyeva played –if I got the announcement right- *Introduction and Rondo* by Dioniso Aguado (1784 - 1894). It's a piece with a quiet start and a virtuoso end. She actually played it like that, despite the hurry in a few passages. Still she held a bit back, it looked like that she remained distant.

Raphael Silva went back to the Baroque with two movements from the *Suite in D* by Leopold Silvius Weiss (1687 - 1750). He played the *Allemande* in a solemn atmosphere with a pleasantly clear voicing. The *Gigue* that followed was not overly virtuoso. The great advantage of this tempo was that the architecture of the piece became quite clear!

Wang Ke played his preliminaries with three sketches, *Tres Apuntes* by Leo Brouwer, which are *De El Homenaje a Falla*, *De Un fragmento Instrumental* and *Sobre un Canto Bulgaria*. Performance of contemporary music needs a structured approach in order to clarify its structure for the audience. Unfortunately, the first movement lacked this. The slow movement did get this approach and thus was understandable to the listener. And the third movement? Well, what should I say? Even worse than the first movement: A touch of Bulgarian Yoghurt, I would guess.

We have seen Kunhwa Lee a few times at competitions in this region too. He played part of *La Catedral* by Augustin Barrios (1885 - 1944). He skipped the *Preludio saudade*, performed a beautiful *Andante religioso* with a sonorous sound and added some original accents on the melody of the briskly played *Allegro solemne*.

Justyna Sobczak had a striking contemporary piece, the *Tiento* by Maurice Ohana. The piece resembles a kind of *Chaconne*. Sobczak played it with a powerful tone and a refreshing transparency. I found her phrasing and breathing of the music in the piece fascinating. If someone plays like that, I am going to like contemporary music! I got the first *Finals* impression of this afternoon.

Blazej Sudnikowicz is an old acquaintance that has visited the competitions of the festivals in this region for years. He filled the concert hall with the well-played *Theme Varie et Finale* by Manuel Ponce (1882 - 1948). His splendid sonorous and consistent performance gave me a *Finals* impression again!

Thu Le appeared with *Queen Elizabeth, Her Galliard* by John Dowland (1563 - 1626) and played it neatly and consistently. Subsequently she moved the musical scene to South America with a *Valse Venezolano* by Antonio Lauro (1917 - 1986). Many players

try to play this waltz as fast as possible. Thu Le did so as well, yet she was not in a hurry. Nice performance!

Nobuhiro Uchimoto had chosen a piece by a well-known guitarist and composer that was a guest of last year's festival: Roland Dyens. He played the movement *Largo* from the *Libra Sonatine*. Uchimoto's performance had a few beautiful moments, yet it showed some very vague moments as well. The atmosphere in the end of the piece was quite well done.

Jan Dekloe (one of the participants of the very first competition of the Twente Guitar Festival in 2006) had a keen eye for what was happening in the audience when he offered a coughing lady some cough drops. After this action, he proceeded with the music, *Valse Nr. 3* by Augustin Barrios. He played the piece in an elegant manner and passed all obstacles that the old maestro had included in the *Valse*.

Nikos Karavias started with a baroque fantasy that sounded like music by Silvius Leopold Weiss, yet it was not the commonly known *Fantasia* with Prelude and Fugue. It was a piece with a dark sound that was enhanced by the player's sonorous approach. After the relatively slow start, Karavias picked up some virtuosity with *Las Abejas*, the fast study by Augustin Barrios. The bumble-bees in this story flew so fast that their wings were hardly visible, summarizing, it was a bit of a fuzzy performance.

Augustin Pesnon offered another opportunity of comparison with two movements from the *Libra Sonatine* by Roland Dyens. He played *Largo* intimately and extrovertly wherever necessary. Its jazzy passage was rock solid. My *Finals* impression was growing. The acknowledgement of this feeling came in the *Fuoco* movement. A solid approach made the movement interesting, well performed mood changes made the piece transparent for the listener. Chapeau!

If I guessed right, Roberto Garcia came up with *Campo* from *Sonata Meridional* by Manuel Ponce. He played the piece warm-blooded, joyfully and triumphantly. Then there was the rat race of the virtuoso scales from Villa-Lobos' *Etude Nr. 2*. He covered the tricky track in a very musical way.

Tristan Angenendt had the music of one of my favourite composers on his music stand: Johann Kaspar Mertz (1806 -1856). *Fantaisie Hongroise* this time. He brought the piece with a nice tone, yet at a certain instant I unfortunately lost the emotional click with his performance.

Robbert Vermeulen continued with Johann Kaspar Mertz via his *Tarantella* from the *Bardenklaenge*. He played it quickly with a surprising phrase here and there. It was a swinging piece. In my opinion, his best piece was *Sir John Smith, his Almaine* by John Dowland. He played the piece consistently, kept the melody well despite all virtuoso divisions and rapid ornaments and added a touch of playfulness. Good performance!

Rafael Carpena took a piece by Joaquín Rodrigo to show his skills: *En los Trigales*. I got confused a bit, at times the piece was very loud and balanced, and sometimes the accompaniment was hardly audible. Slightly fuzzy!

Darek Lampowski started with a nice piece by Manuel Ponce, the romantic *Estrellita*. The small jewel became a nice sensual and romantic star on the nightly sky. Next he went back to Johann Kaspar Mertz with Italian virtuosity in 6/8 meter: again the *Tarantella*. His version was consistent in rhythm and slightly more extrovert that I had heard up till now.

Konstantin Shumilin played Mario Castelnuovo Tedesco (1895 - 1968), a composer that appears on the guitar stages more and more. I heard a well composed piece with a beautiful melody line. The player followed this line all right, yet he remained a bit introvert while this melody wants to sing out! Fortunately, Shumilin became more eloquent in his next piece, *Capriccio* by Johann Kaspar Mertz.

Markus Stich strove for the limits with *Muerte del Angel* by Astor Piazzolla (1921 - 1992). He played with the material in an expressive way, interpreted the slow passages interestingly, but lost his clarity in the tango sections in which his tempo was almost too fast to handle.

Javier Rodriguez Marti made an attempt for the podium with *Dos sugeriones* by Salvador Brotons. An interesting contemporary composition! The first movement was intriguing by its harmonic structure, the player made a nice presentation of the lyrical mood of the piece. In the second movement Marti got ample opportunity for spectacular virtuosity, he took it with speed and eloquence.

Candidate Itani performed *Elogio y Danza* by good old Leo Brouwer. His sound filled the hall, yet the performance of the piece did not cause great expectations with me.

The last candidate of this afternoon! Grigorri Koval went back to Joaquín Rodrigo: *Junto al Generalife*. A clearly Spanish sounding piece that offers both lyricism and virtuosity. Which is, as we are used to with Rodrigo, quite a challenge for the player. In Koval's performance I missed a bit of coherence, a clear expression of the idea of the complete piece, even though he played individual fragments beautifully. And it was such a pity that the sun did not start to shine brightly in the tremolo passage!

Concert Zoran Dukic

Zoran Dukic is one of the world's prominent guitarists. That became quite clear from the turnout in Kulturhaus NIHZ, the organisation had to add extra chairs and the concert hall was packed with audience. Quite rightly, because Dukic is one of the greats.

I have heard Zoran Dukic twice in the progress of the Twente Guitar Festivals and I have enjoyed a master class by him once, so I was a bit prepared. Yet he presented a surprise. I had heard him as performer and advocate of contemporary music, that is a part of his international reputation. Tonight, however, he came up with a programme that was for the most part dedicated to the classics from the guitar literature. He explained that he recently had discovered the wealth of good music from a slightly more

remote past than his usual repertoire, causing him to pick up part of this repertoire. The Paraguayan composer and guitarist Augustin Barrios would play a major role tonight.

The opening piece became *Serenata Espanola* by Joaquín Malats (1872 – 1912), a pianist, in an arrangement by Francisco Tárrega. Dukic made a powerful performance of this popular composition with a festive and triumphant sound. He did not deny the pianistic background of the piece and ‘spoke’ Spanish fluently in the music.

Already this first piece illustrated Dukic’s excellence in interpretation and tone. He made it look so easy and relaxed! He played at will with sound and vibrato and gave every voice in a piece its value with great attention. Extraordinary! This quality of playing would remain all night.

Dukic did not stick to playing the guitar alone. He appeared an excellent announcer that presented interesting pieces of information about pieces and their composers with a touch of humour. That’s the way I like performances!

After Malats it was the turn of Augustin Barrios, the guitarist/composer that was completely neglected by Segovia, a fact that says more about Segovia than about Barrios. Dukic played two little gems, the quick *Gavota al Estil Antigo* and the lyrical *Julia Florida*. I immensely enjoyed the joyful gavotte and the dreamy love song!

Isaac Albéniz (1860 -1909) contributed substantially to the repertoire of the Spanish School. The guitar is heir to this music, because if you say Spain in music, you imply guitar for sure! Dukic had three pieces in his programme: *Tango*, *Capricho Catalan* and *Asturias*.

Tango became a joyful dance party with a playful liberty in the runs and ornamentations. *Capricho Catalan*, a rather unknown work, made the impression of a beautiful quiet afternoon in the sun. What about *Asturias*? Yes, the classical guitarist’s hit from the seventies was back again. The best piano piece for guitar!

After his return to the guitar classics, Zoran Dukic picked up a contemporary work, the *Sonata Nr. 1* by Atanas Ourkouzounov. Completely in accordance with the tradition this work has three movements, *Allegro Assai*, *Adagio quasi Canzone* and a *Vivo*. The first movement brought a remarkable sound with pizzicato arpeggios. The second movement appeared to be a beautiful song with delightful vibratos, one of Dukic’s trademarks. The last section was a virtuoso version of the second movement, embellished with all kinds of effects and taps on the guitar.

The break was almost an unwanted interruption with this beautiful programme. On the other hand, food and drink are necessary to keep going!

After the break, Dukic changed his programme. Augustin Barrios got extra attention with *Prelude in C minor*, *Caazapa* and one of the *Danzas Paraguayas*. The *Prelude* was a serene yet intensive exploration of the complete fingerboard in the way of a Chopin prelude. For *Caazapa* Dukic had to retune quite a number of strings. After he completed this, we were surprised by a romantic introduction that lead to a swinging dance with

humour and a wink. Nice! The piece from *Danzas Paraguayas* appeared to be an old acquaintance in a very lyrical version. Splendid!

After the Barrios pieces Dukic went backwards and forward in time simultaneously. The contemporary composer was Gerard Drozd, his piece was *Adagio, Hommage a JS Bach*. The piece became Bach with a jazzy twist, or was it jazz with a twist of Father Bach?

According to the programme the last piece was an extended work, the *Sonata* by Vojislav Ivanovic. As dictated by classical musical theory, the *Sonata* has three movements: *Allegro con impeto*, *Adagio* and *Presto*. The first movement proved its name: an impulsive prelude with a few quiet moments. The second movement was an interesting combination of a song and a dance with a remarkable polyphony and of course Dukic's unsurpassed vibrato. The last movement reflected the thematic material of the *Adagio* in dazzling virtuosity.

The audience made an attempt to raise the roof after the recital, which is quite a thing in Kulturhaus NIHZ, because above the concert hall the house has two additional storeys under the roof! Performances like these offer a free course in applauding.

Dukic appreciated this enthusiasm with two encores, a joyful and quick *Polka Rosita* by Francisco Tárrega and a dazzling Venezuelan dance titled *El Totumo de Garenas*. Thus ended a phenomenal evening concert!

The Kulturhaus Lounge at Friday

Long, long ago I had a class mate that inhabited a cellar under the electrics shop of his father in the Jacob Obrechtstraat, in the near vicinity of the famous Concertgebouw. A great spot for parties and guitar sessions.

Kulturhaus NIHZ has an obvious parallel. The house used to be an electrics shop, its basement was used for storage of all kinds of electrics parts, just like the premises in the Jacob Obrechtstraat. Since Kulturhaus NIHZ bought the house they have worked hard in the aboveground section, first they made the dining room, then the extra music rooms and the recreation room and this year the bar with open podium.

The Kulturhaus Lounge has an important feature, it is practically sound-proof, so the open podium can be used in the middle of the night without nuisance for the neighbourhood. Just to make sure, this was tested outside on the street.

The Kulturhaus Lounge got its official opening after the concert by Zoran Dukic with the results of the preliminaries: Justinya Sobczak, Albert Marti, Tristan Angenendt, Robbert Vermeulen and Augustin Pesnon had reached the finals.

It took a while before the first guitarist ventured the Open Stage. Henk Olden was the first to play his flamenco. Soon other guitarists joined in and someone took the Cajon, causing a swinging background for a pleasant atmosphere.

Nevertheless, I went home before midnight, because I would have to play my competition tomorrow and I wanted to be well-rested. The others went on until the late hour!

Estudios de Voluntariado

When I parked my car in Nordhorn at nine 'o'clock, I met Lyz Day who made a little walk with her faithful dog Laika. Lyz Day is one of the volunteers and panel members of the first hour. The moment I met her, I got the idea to dedicate a section of my report to the people behind the show.

An event like this guitar festival has a lot of obvious activities like concerts, master classes, and workshops. Behind the show, however, there are a lot of less obvious but very necessary activities. This year I participated in a few of these things, so I got an impression of the importance of a motivated and stable team of volunteers that does all kinds of jobs in behalf of the festival, in guitarist terms the *Estudios de Voluntariado*.

The preparations of a festival usually start even before the previous edition with gaining and maintaining contacts in the guitar world and the invitation of players and master class teacher that form part of the jury too. After acceptance of an invitation there is the commercial side with contracts and conditions. The organisation of Kulturhaus NIHZ is occupied with this all year.

The "physical" side starts with the organisation of all that must be done during the festival. The festival offers an all-in arrangement with food and lodging. So the dormitory has to be prepared and the logistics for the kitchen, coffee- and lunch counter and the bar must be planned and implemented. It's a good thing that there are some large supermarkets in the neighbourhood that are open at flexible hours for last minute provisioning.

Then the supplies must be used for breakfast, lunch and dinner for the guests (at one occasion we had almost 50) and snacks for the concerts (remember, *Kaffee mit Kuchen*). Lyz broke her record, baking three pies in the early morning to be eaten by the visitors of the concerts, and managing all the dish washing. Angie and Sanna were cooking on a tight schedule with large pans of soup, rice, pasta and vegetarian food. Sarah and Dustin were busy early with the sandwiches that would be sold for lunch. Henk, Martin, Tommie and me carried pans with food, saucers, glasses and cutlery between kitchen and dining room vice versa and assisted with dish washing. Finally, Fred took care that the trade in coffee, tea and sandwiches reached a high level. In addition, there was the Kulturhaus Bar that needed to be manned, Tommy and Vasco took care of that.

As an extra service, the artists were collected from the railway station, brought to their hotels and returned to the station afterwards.

At one of these occasions it showed that the Dutch Railways are quite out of order. Sanna would bring two artists to the Hengelo railway station in the east of Holland where they would pick the train to Schiphol Airport near Amsterdam, a two and a half

hour's travel via the railway tracks. In Hengelo it appeared that the railway station was closed despite the fact that a train would pass there. The station of Apeldoorn, 65 km from Hengelo would be the next stop, but no trains left from there to Amsterdam because of unexpected work on the railway tracks near Amsterdam. Thus, they landed at Schiphol Airport in the middle of the night, 200 km from Nordhorn! An exhausting drive! Why would we use public transport any way!

I guess that by now you notice that there is a lot happening behind the show that is worth a story too! It's great that Kulturhaus NIHZ has a team of these hard workers at its disposal!

Day Two



Klaus Rentzel

Luthier Friederieke Linscheid

Friederieke Linscheid is a luthier from Berlin, Germany. In her youth she developed a great interest in building musical instruments because she had guitar lessons in the workshop of a violin maker. After graduating from her training in building plucked instruments she started to develop and build an own line of guitars. She provides a major contribution to the festival competition prize: a beautiful hand-built guitar!

She builds well sounding and good-looking guitars with both cedar and spruce top, well-constructed, with a slick design and surprisingly light-weight. The rosettes she makes have a very personal touch, simple yet wayward in the small details.

It is nice to look at guitars, but the most important is to play them. I promptly did with a few pieces and I got a very positive impression. The guitars have a friendly response and a quick reaction to your play. The stubborn reaction that is normal with very new guitars was not very obvious here. The tuners were high quality and operated lightly and accurately. Of course, the action is a matter of taste, but that can be adjusted accordingly.

Usually luthiers require a few years of experience before they build instruments that make them famous in the guitar world. Friederike Lindscheid is in business for only four years as professional luthier yet she delivers a very mature build of guitars. Very nice!

Doubtlessly the winner of the professional competition will be very pleased with an instrument like the ones that she has built!

Workshop Stage Presentation Klaus Rentzel

To my great pleasure this year despite the crowded programme, the festival included a few workshops, one for stage presentation and the well-known Theatre Sport for Guitarists.

Stage presentation is a piece of cake for Klaus Rentzel who is not only a good guitarist, but also an enthusiastic clown and comedian. His shows are a true marathon for the laughing muscles.

At this occasion, we had a good laugh too, yet in a more serious setting, because stage presentation and contact with the audience is quite important for a good concert. I had some experience from the workshops by Bobby Rootveld, so it was a familiar subject for me.

Klaus Rentzel had his own approach. It had occurred to him that many guitarists on stage only live in their heads and in their hands, so the first task was getting back into your complete body and making sure to settle down. For that purpose he had a number of movement and breathing exercises that I would apply successfully with the preparations for my competition. After the exercises, he demonstrated and practiced a few things concerning contact with the audience.

A few practice rounds by the participants concluded the workshop.

Amateur Competition

I had subscribed to the amateur competition, so I could not take my place on the press tribune. Fortunately, Bobby Rootveld offered to replace me and write the story. You will find it below.

For the second year in a row I write the report of the amateur competition of the Guitar Festival Nordhorn, because the original journalist is on the hunt for the prize this year again. This time there is quite a difference for me, last year I only did the time registration, this year, however, I was member of the jury too. That offered me an opportunity to look at things in the competition in another perspective.

We had four participants: Nandini Sudhir, Agnes Mika, Mark de Gooijer and Jeannette Couvee. I did not know Jeannette Couvee, but I was acquainted with the others. Mark de Gooijer has been around for almost ten years. Agnes Mika (from Hungary, but she lives in Holland) visited all Nordhorn festivals up till now. I met Nandini Sudhir last November.

In November 2012, my wife and I were members of the jury on the Thailand International Guitar Festival in Bangkok. At that occasion we judged various competitions, in one of them Nandini Sudhir won the second prize. Nandini originates from Bangalore, India, and was one of the prize winners in the national Indian guitar competition. Her parents were very proud of her, so she got the opportunity to compete in Thailand too. She won a prize in Bangkok and this enabled her to travel to the competition of the Guitar Festival Nordhorn and to visit Europe. Nandini and her mother arrived one week before the competition, so we passed time with guitar lessons and some sightseeing in Holland with of course a visit to Amsterdam.

The amateur competition started at twelve sharp. The jury was well engaged with the recorder player (and my lovely wife) Sanna van Elst, Thomas Peepkamp of the Guitar Salon Enkhuizen, the multi-instrumentalist and music educator Lyz Day from Switzerland, the luthier Frederieke Lindscheid, the guitarists Annette Kruisbrink and Arlette Ruelens and of course I, the undersigned Bobby Rootveld, your guest-DOS Amigos reporter.

The first participant was Nandini Sudhir. She came for this competition all the way from Bangalore in India, which is a stressful endeavour indeed, yet she coped with it well. Her mother Pallavi offered some support as audience in the concert hall. Nandini was the youngest participant, yet she hit the stage with a quite mature presentation. She played the Romanza from the Grand Sonata in A by Niccolò Paganini.

At the moment, I am quite involved with the music by Paganini because of my antique Stoss guitar, so I was looking forward to his piece. This piece had been the subject of my guitar lessons for Nandini and during the competition recital I noticed that she had implemented many of my hints and remarks. Some of them, obviously, were not possible right away, because they involve time and a lot of practice.

Nandini played through the piece without failures, well done! The only remark I had was that the pressure of the competition affected her musical expressiveness a bit. Well, this stress can be overcome in the end by practice over time, so I am sure that she will add lots of extra musicality in her pieces later. Nandini is a gifted guitarist that may provide a major impulse for guitar playing in India in the future. A very positive point in her performance was that she played by heart, she was the only participant that did so.

The second participant was Agnes Mika, last year's winner of the amateur competition. This time she played a programme with various composers and styles. Her participation was courageous, because a nasty influenza had prevented her from a perfect preparation, yet she wanted to show her musicality on stage.

Agnes has a powerful and musical style that features a strong performance of the bass lines with a sonorous sound. Unfortunately, her preparation difficulties resulted in a few slips, the performance was less than she intended. Yet it was pleasant to listen to her music. In this case, however, I was member of the jury too, so I had to judge her playing as well.

The third participant was Mark de Gooijer, your DOS Amigos journalist. I know Mark for over ten years now, and I have seen a great development with him as a guitarist. He used to be a player with an introvert presentation, a restrained tone and some inconvenience by nerves, but now he has become a player that feels at home before an audience more and more and provides a pleasant presentation with a good sound.

Particularly the last five years showed this gradually improving development. Mark changed the competition stage into a concert podium in a few seconds. He announced the pieces, gave some information about composers and the music and played a mini-concert.

He started with a piece by Fernando Sor that suited Mark perfectly in my opinion, all phrasing and musicality were on the right spot. Then he continued with Legnani. Personally, I was a bit worried about this Capriccio, was it the right choice for a competition?

[The Legnani Capriccio appeared to be a challenge, indeed. I had been busy with it for a while, so I thought it would be a nice try for the competition. Gradually, however, I started wondering during preparation whether I was competition-proof with this piece or not. It was a near-miss! (Editorial)].

Mark started playing the Capriccio and for a while it seemed that my thoughts became real, because I sensed some stress with him and a few notes became hesitant. Fortunately, he recovered quickly.

After Legnani he played Opal from Halbedelsteine, Vier Klangstudien Fuer Gitarre by Marlon Strauss, the sheet music had been a present from me and my wife last December. We came across this music in a guitar shop and thought this music would suit him. It actually did, he played it beautifully. The piece appeared a pleasant contribution to the competition and was appreciated by the jury.

The last participant was Jeannette Couvée, the only player that I had not met before. In the morning, we shook hands and she appeared a very nice woman. She had a team of supporters with her, amongst them her guitar teacher Matthijs van der Kolk. Jeanette played a six movement French Suite that was completely unknown to me. Well, that's a good thing because I like to hear new music!

Jeanette played all movements neatly and made an original contribution to the competition. There were some slips in progress, but the most important thing is that the player continues whatever happens, and she did so in an exemplary way.

After the competition, I had to grade the performance of the players, just like my colleague jury members. It was quite a puzzle for me! The choice of the first and second place was most difficult for me. Nandini had made no errors, played by heart and implemented my directions well. Additionally, she made a neat presentation. It was true: Mark did hesitate a bit with Legnani, yet he had transformed his competition contribution in a nice mini-concert that he performed in an enjoyable musical way. We would have to consult about this with the other jury members. There was a bit of homework to be done before we could announce the results in the evening!

Bobby, thank you for this extensive contribution!

Concert Duo Resonances

A few years ago, I attended a spectacular performance by Duo Melis. Reviews mentioned that the Duo Resonances, consisting of Frederique Luzy and Pierre Bibault, played at the same level at least, so I was really curious.

When they hit the stage, I saw an original solution for the fiddling with the anti-slip cloths, they had just stuck them to the body of the guitar. Looked practical!

They started with a trio of *Sonates* by Domenico Scarlatti, subtitled *Pastorale*, *Cantabile* and *Tempo di Ballo*. As a guitar duo, you have a lot of options with Scarlatti's music and to make things even more interesting they changed parts in repeats. The name of the first *Sonata* was correct, it appeared a jumpy shepherd's dance. I had never heard the second on guitar before, apparently a new arrangement. Ingeniously arranged and played likewise. The last *Sonata* featured a number of tricky virtuoso ornaments, but the duo integrated these caprioles skilfully.

The second piece was *Valses Poeticos*, a nice arrangement of the piano work by Enrique Granados (1867 - 1916). It is a sequence of Waltzes in various moods that were inspired by music from the Salons in Paris at the turn of the nineteenth century. Energetically joyful and broodingly romantic moods alternated, unfortunately accompanied for some time by someone from the audience who was rattling with something.

The *Tango Suite* by Astor Piazzolla is an old acquaintance, I have heard the Assad Brothers playing the piece many years ago. The piece had beautiful moments of hot brooding passion, yet it also incorporated the sounds of hardly hidden conflict. In my ears, it looked like that the players identified themselves with both the romance and the conflict. A remarkable performance with somehow a slight touch of tragedy!

The best-known guitar work of Alberto Ginastera (1916 - 1983) is the *Sonate Op. 47*. If I am informed correctly, he did not compose any other guitar work. So, it was a surprise for me that Duo resonances appeared with a guitar duo by Ginastera.

It was an own arrangement of the piano piece *Danzas Criollas*, a five-movement suite based on the life of the gauchos on the Argentine Pampas. I immediately liked this piece that was quite different from the *Sonata*, in the *Danzas* the folk music from the Andes Mountains and the 6/8 – 3/4 patterns were most important. A few movements were very atmospheric with soft flageolets and chords in watercolours. Only the last piece had some of the trademarks of the contemporary Ginastera. I found these *Danzas Criollas* their most convincing piece of this afternoon.

The encore consisted of the sixth song from *Canciones Y Danzas* by Federico Mompou (1893 - 1987), the pretty piano music based on Catalan folk songs and arranged for guitars. With this piece, I felt my musical pleasure hackles for the very first time this afternoon.

Was the Duo Resonances as good as Duo Melis? Not today, I guess. Apparently complete resonance cannot be reached every day and under all circumstances. But I hope to hear more of them in the future!

Master class with Stefan Grasse

Again, this year I had my master class *after* the competition. I like it that way, even though others may argue that it is impossible to get useful hints for the competition in this manner. Well, I always wonder if I were able to implement these hints at a very short notice, so it is OK with me!

Stefan Grasse is an amiable and pleasant person to work with. He clearly is a man of the musical threads in the pieces and the fine details of the atmosphere. His instructions involve making music rather than focusing on technique.

I played *Valse* by Sor and *Capriccio 2* by Legnani. ;-) That went much better now the competition stress was gone! He came up with a few handy hints to increase musicality. He casually remarked that he had heard that I played a very good competition, but the meaning of this statement did not get through with me. Well, that would become clear later!

He was pleased with the pieces I played, which gave me a remarkable sense of acceptance. It surprised me. Yet it did not keep me from some advertising for the DOS Amigos Homepage, because for me it is *the more visitors, the more joy!*

Concert Klaus Rentzel

This concert evening started with a great surprise for me. Bobby announced the results of the amateur competition and the longer I had to wait for my name to be mentioned, the clearer things got: I had won the competition!

There I was, a bit puzzled and confused but just very glad! I was very happy with the congratulations and a few nice prizes amongst others a signed composition by Annette Kruisbrink, the first I ever got. She selects the compositions based on her impression of the taste of the player, so it is a personal gift indeed!

I was happy too that two other contestants were very pleased with the DOS Amigos Homepage Collection 2012 that I had brought in as a prize!

It was party time and Klaus Rentzel started it when he entered the hall, humming a pleasant tune. Klaus Rentzel is a comedian on the guitar, I had met him for the first time at the Twente Guitar Festival in Enschede, so my laughing muscles were at standby!

Klaus Rentzel succeeded in charming the audience and massaging their laughing muscles during the complete programme. An important instrument for this was his incredible facial expression. His extremely flexible facial musculature could do what you normally only see with morphing software on a computer. His bald head appeared to be a perfect spot for all kinds of funny stick-on attributes like a plunger, a plastic woodpecker and rubber darts.

The bald head of Theo Willemze, the author of *Algemene Muziekleer*, a standard work about music theory in Holland, appeared a ready target too for a few suction pads! Roaring with laughter he took it very well.

Rentzel hit the stage (literally and figuratively) as a falling pop star in slow motion. Then love got a chance in a romantic flamenco song with stick-on clapping hands on a bald head. The song was dedicated to a lady from the audience that was already married, so Rentzel had to watch out for a jealous spouse. The romance resulted in an addition to the family in the form of a little guitar that was born from a Caesarean in the body of the mother guitar. Within no time the little guitar became a noisy adolescent that indulged in rock and roll and Jimi Hendrix!

After bringing up the little guitar, Rentzel recounted in a touching way how he had tried to win the heart of a girl with *Recuerdos de la Alhambra* while he was on holiday as a teenager. The flight to this holiday destination appeared not without problems due to a hijack operation in the plane. In the role of Guitar Hero, however, Rentzel took a brave stand, threw the hijacker out of the window and made some impression on the stewardesses.

A few rock and roll tricks ended the programme. Again, this time I had cramps in my laughing muscles. Lovely programme!

Concert Real Duo

After the break that provided the post-enjoyment of Klaus Rentzel's show, it was the time for the Italian Guitar-Mandolin Ensemble Real Duo. A remarkable team! Luciano Damiani, a large man with likewise hands appeared to play the smallest instrument in the duo, the mandolin! On the other hand, Michele Libraro, the slenderest of the two, played the largest instrument, the guitar.

Seeing and hearing a mandolin I automatically think of Italy and movies like *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*. I was right indeed, most of the programme would be music of Italian origin.

It started in a classical Italian way with a *Serenata* by Niccolò Paganini that featured the mandolin in the role of the original violin. It was a challenging metamorphosis! Several Italian pieces followed, everything between salon music, Venetian gondola songs, *O Sole Mio* and a real *Tarantella*. All music was basking in the Tuscan sun! That was quite obvious because the mandolin player got really warm with sweat on his forehead!

A nice set of three movie themes followed the Italian songs, *Cavatina* from the *Deer Hunter*, *The Entertainer* from the movie with the same name and the spectacular theme from *Forbidden Colors*. With these arrangements both players got room for virtuosity.

The programme ended with a few compositions of South American origin that were explicitly composed for the Real Duo. Here we heard pieces by Maximo Diego Pujol and Jorge Cardoso. The music and the sound of the Real Duo were quite compatible!

An enthusiast audience succeeded in getting the Real Duo to two joyful encores, a perfect completion of a nice and sunny programme!

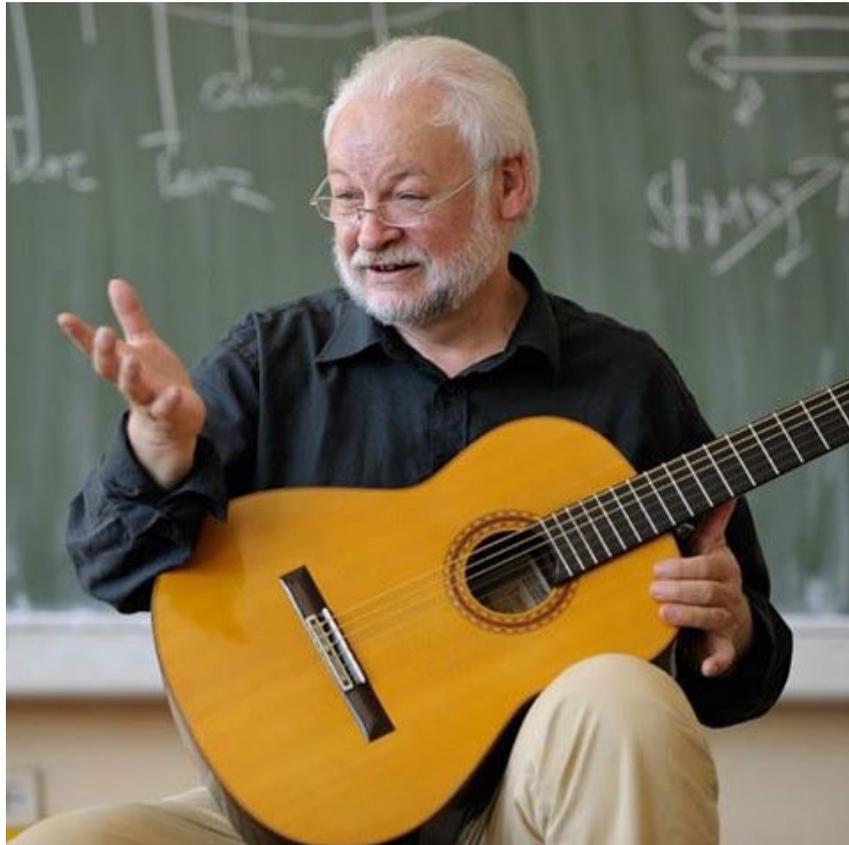
The Kulturhaus Lounge at Saturday

The humour of Klaus Rentzel and the joyful Italian music by the Real Duo had boosted morale significantly and this became quite clear in the Kulturhaus bar. After a little while the guitars and Cajon spoke and everyone clapped along. First, we saw Nikos Karavias from Greece and Thu Le from Vietnam on the open stage, with support on the Cajon by Rocio Jurado from Spain. Flamenco and jazz flashed by. At this point I have a special word of appreciation for Thu Le, because she clearly knew her scales and improvised jazzy and brightly over all kinds of chord progressions.

Soon Luciano Damiani joined the band. He changed the mandolin for a guitar and played a host of pop songs that everybody knew and could clap and sing along! Three guitars, voice and percussion, the band was complete!

Thus, we experienced an elated mood of music, ping-pong and small square football. I left at twelve (which is late for me), the others went on until four in the early morning.

Day Three



Reinbert Evers

Theatre Sports for Guitarists

I was in early at the Sunday morning and I heard that it had been an even more early day for Sanna while she was putting the guys of the Real Duo on the train in Hengelo, a Dutch town about 20 kilometres from Nordhorn. As a consequence of the failing policy of the Dutch Railways she ended up on Schiphol Airport, about 200 kilometres from Nordhorn. So, chapeau that she came to lead the Theatre Sports for Guitarists in good spirits, together with Bobby. I would have been quite sleepy indeed!

Theatre Sports for Guitarists is an exercise in stage awareness. It is a nice concept to make you aware of and exercise your capabilities for improvisation and communication with audiences, and to help you to become more relaxed in situations like this, not only on stage, but also on the “World stage” outside the concert hall.

The exercises provided a gradual build-up from group awareness to individual projection of spontaneous ideas in a role-playing game of two people that have dialogues and two more people that express the hidden thoughts of the communication partners. The final exercise involved spontaneous ideas in music in an opera setting.

Unfortunately, one hour is far too short to enable everyone to discover the fun of a spontaneous idea, particularly when interacting with others. But within this hour Bobby and Sanna managed this game with witticism and encouragement (would Nandini start to eat more after the admonitions by Father Bobby?), so everybody got a chance in his or her own way. Good job!

;-) Maybe after all, I should take a look at those hot posters of Christina Aguilera at the first floor of the hockshop while my wife from the role play can indulge in the nice dresses downstairs... My thought-speaker knew what's on a man's mind!

Master class Annette Kruisbrink

Right after the Theatre Sport it was time for the sport of the strings, my master class with Annette Kruisbrink. Annette is one of Holland's leading composers of contemporary guitar music and has quite a number of compositions published. She is a versatile composer, not only for solo guitar but also for ensembles with guitar, her compositions ranging from modern-traditional to avant-garde.

One of my prizes for the amateur completion was her composition *Trois Pieces de Style Ancien* for solo guitar, in which she combines in three movements the old Renaissance musical conventions with moderate contemporary styles. It is an interesting composition that requires a multi-layered approach, knowing the notes only is not sufficient to understand the structure and atmosphere of the piece in order to perform it well. Judging by the discussions I had with my guitar teacher about the musical lines, there is a lot more to this music than appears from the score at first sight. An enjoyable experience and I will attempt a recording at least... At the moment of my master class however, I had not read through the score yet, so I could not ask for advice from the composer!

This morning I did not like to play the competition pieces again, after three months I was a bit through with them. Fortunately, I always carry extra notes with me. To start with *Ommagio a Caturla* by Leo Brouwer and then *Nocturne Nr. 1* by Johann Kaspar Mertz.

With a quick and analytical mind (it became quite clear that she is a skilled composer) Annette Kruisbrink extracted points of improvement from my play and provided a clear explanation of the reasons for change and the role of particular actions within the pieces.

She did so with the same relaxed authority like she emanated when leading a full ensemble of guitarist-individualists during the Ensemble Weekend in the town of Zwolle a few years back and turning it into a unity (I really regarded this with admiration, because the ensemble looked like a bunch of rebels!) At the same time, she took things easy so I was not flooded with information that I could not digest the very minute. A pleasant class!

I stayed a while to look at the activity of the next student, the sixteen-year-old Nandini Sudhir from India. She brought in the piece that had stirred up her love for the guitar,

Prelude Nr. 1 by Heitor Villa-Lobos. It's funny, but I know more occasions where *Prelude Nr. 1* attracted people to the guitar, even up to professional level.

Prelude Nr. 1 is a mature composition that may take you a life time to grasp fully. The way Nandini played the piece it sounded like a promise for the future and I am quite curious how she will interpret the *Prelude* once she has grown up and has brought her play to a high level with the same dedication as she has shown this very moment.

;-) I already told her that I insist on buying her first CD (India is a bit far away to visit her concerts).

During this lesson Annette worked on Nandini's thumb apoyando that enables to lift the melody of the *Prelude* high above the accompaniment and let it sing. It was surprising to see how quickly Nandini picked up the instructions and implemented them right away. Her eagerness and flexibility of mind made the promise even more clear, because in order to be a good musician, you will have to invest dedication, passion and intelligence in the exercises and the study behind the music. And she showed that she was prepared to do so.

Master class Zoran Dukic

It was quite clear that the master classes by Zoran Dukic were the crowd pullers, all chairs were occupied so I spent some time hanging out against the wall.

Zoran Dukic has the notable feat that he seamlessly adapts to the level of his students, he senses it and acts accordingly. If you have a high level, he attempts to lift it higher. In that case you may expect stern yet just comments, because he demands from his students that they are faithful to the music and must be able to motivate the whereabouts of their performance. On the other hand, if the level is moderate, like mine, he attempts to consolidate and strengthen the things you do well and suggests improvements in a less frightening way. So, everyone gets what he/she needs.

I was present with a student that played an arrangement of Albéniz' music. Dukic immediately called in the piano original and complained a bit about the failures in the arrangement, by Segovia in this case. Yes, being faithful to the original is challenging at times!

He can make stern statements, yet he always has a bit of humour that sands off the sharp edges. ;-) *A spoonful of Sugar makes the Medicine go down!* Mary Poppins used to sing. In brief, Dukic is both a world class player and a fine teacher. His room was rightly filled to capacity with audience.

Finals of the Competition for Professionals and Students

The preliminaries had yielded five finalists. Each one of them would play 20 minutes of repertoire to convince the jury that he or she was the best player. The sequence of entry of the players had been determined by drawing lots last Friday. Now it is the

question if it is coincidence or fate that the first player to appear in the finals almost never wins the competition!

The first player was Robbert Vermeulen. He used an attribute that I had not seen for a while, a Dynarette guitar support cushion. Because he announced himself loud and clear, I got a fine impression of what he would play for us.

He made a challenging start with *Fuga* from the *Sonata for unaccompanied violin BWV1001* by Johann Sebastian Bach. After a slightly hesitant beginning he brought out the complex fabric of voices in a convincing manner. Nicely transparently played.

His second piece was *Fantasia Op. 10* by Luigi Legnani. A piece of opera dramatics at its best, that emerged in joyful virtuosity. Vermeulen played with a nice finish and added an extra touch to the performance by means of interesting dynamics. Out of enthusiasm, one of the jury members toppled his or her glass of water. Splash!

Augustin Pesnon appeared after the applause for Robbert Vermeulen. His father in the audience had already set up his video equipment for registration. It's a funny story, father and son make up two generations of guitarists. Father Pesnon is a renowned finger-style guitarist in France, his son walks the classical path (quite rebelliously indeed). That's the humour of father-son dynamics, so the world is enhanced by two musicians as a result.

Pesnon started with *Elegie* by Johann Kaspar Mertz. He played it with a fine technique and alert reactions on the sound of the piece. Yet it did not bring me the emotional connection that I normally have with the atmosphere of the Mertz pieces.

Second was his daring exploit, two movements from a *Sonate* by – I guessed - Mario Castelnuovo Tedesco, but I was not sure because I had never heard the piece before. The first movement was a rippling melody with challenging technical antics, by the look of it. Of all things, during this fragile first movement, a handy went off. Mobile phones, the nuisance of modern concert recitals! Folks, switch OFF those bloody things! The second movement appeared a rat race in speed and diabolical technical requirements. During playing Pesnon again reacted promptly and elegantly to a sound from his instrument that he did not agree with.

Albert Marti started his finals with a *Sonata* in three movements (that theory always applies!) by -I guess- Joaquín Turina or Federico Moreno Torroba. ;-) It's hard for me to discriminate.

The *Sonata* took off at a moderate tempo with a calculating virtuosity. The second movement was traditionally slow. Marti did perform the fast passages in this section well balanced. The third movement was a fast and virtuoso conclusion and here at times hurry stroke, affecting the flow of the piece.

Albert Marti remained in Spanish mood with *Jota Aragonesa* by Francisco Tárrega. A smoothly played introduction with playful fragments loosened up our ears before the main theme. Starting this theme, he slipped for a moment and then took off full speed.

He played faster than David Russell! Nevertheless, he stayed on course in all variations including the section in harmonics. I enjoyed it!

Tristan Angenendt was the fourth finalist. He had a whopping *three* pieces. *Invocación y Danza* by Joaquín Rodrigo, *Homenaje a Debussy* by Manuel de Falla and a *Sonata* by Fernando Sor. How to fit this in twenty minutes!

The Rodrigo piece became an explosive performance. It's true, it was straight and transparent but also incredibly *loud*! It had some beauty, but an offensive quality seemed to be predominant. It was quite obvious that Angenendt won some time by skipping the repeats in this piece. The piece by De Falla got a powerful approach in the bass lines that appealed to me. With his last piece, the Sor *Sonata*, Angenendt filled the hall with sound. Unfortunately, he played this music so loudly and extrovertly that in my ears it became more offensive than enjoyable. The performance was faultless but some slips in the rapid scales. A pity!

After Tristan Angenendt's powerful approach, Justyna Sobczak hit the stage as the last finalist of this afternoon. She would play music by Alexandre Tansman (1897 - 1986) and Hans Haug (1900 -1967).

The first chords of the *Prelude* from Tansman's *Hommage a Chopin* hit me like a sledgehammer blow that left tears in my eyes. How can a composer integrate centuries of tragic Polish history in a few chords and how can a guitarist transmit this mood so powerfully into the concert hall? It must have been the melancholy of the sound of Chopin!

Tansman's *Prelude* was quite short, the piece by Hans Haug - *Preludio, Tiento et Toccata* - was much longer! In this piece Sobczak sketched a colourful palette of atmospheres and moods with an excellent tone and dynamic approach. The first movement formed musically and dynamically a circle movement, almost a *Perpetuum Mobile*. In the Satie-like ballad in the middle section her tone and expression were perfect, the musical breathing gave the piece a natural balance. The third movement continued this atmosphere, be it at a much higher tempo with all kinds of technical *tour de force*.

I did not want to put the other candidates at a disadvantage, but after Justyna Sobczak's final chord the final result was quite clear to me. The applause afterwards gave the impression that I was not alone with this opinion.

The music had spoken and now it was time to think about logistics, because the finals had made the audience hungry, so there was work to do between kitchen and dining room!

The Sensitive String

In the preliminaries and the finals, I learned some things about the importance of the selection of the right strings.

Strings? Don't ask me! Subject of fierce discussions amongst guitarists. About string tension, about various brands of bass and treble strings, there are players that have six different string types on their guitar. In that case you need to have a music shop that sells single strings (that's rare) or you are running around with six packages with five unusable strings each (maybe you can sell them to other fools). And I did not even mention the choice between carbon and "conventional nylon" strings.

At the moment, I use complete Savarez Cantiga sets, just like I used to play Hannabach Medium Tension and D'Addario Pro Arte in the past. I do change brands at times, but I do not mix different sets. Additionally, I do not like the feel of carbon strings on my fingers, so I stay away from them, even if they play louder.

I have noticed at times that I started to use higher tensions (sometimes too high!) because I got the feeling that my sound had no projection at all and that everybody blew me off the stage. A few recordings proved that it was not as bad as I feared, so I could revert to medium tension again. ;-) Much better during playing stress!

On a festival like this you hear a great diversity in "sound" of the guitars, in many cases caused by the choice of the strings in both positive and negative ways. Mostly the balance of the sound of the guitars was OK, bass and treble strings had more or less equal contribution.

;-) Or they did not contribute at all because the strings were so old that they sounded like rubber bands. At this festival, there were some examples too!

In a few rare cases I heard situations of unbalance, the treble strings were e.g. much louder than the bass strings. In that case any music, even if played with great skill, will become unbalanced too. In that situation, the unbalance disturbed the unity of sound. When I listened to it, at first it was not that obvious, but some music shows no mercy where balance of sound is involved. It is such a pity if the player has a fine performance while the sound of his efforts fail to hit the mark!

At that moment, it occurred to me that I was an ordinary listener that obviously likes a balanced sound much more than a disturbed balance, *whatever played!* For me that was an indication that the choice of strings is important. So choose wisely and always check how and in what way your sound reaches the audience!

Concert Stefan Grasse

Stefan Grasse is a German guitarist and composer that combines the classical style with folk music and explores both European and Latin American styles. He plays as a soloist and in ensembles.

Tonight, he played solo and thus he had the task to play the complete band. He did so with a few beautiful own compositions, mostly in Latin style with a wealth of rhythmic variation. He provided an explanation with most of the pieces, which gave some insight in their backgrounds.

As a warming-up he started with a *Bossa* and a *Samba* in complex rhythm. Then he played the *Suite Cubana* that offered a nice combination of melody and rhythm. One of the movements from this suite, *El Sueno del Chico Keniata*, had an interesting background story about a boy from Nairobi, Kenya, that combed rubbish dumps for useful things and found a folder of a foreign university. His dream became a study at the university, for that purpose he learned a foreign language and left his country.

Grasse also composed pieces for his children, like *Prelude for Raphael* and *Bedtime Story for Adrian*. The bedtime story became a small samba with tender sleepiness. After this set he surprised us with a jazzy version of *Gymnopedie 1* by Eric Satie. It is very well possible, I remember that I have played with the piece the same way, turning it into a *Jazz waltz*.

Thus, we heard a number of relaxing pieces of music, with lots of latin and jazzy elements. All pieces with a strong musical gift, yet played with considerable technical capability "under the hood".

Concert Reinbert Evers

In Germany, Reinbert Evers is known as the specialist in contemporary guitar music. Therefore, it was surprising that he hit the stage in an almost classical outfit.

I have not really a preference for contemporary classical music, so this programme was a nice opportunity to get a taste of musical forms that I hardly listen to in daily life. No Sor and Mertz this time, but Yusupov and Henze.

With contemporary music, it is often difficult to think in existing structures, so I gave it a try in a kind of comic strip form. An anthology...

Kitab (dairy in Arabic) by José Sanchez Verdu started as a monotonous flow that was interrupted by tapping. An agitated atmosphere emerged that calmed down from time to time and rushed itself again. A nervous bass line acted as a merciless time indicator.

Epicedia by Cergio Prudencio was a kind of epitaph for a certain Gorge Nazarovff. The piece appeared to be a meditation on overlapping tones and created a mystical atmosphere with at times a whirl of atonal segments.

Early Spring by the Japanese Jo Kondo could best be compared to crystal growth in which the chaos of a supersaturated solution suddenly changes into a structured growing crystal pattern.

The *Winter Music* by Hans Werner Henze is a triptych of insanity built around well-known dramas by William Shakespeare. The movement *Sir Andrew Aguecheek* comes from *Richard III*, a drama around the insanity of power. *Bottom's Dream* originates from the mad mind of a weaver in *A Summer Night's Dream*. Finally, there is the Lady Macbeth that becomes mad after finding out about the crimes of her husband in *MacBeth*. It was a difficult composition with insane sections.

And thus, ended the third Guitar Festival Nordhorn...

An end? No, not yet, because we had not heard the results of the finals of the competition for professionals and students. The appropriate winner was Justyna Sobczak, the other places in order were Augustin Pesnon, Albert Marti, Robbert Vermeulen and Tristan Angenendt. Congrats with the results!

So the main prize, the top model guitar built by Frederieke Lindscheid, went to Justyna Sobczak. She was very pleased indeed!

The Kulturhaus Lounge at Sunday

The festival was over, the prizes had been issued, so it was time for a chat and more music in the Kulturhaus Bar. Fred and Angie would take off to Denmark the next day, so they left early. Sarah and Dustin joined them. I took some time to say goodbye to them.

Then I had to say goodbye myself, because I had to get up early the next day. The serviceman would come for the washing machine and we planned to have a little trip during daytime.

In those three days, I had got acquainted a bit with most people, so I said goodbye to everyone individually before leaving. It was a pity that I could not find Lyz at that time. So, at this occasion I say: "See you soon and hope to meet you next year!"

Remark noted!