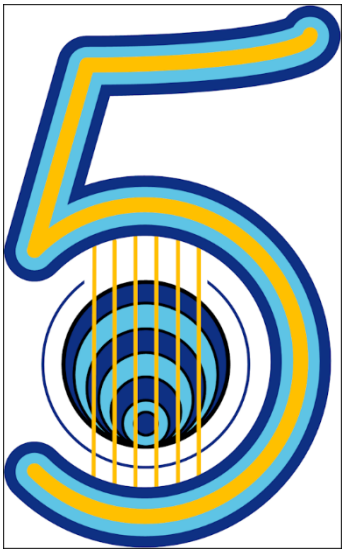
# Gitaarfestival Nordhorn 2015

## Quinquennium



Thursday night, 23 April 2015. My agenda shows a highlight in this last week of the month. For that purpose, I am on my way to Germany. I just bought a new car that has a lot of luxury despite its small size. Climate control and an integrated audio system and navigator that even accepts USB sticks with lots of guitar music. Consequently, the sounds of Raphaella Smits form a pleasant and quite appropriate background while I am headed for my destination.

I realize myself that it is a fifth anniversary, a Quinquennium. For the fifth time, I am heading for a guitar event that has built a firm reputation in Germany and abroad after such a short time. I enjoy the beautiful weather and the spring that shows itself in all trees of the woods around. It is sunny, clear and calm, at the horizon I see the plume of the smoke of the nuclear power station of Lingen. My destination, however, is Nordhorn, just beyond the German border and the first larger town on the road this target of many protest demonstrations by the *Grünen*, the German environmentalist faction.

For Bobby Rootveld, one of the important organisers of this festival, it is a double anniversary. Ten years ago, he started the Twente Guitar Festival as a co-organiser. This year this festival has its tenth edition.

On the Scandinavia Route around the town of Denekamp I stay behind a Polish truck out of necessity, the road is too shallow for evasive manoeuvres. I remember that the truck drivers have a parking place where they met, just over the border opposite the Tensundern supermarket. They socialize and stay there for the night, I guess there is no other reason for an international truck driver to stray away from the highway. For a change, the guy has a moderate tempo. Safety first on this narrow road! I take a look at the route signs near the road. They show Noord Deurningen and Nordhorn.

The Polish truck driver slows down and enters the parking lot just after the German border. I still have to drive for a while. The Guitar Festival Nordhorn –abbreviated GFN in the professional world– takes place in the Kulturhaus NIHZ in the eastern part of town. Over the years it has grown a meeting place for old and new friends.

Nordhorn itself did not change much, which is quite logical if you are there on a regular basis. Yet to my surprise I notice that the *Kaufhalle* is being demolished. Long years ago, we went there for cheap petrol and relatively cheap Duplo building blocks for the kids. Well, the kids have left home for years in the meantime, the oldest is thirty now!

Something did change! As a consequence of the construction of a little section of cycle track, the junction after the railway crossing near the *Bahnhof* has become more dangerous for motorists. I am alert. There is the street towards the parking lot behind the school.

I have some prizes with me for the amateur competitions, nice wire-bound versions of a part of the DOS Amigos Homepage collection. I am no partner of the festival for nothing!

Kulturhaus NIHZ in sight! The red van of the Rootveld family is already there. The fifth festival is about to start!

## The Festival

A quinquennial edition of this festival report is a nice opportunity to summarize the history of Kulturhaus NIHZ, the origin of the festival. That saves the trouble of browsing the reports of the previous years.

In 2011 Bobby en Sanna Rootveld-van Elst bought a commercial property with living facilities in the Mittelstrasse in Nordhorn. There they wanted to realize their dream of a centre for art and culture with an emphasis on music. For many years they had formed the guitar/recorder duo Niet in Het Zwart (Not Dressed In Black), abbreviated to NIHZ. It was quite obvious that their endeavour would carry the same name. In that way Kulturhaus NIHZ was born.

The old shop in the premises appeared to have great acoustics for chamber music. So it was converted into a concert hall with stage, stage lighting and a few support instruments like a piano and an organ. At the back side of the ground floor used to be offices and workshops. Fine locations for rooms for making and studying music and thus the *Musikzimmer* were created (we are in Germany after all). The kitchen and the hall on the ground floor were perfect to be converted into a portal and a bar for ticket sales and refreshments. *Kaffee mit Kuchen (Coffee with Cake)* forms an integral part of a musical night in Kulturhaus NIHZ.

Upstairs the house is an adventure. Two storeys and ample room to live yourself, to create a dormitory for the guests and have space left for music rooms. And what about the lounge with all kinds of rooms that almost scream to be developed? The development started indeed! In this way, the relax room was built with a little stage as well, a nice room for intimate concerts and jam sessions. It’s neighbourhood-friendly as well, because the sound

isolation is top-notch. You can play a full swing rock band there without causing the neighbours sleepless nights.

A space like this enables lots of events to be organised. In this way five years ago the Guitar Festival Nordhorn, Recorder Festival Nordhorn and the Accordion Festival Nordhorn were established. Festivals with all provisions under one roof. The guest rooms enable a comfortable stay, you don't have to walk to a hotel in the middle of the night, you can stay for a drink and socialize nicely (and play music) until early in the morning if you like and of course the organisation permits (they need their night's rest too!).

The development of the premises of Kulturhaus NIHZ kept pace with the evolution of the festivals. The lounge was constructed, the sanitary facilities were extended to meet the growing demands and an environment-friendly heater system was added. The furnishing was not forgotten either, the concert hall is used for art expositions. Being there, you'll notice delight for both the ears and the eyes!

Enough said about the construction details, let's discuss the festival itself. The recurring part of the GFN consists of the guitar competitions, master classes, workshops and concerts.

This year we had three competitions. Category 1 for the professionals and guitar students. Regarding the continuously rising number of international participants and the high level of performance, this competition has clearly gained reputation on global level. The Category 2 competition is intended for amateurs, over the years it appeared that more and more guitar hobbyists found their way to the arena. The new competition this year is the Cat. 3 competition *Beste Gitarrist/Gitarristin von Nordhorn* that aims for the guitarists from the region, adding a local component to the international reputation.

Kulturhaus NIHZ has been able to book quite a number of famous guitarists for master classes and concerts. Celebrities like Denis Azabagic, Lorenzo Micheli, Alberto Mesirca and Zoran Dukic already appeared. For both professionals and amateurs these master classes are a great way to meet well-known and experienced players that provide personal attention and give hints concerning the pieces that you play for them during the class.

Workshops deal with aspects of life on a small or bigger stage. Theatre Sports for Guitarists provides instructions for stage presentation and concert preparation in a light-hearted and humoristic manner, using well-designed realistic exercises.

Besides playing yourself, the best way to enjoy music and to learn from it is listening. The concerts are the perfect opportunities for this. The festival used to have many concerts, often twice a day, this year there are even more as a consequence of the lounge concert formula. These late-night concerts provide music in an intimate setting. Consequently, this report will contain many more concert related subjects than the years before.

In brief, the Nordhorn Guitar Festival, GFN, is a fine guitar event that indeed deserves a visit, not only by players, but by music lovers as well! This year's edition is the subject of this report, in the meantime the next edition in 2016 has already been planned!

## Commission for Fortification of the Inner Man

This commission with a long name played an important role during the festival. Because those that play guitar well must eat well too!

Hard working members of this commission were Fred and Angie Rootveld, Henk and Martin Olden, Pallavi Sudhir, Marie-Luise Peperkamp and Felim Sheridan. Additionally, undersigned provides some hand- and carry services at peak hours.

A lot of work had to be done indeed! Starting with the provisioning, you need quite a van to transport all stuff for three days breakfast, lunch and dinner. Every day you have to prepare the tables for breakfast and dinner and remove everything afterwards for washing-up. The kitchen crew has to prepare dinner for 50 persons a day and to organise sandwiches, soup and meat balls for lunch. In the meantime, they must make sure that there are sufficient clean plates, cups and cutlery and that the bar is manned.

Much to be done behind the scene, but no problem for the commission. A big Thank You for all volunteers that make up the oil in the machinery of the festival!

# The Evening before

## Welcome Party

The Thursday night features the Welcome Party with as main event the draw for the competitions. It was very nice to meet all acquaintances again (slowly you notice the growth of a bit of a backbone of people that return every year). I met Pallavi and Nandini from India and I could shake hands with many others that had found the way to Nordhorn again.

Making music is the appropriate way to start a music festival. For this occasion, the organisers and musicians that had helped from the beginning, made up a Quinquennium Ensemble. The players involved? By approximation from left to right: Samuel Klemke, Fred Rootveld, Annette Kruisbrink, Arlette Ruelens, Bobby Rootveld, all on guitar and Sanna Rootveld-van Elst on recorders.

They started to play a piece by Pieter van der Staak (1930 - 2007). We hope that it takes a while before we reach the subject of the title: *Happy End*. I am sure that I will have that feeling after three days of festival! The piece proved its title with a humoristic atmosphere.

Second piece was a composition by Annette Kruisbrink, appropriately titled *Festival*. It turned out to be a ballad-like piece that brings associations with playing and singing together around a campfire.

Piece Three was *Tin Woodman* from the suite *The Wizard of Oz* by Lars Wűller, a composer that I have met at an ensemble workshop during one of the Twente Guitar Festivals. According to the story by Frank Baum, the Tin Woodman was busy with wood industry, which included a lot of chopping, sawing and filing. This became quite clear from the composition with all kinds of wood-related guitaristic effects. At times, it even became hard-knock!

The last piece was an arrangement of *Guajira*, a composition by Louis Ignatius Gall (he was present himself during the evening), not for solo but for a full ensemble. It's a joyful well-known melody that first appeared on the very first CD by Duo NIHZ.

In between times the draw of the competition took place. I was a participant in the Cat. 2 competition myself and it appeared that I could play my mini-concert as candidate Nr. 2. Good, in that case I will be able to listen to the others too!

## Lounge Concert Samuel Klemke

The German guitarist Samuel Klemke has been active with his guitars for many years, witness a Youtube video that shows him playing a *Rondo* by Tielman Susato together with his father and sister during a coverage by a local northern German TV station. The cooperation with his sister still exists in the form of the Guitar Duo Klemke. Besides he is a welcome and very active guest of Kulturhaus NIHZ. His experience in the field of organisation of events comes in very handy.

In a still reasonably chilly lounge he started with the warmth of Augustin Barrios Mangoré (1885 - 1944). *Mazurka Apassionada* provided an excellent balance between virtuosity and quiet romance. *Medallion Antiguo* gave voice to a melancholic nostalgia with a surprising

section of warm sympathy in the middle section. *Gavota al Estilo Antiguo* did show the old style of the Baroque, yet it had the romantic characteristics too.

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 - 1750) provides lots of challenges for the guitar repertoire. Klemke decided to meet this challenge with a number of movements from the *Violin Partita Nr. 2 BWV1004*. A briskly and robustly played *Allemande* formed a perfect introduction to a serene *Sarabande*. A super-fast *Gigue* thwarted any attempt of falling asleep and stirred up the enthusiasm of the audience.

The piano music by Isaac Albeniz (1860 - 1909), the adventurous exponent of the style of Pedrell's Spanish School, is a major source of arrangements for the guitar repertoire. Samuel Klemke played two of them. *Mallorca* brings peace and the typical Spanish-Maurish harmony. *Torre Bermeja* has a much higher tempo with its fast triplets alternated with melodies on a musical surge of accompaniment.

A beautiful start, so it was an honour to Sanna van Elst to present the very first box of traditional *Mozart Kugeln* to this player.

## Day One

Hubert Käppel

## Master class Pavel Steidl

It was pretty early on the first day of the festival, my master class with Pavel Steidl was scheduled first. It was pleasant to see him again, he remembered me from the Twente Guitar Festival in 2009.

I started with *Belle*, a *Gavotte* by Jose Ferrer (1835 - 1916), my first competition piece. More accurately, it was Steidl's first piece, he played it *a prima vista twice* as fast as I could and added a lot more fantasy than I had thought to put in the piece, at the moment at least. For a moment, a sense of despondency came upon me. Should I have studied the piece another year before playing it in a master class? Well, never mind, if you can't cope with master ship, you should not attend master classes!

With a good laugh, Pavel Steidl immediately turned the discussion to the essentials: Music is for entertainment. Play and dare to smile!

Then he made an interesting demonstration of tone forming, the finger pressure causing the tone to sing without support of the thumb! Even more astounding was that he showed me that tone forming often was hindered by the thumb because of a kind of vice effect that decreases the flexibility of the finger pressure on the string. I was not quite deft, with master classes I found at more occasions that my technique has lagged a bit. Never mind again, I will have to do with what I can do, which means learning in small amounts.

A scale run from below to the 12th fret brought us to the planting technique. A good exercise for this is a staccato *pima* pattern on the strings 4-1, all fingers being in a rest state but the one that is making the stroke and immediately returns to the rest position afterwards. This return is the signal for the next finger to make the stroke. You can do it in all kind of combinations and with a mix of legato and staccato.

I found that the exercise required a lot of concentration to prevent the fingers that are not involved in the stroke to move along. Maybe control comes with practice.

I will try to get the tempo of the *Gavotte* slightly faster, but I will wait with that after the competition!

Needless to say, that the hour flew by!

## Preliminaries Cat. 1

The competition for professional and music students, in brief the Cat. 1 Competition, has been an attraction for players from all over the world. It has very interesting prizes, including this year's special: a hand-made guitar built by the Russian luthier Sergey Samoilov. This festival edition we could welcome thirty participants.

The competition rules prescribed announcements as a compulsory subject and everyone met that challenge neatly. Yet it was a challenge for me as a journalist to understand all titles and composers. I did not completely succeed, and I apologize for that. I do recognize a lot of music, but in the field of contemporary music my knowledge has some shortcomings.

Christian Melas set the ball rolling this year with *Fantasia Op. 9* by Luigi Legnani (1790 - 1877). He played a little bit reserved, yet he succeeded in reproducing the nineteenth century opera atmosphere.

Niklas Johansen was the first to come up with a movement from the *Tres Piezas* van Joaquin Rodrigo (1901 - 1999), a long-time competition classic. He played the *Pasacalle*. The bass theme remained clear in the complete piece, including the rapid scale passage. At a certain moment, I heard a surprising turn that sounded quite original. In that way you keep hearing new things every time!

Chiara Fabbri was the first to appear with Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 - 1750), a composer that is played in almost every competition. She presented a *Prelude* and a *Gigue*. She played the *Prelude* with power and the *Gigue* with swing, although the transparency of the latter a bit suffered from the tempo.

Nubohiro Uchimoto visited the competitions of the festivals in 2012 and 2013. He hit the stage with contemporary music, the last two movements from *Libre Sonatine* by Roland Dyens (*1955). His *Largo* had a solid beginning and pleasant dynamics in the quick section. The *Fuoco* was slightly overpowered, causing its dynamic effects to diminish.

Nelly von Alven was an old acquaintance too, she appeared in the 2012 competition. Her shot at the finals consisted of two *Etudes,* one by Giulio Regondi (1822 - 1872) and the well-known Nr. 12 by Heitor Villa Lobos (1887 - 1959). The Regondi study was a pleasant surprise for me, it contained study elements, but above all Von Alven played the piece as music, including the traditional nineteenth century lengthy end. The Villa-Lobos study (squeak and creak) sounded a lot more technical.

Egor Svezhentcev stuck with Villa Lobos with *Etude Nr. 8* and concluded with *Fuga* by Leo Brouwer (*1939). I have not heard *Etude 8* a lot on the competitions that I attended. I liked the way Svezhentcev played it in a brooding dark atmosphere. The *Fuga* by Brouwer appeared a complex piece of ‘knitwear’ with voices and rhythms. Svezhentcev succeeded in a clear presentation of this complexity.

Yucen Du went *Back to Baroque* with a *Fuga* by Johann Sebastian Bach. His beginning was quite modest, the theme of the *Fugue* was hardly noticeable. Gradually the player emerged from his trenches and opened the assault on Bach’s voice fabric with clarity.

Thu Le made her appearance on this festival two years ago, not merely on the field of honour on the competition, but also in the lounge with skilful jazz improvisations. Her attempt for a ticker of the finals went via *Fantasia Op. 9* van Luigi Legnani. In a well-balanced outfit she played the opera of the piece like Pavel Steidl does, with fun and passion. I really enjoyed it. Sens of finals with me!

Davide Tomasi made a good show with the *Fandango* from *Tres Piezas* by Joaquin Rodrigo. Despite the speed his sound remained beautiful and his dynamics were clear. I would guess that he can be a finalist too.

Jorrit Douwes presented himself with *Sevilla* by Isaac Albeniz (1860 - 1909). A festive piece that unfortunately got something hectic as a consequence of the rush of the player. Fortunately, the player solved this problem in the middle section by adding more breath to his play.

Andres Madariaga performed a piece that is one of my personal favourites, *Sonata Romantica* by Manuel Ponce (1882 - 1948), to be specific the first movement. I heard nice contrasting atmospheres and rests that enhanced the tension of the piece.

After a well-earned break for the jury and the audience, Luke Pan hit the stage. *Fandango* from *Tres Piezas* van Joaquin Rodrigo and something contemporary, unfortunately I was able to hear nor title nor composer. Unfortunately, agitation and rush were audible in his play, particularly the contemporary piece suffered from it.

Joao Monteiro came up with a piece that I had not heard much on the competitions in this region: *Improvisation and Dance* by Dusan Bogdanovic. The *Improvisation* stayed to close to the player, the sound hardly could get out of the sound hole. In the Dance, the player became more extravert, which resulted in a nice and melodious piece.

Campbell Diamond showed where he came from: His English was clearly Australian! He presented his skills with *Junta al Generalife* by Joaquin Rodrigo. Notably were his finishing, the clear contrast between slow and fast and the beautifully steady tremolo. I got a sense of finals again!

Ruben Kas played *Back to Bach*, a Fugue by the master, unfortunately I did not hers the BWV number. Concerning performance and voicing it was a neat fugue indeed! A bit more dynamics would have added extra brilliance to the piece.

Mikko Zibulski appeared with a familiar piece by my favourite composer Johann Kaspar Mertz (1806 - 1856), the *Hungarian Fantasy*. Generally speaking he did OK, but at a certain instant the excitement in the piece ebbed away and the hurry in the last section did not cause a happy end.

Florent Aillaud played two pieces by Leo Brouwer, a *Prelude* and a movement from the *Sonate*. The *Prelude* did not appeal to me, I heard a bit vague contemporary chaos. Even though Brouwer in his contemporary mood is not my favourite, the *Sonata* was way better! Well played with a healthy dose of adventure in the middle section.

Simon Thielke met the challenge with an ill-famous bold venture, *Prelude* from *BWV1006* van Johann Sebastian Bach. In the ten years that I have been attending competitions I have seen many players struggling and failing with this piece. Thielke did stagger on some places, but he kept upright, which is an achievement in its own right.

Vaclav Fuksa took his chance with the twentieth century composer Hans Werner Henze, he played his *Drei Tientos*. Fair's fair, he expressed the atmosphere of the pieces well. Yet I asked myself, particularly with the second *Tiento*: 'What binds a player to a piece?' I guess that's worth some extended study.

Francisco Chaves made the maximum of his playing time: a movement from a Sonata (BWV number unintelligible) by Johann Sebastian Bach and the *Zapateado* from the *Tres Piezas* by Joaquin Rodrigo. The movement from the Sonata appeared the slow one, Chaves played it serenely and clearly, ;-) just like I like to hear it. The *Zapateado* formed an obvious contrast, but just missed the fervour to make it spectacular.

Andrija Lazarevic is an old acquaintance from last year's festival, well I should say from two festivals, because he appeared at the Twente Guitar Festival as well. Last year he was a finalist, but he just missed the first prize, so I was curious about his performance of this year. He started his endeavour with a few *Capriccios* by Niccolo Paganini (1782 - 1840). Originally these pieces were written for violin and famous for their virtuosity because Paganini was quite good at it. Well, this virtuosity was obvious in the guitar arrangement and Lazarevic was quite good at it. Fine balance between speed and lyricism. So if you ask my opinion: A place in the finals!

Playing a baroque *Passacaille*, Konstantin Shimulin provided some contrast with Paganini. According to tradition the piece developed from a simple bass theme towards a complex harmonious network. A clear presentation!

Alejandro Ovares fetched Bach from his cabinet: *Prelude* from BWV995, the lute suite in G minor. The player was quite theatrical in his performance (at that moment it reminded me of the tormented expression of Oman Kaminsky Lara, one of the competitors from the past), which looked a bit overdone. Fortunately, in the Fugue he guided the attention of the audience back to the music with fresh and transparent play.

Jasper Pieteraerents popped up with Leo Brouwer, a movement from the *Decameron Negro*. It was a clearly built piece with a brisk lead theme and two quiet passages in between. The player presented the main themes well, in my opinion the first quiet interlude was far too quiet, but the second interlude was more than up to standards.

A little break comes in handy after all this guitar excitement, just to relax ears and mind.  A bottle of water quenches thirst and a sandwich makes up for the lost calories.

The last stage of the race. Andrea De Vitis played music by his fellow-countryman (at least part of his life) Mario Castelnuovo Tedesco (1895 - 1968), to be precise the *Sonata Ommaggio a Boccherini.* De Vitis exactly understood how to play this music expressively, as a listener you almost start playing a movie in your head! Well done, I had a sense of finals. After Castelnuovo Tedesco he played some Bach. Powerful indeed!

Chao Pan put his cards on two pieces form a *Sonata* by Joaquin Turina (1882 - 1949). The first thing that was obvious to me was his volume. The loudness took a lot of energy. The Sonata sounded a bit disjointed at times, the coherency was missing, which led to small interruptions. A less optimal performance.

Luis Juarez kept things suspenseful, because his announcement did not explain what he was playing. That's a disadvantage of sitting in the back of the hall. His first piece was waltzy with a nice melody, his tone was clear from the lowest to the highest fret. The second piece was a

nice example of a drum-solo, lots of percussive effects. Nice to hear and watch, but the guitar was the underdog in this section.

I had met Kristina Varlid on a previous guitar festival in this region. Her programme consisted of two pieces, the famous *Hommage a Debussy* by Manuel de Falla (1876 - 1946) and a contemporary piece by Miroslav Tadic. She performed De Falla like one tells a good story with a sharp sense for the rests in the piece. With Tadic she brought an agitated solo that showed other aspects of her qualities.

I had heard Antero Pellika in the past on a competition of a festival in this region. He had worked hard on the *Scherzo Vals* by Miguel Llobet (1878 - 1938) that he played on this occasion. The piece had grown in performance indeed! Result was a presentation with cheer, humour and dazzling runs.

Right at the end, Matteusz Kowalski appeared with a piece by Johan Sebastian Bach. BWV998, a *Prelude* followed by an *Allegro*. Kowalski played the *Prelude* stately and consistently and surprised in the *Allegro* with well-balanced voicing.

Last candidate (it was quite a session for jury and journalist): Franco Maigue played as a conclusion *Valse Nr. 4* by Augustin Barrios. He did so with virtuosity and a pleasant swing.

The jury could start their negotiations!

## Concert Tom Kerstens

Tom Kerstens is a Dutch guitarist that lives and works in England. Besides playing and teaching the guitar, he is active in the organisation of the Bath Guitar Festival.

He shared the concert night with Hubert Käppel. Half way his programme he remarked with a wink that he had to hurry a bit in behalf of *The Great Hubert Käppel* and that consequently his recital would be slightly shorter than mentioned in the programme.

He started with music by Isaac Albeniz, *Mallorca* en *Zambra Granadina.* Doing so, he played a copy of a nineteenth century Torres guitar, a guitar design by the luthier that laid the basis for the modern instrument. I did recognize the model from an image in the booklet that comes with the CD set of music by Tarrega played by David Russell. Kerstens excelled with a warm tone and a subtle vibrato. The *Zambra* had a surprise in stock, it had a part that very much resembled *Leyenda* by Granados. Or did the guy fool us?

The Torres guitar was set aside and Tom Kerstens picked up his regular guitar, a pretty instrument with a cut-out and a remarkably elaborated headstock. The guitar for contemporary music!

*Air and Variation* appeared to be pleasant *minimal music* piece by Michael Parsons (*1938), a pioneer of the contemporary guitar music in England. In the piece small motives were repeated quite a number of times with very subtle variations.

Gabriel Jackson (*1962) is the youngest representative of the contemporary composers in England. His *Fantasy with Anniversary Chorale* brought a stark contrast between rest and

agitation around an almost classical choral passage. Kersten played this modern work with abandon and made it interesting for the audience.

Well, then, the programme was finished. Apart from an encore, *Rumores de Caleta* by Albeniz, especially played for Bobby Rootveld who plays the piece himself. This fragment of Spanish fire concluded the recital.

## Concert Hubert Käppel

As soon as Hubert Käppel, the famous German guitar educator and guitarist/lance breaker for contemporary repertoire, entered the hall, I started thinking: 'In which movie did he play?' With regards to his appearance and charm he resembled Omar Sharif at a later age than when he played in Doctor Zhivago.

He started his programme with the remark: 'I guess this concert will be a difficult one for you!' Promptly my thoughts went back to the last evening of the Twente Guitar Festival 2010. At that time, a fellow-countryman of Käppel made the same remark about a programme including all *Etudes* by Villa Lobos. Consequence was that after the break the hall was considerably less occupied than before.

Hubert Käppel, however, offered a 'spoonful of sugar that makes the medicine go down' with humour and charm. He organized a little quiz that enabled people from the audience to win his latest CD. A happy few, including me, succeeded to take one home!

Hubert Käppel rightfully in the literal as well as figurative sense belongs to the *éminence grise* of the German guitar world. His play stands out by a firm approach and a tone that is rock solid.

After a well-played *Canticum* by Leo Brouwer and the intriguing *Garuda* by Oliver Hunt, he came up with the most interesting piece of the evening that had a little restriction for the audience, you had to be able to understand German.

This piece was *Memorias de El Cimarron* by Hans Werner Henze. It was a piece for narrator and guitar, Hubert Käppel played both roles. The story was about the life of slaves and the revolution with war of independence on nineteenth century Cuba. Conclusion of the story, that was framed by effective guitar music, was that the ordinary people did not benefit much, which became clear in the twentieth century when Castro staged a new 'proletarian revolution' that unfortunately did not benefit the man on the street either.

Käppel drily remarked that he had never played Tarrega, but that he had found out lately that Tarrega's music was better than het thought. Therefore, he played three pieces by Francisco Tarrega: *Gran Vals*, *Marieta* and *Maria*, the *Gavotte*. The *Gran Vals* has become famous because the ring tone of the Nokia smartphones is derived from it.

He finished his programme with a beautiful arrangement of *Der Leiermann* from *Die Winterreise* by Franz Schubert (1797 - 1828). The desolate atmosphere, the immensely sad repeated theme of the hurdy-gurdy and the emotional melody made it to a moving piece.

The Encore was an original one, *Ponue*, a piece for two ping-pong balls and a guitar by Michael Pearsons, on special request by Bobby Rootveld. It was special indeed, slide guitar with ping-pong balls, and of course one disappeared in the sound hole. Fun!

After the enthusiast applause, it was time for the results of the preliminaries of the Cat. 1 competition. Campbell Diamond, Thu Le, Konstantin Shimulin, Florent Aillaud, Andrea De Vitis and Andrija Lazarevic would play the finals at Sunday. Six contestants this time, rather than five. This was caused by the scores.

## Lounge Concert Thomas Peperkamp

The guitarist and composer Thomas Peperkamp is co-founder the the Gitaarsalon Enkhuizen and is involved with the engagement and programming of artists. The GitaarSalon and Kulturhaus NIHZ have a friendly cooperation. Within this scope Thomas is one of the regular guest of Kulturhaus NIHZ events, such as this festival. There I got to know him.

I never had heard him playing guitar in a concert setting, so I was curious when I found out that he would play the second Lounge Concert. An attractive feature was that he played his own compositions.

His first piece was titled *Händel's Trip to Italy*. Correct, as a young man Georg Friedrich Händel visited Rome, Naples and Venice and achieved success. Peperkamp described the composition as an exploration of the 6/8 meter.

The first movement *Theme Händel* sketched the main character in Baroque setting with a classical structure. The *Travel Theme* represented the long travels that Händel had to make in a bumping stage-coach. The final destination Naples was reached via a *Tarantella*. A quick theme brought the music in the classical period with the well-known loooong conclusion.

*Sonatine* was a composition for a student that refused to play anything by Mauro Giuliani. If, however, he would study this piece, he would change his mind. Actually, the charming classical theme contained a lot of Giuliani's characteristic sound and rumour states the student immediately picked up all *Rossiniades*.

*Ländler* became a charming Austrian dance theme like Johann Kaspar Mertz wrote them quite a few. *Valsa da Saudade* sung about nostalgia with pleasant romantic modulations.

Jazz Journey had an emotional charge, because it was dedicated to a friend, a jazz enthusiast, who died at a young age. The emotional melody with the jazzy modulations reminded me of pieces by Pat Metheny, at least the ones arranged for classical guitar by Jason Vieaux.

*Nocturne* brought complex arpeggio variations in a dark atmosphere, with *Admiration* the light returned via a beautiful ballad with a nice thematic movement,

The audience was enthusiast and succeeded in getting an encore. *Aan de Amsterdamse Grachten (On the Canals of Amsterdam)*, a melody by Pieter Goemans (1925 - 2000). Yes, in Holland everybody knows the refrain, so let's sing along!

# Day Two

Ben Salfield

## Master Class Christian Lavernier

The Italian guitarist Christian Lavernier could already be heard in the Lounge yesterday even before his official appearance, happily jamming with Thu Le and Samuel Klemke.

Out of superstition I did not bring one of my competition pieces. It was *Sicilienne* van Jose Ferrer and we started right away.

He noticed that I was rather glued to the score during playing. 'The sheet music only is a clue to what you could play', he commented, 'just use your imagination and play together with it.'

In order to use your imagination, you have to listen first. That was today's exercise, I played the piece and he improvised all kinds of patterns in between. In the mean time I had to remain on track convincingly. In the end I was successful, but the tempo had grown twice as fast! *Jazzilienne*!

In the meantime, in the Alte Kirche in Nordhorn, Nutavut Ratanakarn played his concert. Unfortunately, I was too busy (master class and competition), so I missed it. A shame indeed, because the stories about the concert of this Thai guitarist were very favourable.

Bad luck! I hope that I will have an opportunity to hear him again in the near future.

## Competition Cat. 2

Despite all preparation (or maybe a bit alleged lack thereof) the competition was an exciting and slightly stressful happening for me. I already covered that elsewhere on this sit in a blog-like Guitarity, so now I will describe the other contestants.

Towards the scheduled starting time the participants trickled in and I had the pleasant experience to see a few that had been there last year. In the cloakroom Nandini was working hard under the motivating supervision of Thomas Peperkamp and Samuel Klemke, two teachers for the same money! In the meantime, I was quietly eating my meat ball with mayonnaise in order to increase my stability on stage.

Diana Belfor was the first candidate to play. I missed her because I was sitting in the Lounge to spend my time for playing-in. I missed the player after me –Ivar Bos- as well because I had to leave the hall after my own contribution.

When Janette Couvée appeared, I had just been able to return to the hall. She started with the famous *Adelita* by Francisco Tarrega. That went well, including the awkward E major section with the little barrées. Her second piece was a composition by Fernando Sor (1778 - 1839), the *Etude in D*, number seventeen from Op. 35. She played a nice and clear melody on top of the casually awkward accompaniment notes. She made her conclusion with *Estudio Scencillo Nr. 6* by Leo Brouwer. Her she made clear the effect of the ringing notes in the arpeggio pattern, adding an atmospheric touch to the piece.

For a while the stage was the domain of Ellen Heijboer. She started with *Montemayor* from *Castillos de Espana* by Federico Moreno Torroba (1891 - 1982). She played this striking warm movement with a firm tone. Concerning atmosphere, her *Sarabande* by Francis Poulenc (1899 - 1963) was quite contrasting. The stately melody was well finished with the subtle vibrato on the D-string. Her last piece was *An Idea* (*Passacaglia for Eli*) by Leo Brouwer. Well played with a bit of the atmosphere of *Un Dia en Noviembre*.

Tanja Vermeeren brought repertoire from the twentieth century. *Estudio Scencillo Nr. 6* by Leo Brouwer sounded first. Again, I heard the magical effect of the ringing open strings, yet a few hard decisions had to be made: which accents best suit the arpeggio pattern? The compositions by Francis Kleynjans (*1951) were next, to be specific *Trois Pièces* from 1977. The *Arpège* provided a melancholic melody in the bass line. *Chanson de Marin disparu* appeared to be a piece in dark colors, again with the melody in the bass line. The atmosphere reminded me of a fisherman's monument that I had seen in the city of Fécamp in Normandy. Unfortunately, I could not understand the title of the last piece, it reminded me of a lullaby like you encounter in Stephan Rak's *Minutova Sola.*

The stage was reserved for a while for Nandini Sudhir from India, last year's second prize winner. She had studied two pieces, *Sonata in A* L 485 by Domenico Scarlatti (1685 - 1757) and the waltz *Julia Florida* by Augustin Barrios

The swing was quite present in the *Sonata* and Nandini implemented a few original variations that livened up the music. *Julia Florida* had a surprising and above all moving start. It was the first time that her play actually touched my heart. That's the characteristic of a good musician, to be able to make contact with the audience on an emotional level. It was really a shame that after a few measures this contact became faint and disappeared completely in the end, it looked like that her performance became more technical. In spite of this, she made a very positive impression.

Bram Bakker was the last candidate, he started well with a clear and informative announcement. He played three pieces by Maria Linnemann, *Souvenir*, a melancholic ballad, *Whisperings*, an atmospheric piece with tranquil melody and *Head in de Clouds*, a swinging piece that is nice as a conclusion.

*Souvenir* went well, even so well that I thought 'He's a winner!' Then fate struck. It was striking that quite a number of players, including myself, lost the way in the second piece in different severities. Maybe a bit of over-concentration after the relief that the first piece went well? Whatever, he did not reach the level of his first piece by far any more. Such a pity, because his start was so convincing!

As far as I was concerned, the results were clear to me (also refer to the Guitarity on this subject). I gave the best cards to Nandini Sudhir en Ellen Heijboer. The jury would proclaim the winner tonight!

## Beste Gitarrist/Gitarristin von Nordhorn

This year Kulturhaus NIHZ organised a competition for the local talents in Nordhorn that attend the *Musikschule*, the music school. A mixed bunch of very young and somewhat older guitarists that had in common that they were invited based on their diligence and motivation in the guitar lessons. I consider it a good idea, it's positive stimulation.

The competition had a professional setup, there was a programme for the listeners and the players announced themselves.

Jule de Vries (8 years) made the first performance. It was quite a moving sight, such a little girl that could just peek above the music stand. Of course, it is the music that matters, and she brought it with conviction. *Vals* and *Boceto Andaluz* by Bartolome Calatuyud (1882 - 1973) were followed by a *Marsch* by presumedly Carcassi or Carulli. The *Valse* had nice glissandos, the *Boceto* turned into a touch of flamenco and the bass line of the *Marsch* went straight ahead.

Danny Stefan started with an arrangement of *Morgenstimmung* from the *Peer Gynt Suite* by Edvard Grieg (1843 - 1907), followed by *Boceto Andaluz* by Bartolome Calatuyud. The morning mood was good and the bass line of the *Boceto* had a good finish.

Michelle Hering appeared with *Bolero* by Bartolome Calatuyud and a *Tarantella* by Mauro Giuliani (1782 - 1829). Particularly the *Tarantella* shone with a nice piece of swing, but the *Bolero* did not stay far behind.

Anne Lűken performed on stage with *Boceto Andaluz* by Bartolome Calatuyud, followed by a quite weird piece called *Ai… Strange, Alberto!* Hearing the very first chords I found that it sounded quite familiar. Yes indeed, they resembled the first bars of the first movement of *Sonata Op. 47* by Alberto Ginastera (1916 - 1983). This fun arrangement provided all kinds of effects from its great example. Anne appeared to be quite good at it!

Lass Unke played a slightly more classical programme with *Morgenstimmung* from the *Peer Gynt Suite,* a waltz and the well-known *Andante* by Fernando Carulli (1770 - 1841). He enjoyed the stage experience immensely and kept a keen eye on the audience. In the meantime, he played his guitar practically by ear.

I had seen Eda Acilar on the same stage last year. At this occasion she performed with *Fandanguillo* by Bartolome Calatuyud, *Ai… Strange, Alberto!* and the *Tango Arabe*. The *Fandanguillo* has a definite drive that makes it difficult to keep the tempo straight. The Ginastera homage, however, went extremely well and during the *Tango Arabe* she surprised us with a touch of percussion.

Tom Schulte Kolthoff provides interesting material for comparison with the *Vals* and *Boceto Andaluz* by Bartolome Calatuyud. I liked his version of the *Boceto!*

Kevin Wiesner was the last candidate. He played some pièce de résistance, the complete *Prelude Nr. 1* by Heitor Villa Lobos. The homage to Ginastera formed the dessert. Kevin played completely by heart and kept a keen ear on his sound, witnessed by the fact that he interrupted his play for tuning (which was quite necessary because of the temperature in the hall). I was surprised by his performance of the Prelude, I did not expect a player at his age to play the *complete* piece. After the *Prelude*, I guess the energy had been spent a little, because he had a very careful approach with *Ai… Strange, Alberto!* Advantage was, that his version was far more transparent for the listener than the version of the other players.

It was a pleasant experience, all these young guitarists on the field of honour. I am very curious about the assessment of the jury!

## Concert Ben Salfield

Before Ben Salfield hit the stage, Bobby Rootveld announced the results of the amateur competitions.

Concerning me, the result was as expected, I did not play good enough for a prize. Nandini Sudhir and Ellen Heijboer shared the second prize, Diana Belfor occupied place three. Why there was no first prize winner? Well, Nandini and Ellen had the same amounts of points, so there was no clear winner. Consequently, the decision was to share the second prize, because it is no common practice to share a first prize.

*Kevin Wiesner* became *der Beste Gitarrist von Nordhorn*, closely followed by Eda Acilar (2), Michelle Hering (3), Tom Schulte-Kolthoff (4) and Lasse Unke (5). *Leute, gratuliere!*

Let's talk about the concert. Ben Salfield is a specialist in the field of Renaissance and Baroque music. Clear sign of this was his lute-guitar, a very practical instrument that did not have the tedious tuning problems of the old lute design with gut strings. It was not possible to play without tuning, however, because it was pretty warm in the hall.

His first announcement was to make a bit of fun. He started with a potpourri of renaissance dances like *Branles* en *Passameses.* Amongst others I heard the *Branles de Village* by Robert Ballard and a *Passemese* by Pierre Phalèse. He played everything in strict tempo with a touch of humor, interspersed with some fun *rallentandos*.

Then he switched to John Dowland (1563 -1626) and mused for a moment how famous he would have been if he played his lute like an electric guitar in these days. I guess in this time Dowland's management would have been involved in a lot of royalty lawsuits, while in his own time no one would have found it a problem that his music was copied in multiple collections.

Salfield played a few of Dowland's best known pieces. *My Lady Hunsdon's Puffe* danced light-hearted and elegantly. *Sir John Smith's Almain* and *Mr. Langton's Galliard* brought wayward yet original variations. *The Frog Galliard* was a bit more heavy in its mood, I guess that the lover of Queen Elizabeth I, the dedicatee of this piece, had had a hard night's day!

Salfield described the *Pavan* by Thomas Morley (1557 - 1602) as his favourite *musica miserabilis*. Well, the tears dripped from this extremely well played piece indeed!

Playing Renaissance music, Ben Salfield only used a fraction of the strings of his lute-guitar. With Silvius Leopold Weiss (1687 - 1750) all strings were on duty, including the open bass strings. He played a Baroque suite consisting of eight dances. Quite a pile of scores, so during playing Salfield got a bit confused concerning the right pages. He solved the problem with humour and a wink and did not permit that the quality of his play suffered from the search party for the right sheet.

During his encore, Ben Salflield surprisingly showed an unexpected aspect of his musicianship, namely that he is a good singer as well! *Can she Excuse?* by John Dowland became a little gem of clear singing, I could understand every word, and a complex lute accompaniment. Lovely to hear and it was fun that he expressed the humour in the piece so well.

## Concert Sabrina Vlaskalic

As a listener, I met Sabrina Vlaskalic (*1989) for the first time at the preliminaries of the Scharpach Competition at the Twente Guitar Festival in 2008. In that year, she won the third prize and surprised the audience with a fierce on-stage discussion with the jury concerning exceeding the allotted time. One year later she re-appeared on the same Scharpach Competition and won the first prize with conviction. As usual I did never see her back again

on the Twente Guitar Festival, if players have won a competition they prefer an attempt at other competitions.

When I heard and saw her for the first time, it became obvious to me that she added a flamboyant stage personality to her musicianship, with a certain passion in her performance. At least her outfit was quite eye-catching in the crowd of grey mice dressed in black. The same applied to her effort, she uttered it the same way as the female tennis players at Wimbledon, fortunately a bit adapted to the volume of her playing! This custom is not unknown in music, she shares it with famous players like Glenn Gould and Carlos Barbosa Lima

At first sight, things were a bit unusual, but at a certain moment the whole of her appearance brought some freshness to her performance. Carefully settling a long dress provides some cachet, even though to me this struggle with textiles looks like a crime for the player. I remember Sharon Isbin to be busy for five minutes to arrange her dress after a break.

Now it's six years later…. A long period like this somehow brings a song to my mind that is included on the album *Aqualung* by the British pop group Jethro Tull. The song is called *Wondring Aloud*, with the following line in it: *Wond'ring aloud/will the years treat us well?*

How would she have developed as a guitarist? That question would be answered today.

Already before the concert I found out that Sabrina Vlaskalic does not leave anything to chance. She makes sure that she appears on stage well dressed and in perfect condition, with nails polished and fingers warm and supple. After sitting down on stage, she takes care for the optimal playing position, even though that requires some effort with her chic dress.

When she appeared, I noticed that some of my memories revived (amongst others her long dress), yet a few things were definitely different. I sensed growth… At this moment, she comes across as a diva that knows how to entertain the audience with music and announcements and realizes this with a completely distinctive style. ;-) I guess that did not change, her distinctive way of presentation.

Enough said about outward appearances. The music starts to play!

Her first piece was an *Estudio* by Francisco Mignone (1897 - 1986), to be precise number two from the collection of twelve that he composed in 1970. He had dedicated the studies to the guitarist Carlos Barbosa Lima. Considering the size of Barbosa Lima's hands (that becomes clear from the fingerings in his arrangements) the studies must be tough! This degree of difficulty was unnoticeable with Vlaskalic, she played music and nothing else! An atmospheric piece with lots of variation and the possibility for a singing vibrato.

Dioniso Aguado (1784-1849) was a guitar virtuoso, which becomes apparent from many of his pieces. *Introduction & Rondo Brilliante Op. 2 Nr. 2* is a piece that we have heard more often played by Vlaskalic. She won the Scharpach Competition in 2009 with it. I did notice that something changed since. The top speed! In my mind, I saw the old master turn pale with a few passages. Or would Aguado himself have played it that fast too?

Initially I had to make some effort to get accustomed to the tempo that Vlaskalic played in. Hearing the slow and lyrical passages, however, it soon appeared to me that her speed was a controlled action to make music rather than the need for speed.

From the classical period, we proceeded to the end of the last century. A movement from the *Royal Winter Music* by Hans Werner Henze. Vlaskalic told an extensive and informative story about the Shakespearian character Sir Andrew Aguecheek that plays a role in this piece. What followed was a likewise interesting performance of the music itself.

Vlaskalic used the same speed spectrum with *Sonate* by Leo Brouwer as she did with the Aguado piece. In a number of passages this speed was extremely functional, at other occasions it increased the contrast with the slow passages. I particularly noticed this with *La Toccata de Pasquini*. Additionally, the brooding and exiting atmosphere in *Sarabande de Scriabin* was top class!

Speed and virtuosity remained a main thread in Vlaskalic's performance. The *Fantasia Op. 19* by Luigi Legnani appeared a fine application of this concept, again with clear contrasts between slow and fast.

It was a good thing that she provided some explanation about the complex rhythms in *Kalajdzijsko Oro* by Miroslav Tadic, because during her brilliant execution of this piece it was impossible to count along!

The audience was justly enthusiast and coaxed an encore, *Cancion del Lladre*, an arrangement of a Catalan folk song by Miguel Llobet. Her performance of this piece showed me the true progression that she had made since I last heard her in 2009. The slow lyricism with the little elegant passages that quasi-impromptu contributed to the atmosphere of the whole, that was sheer beauty!

*Wond'ring aloud/will the years treat us well?* I think for Sabrina Vlaskalic as a guitarist, the answer is Yes!

## Lounge Concert Jim ten Boske and Friends

I have known Jim ten Boske from the very first Twente Guitar Festival and met him every year on the workshop Improvisation until the 2014 edition. That creates a bond and every year I looked forward to improvise again. This time he came to Nordhorn not only as a listener, but also as a performer.

Jim started in the pop music, but quickly gave an effective impulse to his career as musician and composer by means of education at the Royal Conservatory in The Hague. After his graduation, he introduced the main subject Electric Guitar at the then Twente Conservatory.

His workshops showed the solid and accessible way that he wanted to learn musicians to improvise outside the boundaries of the common. It was really fun to turn a *Rondo* by Carulli for guitar solo into a jazz improvisation for two!

Tonight he played together with friends, Sanna van Elst on recorders and Bobby Rootveld on guitar. In this concert his repertoire consisted of a few pieces, as he described it, in the *minimal music* style. The *Six Miniatures,* originally for two guitars but now arranged for guitar and recorder, explored a few rhythmic patterns on interesting repeated accompaniment structures. This pattern was also reflected in *Sangita.*

The composition *Leave Something Unexplained* was not unknown to me, it was included on the very first CD of Duo NIHZ. It was fun to hear this joyful piece with accompaniment of composer Jim himself!

## Day Three

Pavel Steidl

### Workshop Theatre Sports for Guitarists

According to tradition Bobby Rootveld organises his workshop Theatre Sports for Guitarists on the Sunday morning. It's a training to feel yourself more at home on stage.

Theatre Sports starts with a mindfulness exercise that requires reaction on the group, practice of stage presentation and an improvisation exercise with various roles. A good way to learn from each other and to overcome your diffidence.

Various aspects of life on stage passed the review. How do you feel yourself at home in a concert hall? How do you cope with the interaction with the audience that affects your performance? How do you concentrate and focus in moments of performance stress? Some

artists explore the hall before the concert to make it their home, others visualize the audience in such a way that they become part of a kind of emotional wallpaper.

There was an interesting discussion about the mascot. Many consider it superstition, but many stage performers do have one. Indian musicians for instance take an idol with them on stage as a kind of dedication of their performance to the higher things, some in Europe install a little family portrait in their view as a kind of audience. All kinds of means to focus the performance and the music.

## Masterclass Tom Kerstens

In the master class with Ton Kerstens I decided to do what is best if you have dropped off your bike, which is, just get on the bike again and ride on. In this case I picked up *Alfonsina y el Mar*, the piece in which I lost my way yesterday during the competition.

I succeeded to ride again, the audience that was present immediately noticed that things went much better than the day before, and without interruptions!

Then we could start working. Ton Kersten had noticed some flaws in the melody, so the rest of the thirty minutes we were busy changing the fingering. He recommended to practice the melody alone and sing it as well (the latter will be a challenge for me!) and add accompaniment and bass line later.

That's worth a try!

## Concert Christian Lavernier

'Use your Imagination' was Christian Lavernier's motto during my master class. Well, the same applied to his programme, he played none of the pieces that were in the festival leaflet. So the only thing that I can do is giving impressions *Senza Titulo*. The only certainty I had, was that he played his own compositions.

The first piece –I understood the word *Suone*- was a dreamy improvisation indeed. Then he played an arpeggio piece with fast runs and a strongly jazzy coloured theme, followed by some more pieces that showed that he masters all aspects of the guitar with emphasis on improvisational music.

One of the last pieces was created in cooperation with the audience that had to vote for a number of notes in the piece. The result was a nice melody with ditto improvisation.

During the encore, the gong of Kulturhaus NIHZ had an important role. It did appear to be a little awkward to tune the guitar to the gong. Martin Chien played the gong and Lavernier improvised a very far eastern like piece with it.

## Finals Category 1

The Sunday is the traditional time for the finals of the professional's competition. The audience had flocked in in large numbers to see which of the six finalists would impress most and win the hand-built guitar by Sergey Samoylov.

Normally five finalists strive for the first prize, but this year there were six because the number of points in the preliminaries was so close for the best players. Again, this year it was apparent that the quality of the participants is high, in the preliminaries everyone played his/her pieces without fail, so in my opinion there were more players with a positive impression than the number of places in the finals. It had been a tough job for the jury indeed!

Thu Le from Vietnam set the ball rolling and appeared on stage up to the nines. She had thought of everything, from the beautiful (and for playing quite practical) dress, her jewellery, her carefully tended coiffure to the subtle colour combination of her lipstick and dress. She is an obvious eastern beauty and I frankly admit that my eye was caught indeed!

Obviously, it was music that mattered. She started with a *Fantasia* by Napoleon Coste. A delicately played introduction was followed by a march-like movement. Her performance was well finished and pleasantly virtuoso. After the march, the dramatic opera set in. Besides her excellent play, the phrasing in this section was ear-catching.

Her second piece was the *Sonata Meridional* by Manuel Ponce. She played the *Campo* well-finished, but the piece did not touch a string with me, even though the dynamics were interesting. That changed for the best in the quiet *Copla*, in this piece she took her time to develop the melody and crescendos/decrescendos. *Fiesta* became a party indeed! She started a bright contrast with the *Copla*, threw in passion and stirred excitement with delicate soft passages.

Florent Aillaud immediately provided material for comparison with the *Fantasia* van Napoleon Coste. It took me a while to achieve appreciation for his play. He missed the clarity of Thu Le, but added some extra in the drama department. The piece sounded a bit harsher in the end.

However, in his second piece, *Fantasy* by Malcolm Arnold (1921 – 2006), he did draw my attention with well exploited tension variation and a consistent play of the question and answer passages. The piece included a lot of variation, colourful quiet passages were alternated with a complex fugue and a march with tambora.

Andrea De Vitis had three pieces for his finals programme, *Grand Solo* by Fernando Sor (1778 - 1839), *Variations on a Theme by Scriabin* by Alexandre Tansman (1897 - 1986) and finally *Estudio Concierto* by Augustin Barrios.

With the *Grand Solo*, De Vitis presented a nice approach and virtuosity in service of the music. It was pleasant to hear that he did not deny his Italian origin, because there was quite a lot of opera in the performance. The use of colours and the shock effect of the sudden rests were well done.

The Tansman piece stood out because of its beautifully singing melody line and the surprising atmospheres in a few fragments.

As could be expected by its title, *Estudio Concierto* became a display of technique, a lot of *Estudio*, slightly less *Concierto,* which does not imply that the performance was poor. On the contrary, the player did very well.

Campbell Diamond went for the first prize with mainly fast repertoire. A quick *Prelude* by Johann Sebastian Bach, a *Tango* by Astor Piazzolla (1921 - 1992) and two movements from the *Sonate* by Antonio José (1902 - 1936).

I did not hear this *Prelude* by Bach, the one of the Sixth Cello Suite if I understood correctly, very often. Diamond played it quickly yet fresh and well-finished.

With Piazzolla it was a gamble which *Tango* was on. Diamond chose a playful and interesting approach in a high tempo. Notable with this tango was the absence of the usual slow middle section. Or did Diamond skip it?

I recognized the José *Sonata* from a previous occasion. Thus, I noticed that the player performed the piece pretty fast, but with fantasy and power. It was a shame that he skipped the slow movement, now it looked like that he just went on and on the same way. A positive point was that I could clearly hear the relation between themes in the first and third movement.

Konstantin Shimulin hit the stage with three pieces. A *Second Sonata* by a composer whose name I could not understand, *Capriccio Nr. 9* by Luigi Legnani and a *Tango* by Astor Piazzolla.

I did not recognize this *Second Sonata*, but the piece sounded well. The player had a nice sonorous sound and bit by bit he brought more passion in his performance. The piece offered the opportunity to bring forward many aspects of his play.

In the *Capriccio Nr. 9* by Luigi Legnani, his play fell back a little, it was virtuoso but rather agitated. The fact that the guitar got out of tune did not make things better, particularly because Shimulin himself clearly got out of tune too.

The unrest and agitation continued and deteriorated in the *Tango* by Piazzolla. In my opinion, he played the piece way too fast. Fortunately, the slow section provided a bit of breathing space. It was a pity that the guitar did not intend to stay in tune.

The last candidate of the finals, Andrija Lazarevic. He had been extremely bad lucky cutting himself in the finger of all things on this particular day. Nevertheless, he strove for the top with the *Sonate* by Leo Brouwer and (an arrangement of) a *Capriccio* by Niccolo Paganini (1782 - 1840).

The first thing that I noted with the *Sonate* by Brouwer in the movement *Fandangos y Boleros* was the extreme speed. Or was it that my hearing had slowed down? Some passages became almost blurred as a consequence of the velocity. There was a kind of anger in the piece (or a painful finger?) that would make the drive in his complete

performance. In the second movement *Sarabande de Scriabin*, however, Lazarevic played like I like to hear it, with peace and balance. In the third movement, *La Toccata de Pasquini* this quiet atmosphere vanished completely and the anger was back. ‘What moves the player here?’ I wondered, so angry was his expression that it almost choked me. Literally moving!

Paganini was one of the fast and virtuoso guys on the violin and you could notice that quite well in the *Capriccio*. With astonishing speed, Lazarevic tried to surpass Paganini himself. Wow, what an action, such a drive!

Those were the finals! High time to put down my pencil and start working to make shore that the inner man got fortified. In the meantime, the jury con chew on the results!

## Concert Pavel Steidl

Pavel Steidl is a phenomenon on the guitar because he brings a balanced programme of music and body language. I have heard and seen him playing a number of times and each time it was fun!

This time he came up with music from two style periods, the nineteenth century, his favourite, and the contemporary (in this time twentieth century) repertoire.

The first pieces were by Fernando Sor with five *Minuets* from Op. 11. Pavel Steidl played them all with a tender tone and a clear expression. The tempo surprised me, it was quite relaxed, but it suited the pieces perfectly. Both Sor and Steidl extended the in itself rigid Minuet form to a broader musical scope. Elegant music with original accents.

As a surprise, Pavel Steidl played the non-programmed *Minuetto per la signora Marina* with an extensive collection of improvisations. I guess he wanted to do Bobby Rootveld a favour, because the latter would have heard a piece by Paganini and found it a pity that none was included in the official programme. Humour and drama united in a little piece!

Steidl stuck to the Minuet form, playing a set of them by Pedro Jimenez de Abril Tirado (1780 - 1856), a composer that was quite unknown to me. I heard three surprising gems (including trio) in which Steidl pulled out all the stops and even played tremolo.

The last piece for the break was a composition by Napoleon Coste: *Deuxième Polonaise Op. 14*. Such a humour, how this fun is integrated in Steidl’s play! I have been enjoying myself with tears in my eyes because of the good laugh that was caused by Steidl’s musical comedy. In your mind you see the complete play developing! Top class!

After the coffee, thea and wine, Pavel Steidl appeared in a genre that I had not heard from him until now. Contemporary music has a completely different drama than the opera. He played three pieces, *Hommage a Choral Gothique* by Jana Obrovska (1930 - 1987), *Hommage a Jimi Hendrix* by Carlo Domeniconi (*1947) an *Hommage a Jana Obrovska* by Pavel Steidl himself.

The performance was quite different, but no less phenomenal! The pieces connected seamlessly and I was surprised that the programme was over so soon! I did recognize some

of the effects of Jimi Hendrix on guitar in the music, they gave the piece a psychedelic character.

Loud applause and a standing ovation was the appreciation of the audience for this extraordinary concert. Pavel Steidl rewarded the applause with a little encore called *Eugene*. A light-hearted end of the last concert hall concert of the festival (the Lounge concert still was to follow).

The final act of the evening concert was the announcement of the results of the Cat. 1 competition. Andrija Lazarevic became first, Andrea De Vitis second and Thu Le achieved the third prize.

Involuntarily I had to think about Lazarevic's finger injury. 'The cut kept him sharp!'

Winners, congratulated!

## Lounge Concert Anido Guitar Duo

The last Lounge Concert of the festival was for Annette Kruisbrink and Arlette Ruelens with their Anido Guitar Duo. A nice opportunity to hear something from the extensive repertoire of compositions by Annette Kruisbrink.

The first piece *Horizontal 8* had been commissioned by a museum director that was very interested in mysticism. In this piece, the duo used electronic equipment for playing of samples and sound clips (for instance a Morse code or the sound of church bells) and a melodious Tibetan scale. An exciting piece with lots of moods and complex rhythms, a clear demonstration of how well the members of the duo are matched.

*Forest Drizzle* from the suite *Weather Music* became the middle piece of the concert. A nice relaxed piece in which percussion with the finger nails on the side of the guitar added a subtle rhythm.

The piece *Eucalypta* was about the witch Eucalypta from the books, radio plays and the old (black and white) TV sequel of *Paulus the Wood-gnome* by the Dutch writer Jean Dulieu. I clearly remember the sound of her crackling voice in the then TV program on the Sunday afternoon.

Again, an adventurous piece with avant-garde elements, but quite compatible to the character of the witch that I remember from my youth. The piece ended with the same words as the TV program, I'll try to translate: *There we are, things are finished, Eucalypta will not have anything to say for a while*. To be honest, I can't remember this phrase. I guess that's caused by the fact that my parents exactly knew when to operate the OFF button of the TV, cutting out this last sentence.

## Finally…

Three days of guitar festival, that's an intensive happening. I was very glad that we had the day off on Kings Day on the Monday, because I would have had a hard day at the office in

the attempt to focus on other things than guitar. It would take me a week before I had processed all events and adventures. A matter of age, maybe?

The goodbye on the Sunday evening was long and affectionate, because on the long run you get acquainted with the people that come here year after year.

Tired but quite satisfied, that was the way I felt. Writing this report, I could keep the satisfaction for quite a while.

So: Onward to the second quinquennium of the Guitar Festival Nordhorn!