

Nordhorn Guitar Festival 2019

Tempus Fugit



"Where are you going, Grandpa?"

"I'm going to a house where they all play guitar and everyone loves guitar music."

"Are they going to dance there too, Grandpa?"

"Perhaps..."

"Soon grandma and I will eat nice French Fries."

"And I am on my way to the soup with bread."

Granddaughter Iris observes sharply, has a lot of attention, and wants to know exactly how the matter stands. She is with us for a day and stays overnight because our daughter has to go on a training course. So I will have to climb the stairs very quietly tonight when I get home.

I get in the car and wave goodbye to grandma and grandchild. The car radio wakes up and spreads intense sounds from Victor Villandangos' guitar.

Velando al Angelito, Vigil for a Little Angel ...

An old Argentinian tradition, an evening vigil for a deceased child where the people that are present all are dancing. No crying is allowed, because then the little angel's wings become too heavy because of the tears and she cannot fly to heaven. I hope that my granddaughter can stay on earth as a little angel for a very long time.

Victor Villandangos. Nordhorn 2016 was that, I am thinking, *time flies ...*

The ancient Romans, Vergilius to be precise, said *Tempus Fugit*. We translate that with *Time Flies*. Not entirely good, if you look closely at the meaning of this Latin, it is *The Time is Escaping*.

Indeed, the time has fled me this year, I was constantly chased by tight deadlines. Deadline met, sprint to the next. That is called *Agile* working, breathing prohibited because you have to ask yourself every day *what did I do yesterday? What am I going to do today? and What is stopping me from doing this?* All this against the flashy background of *issues, topics, epics* and *stories* and the notorious stand-up meetings where you will not encounter a comedian at all. Seems to be a success in the software industry.

Chaotically hectic and exhausting on the long run. That is why this year the week of the Guitar Festival Nordhorn comes as a surprise to me. That's a shame indeed, because then I miss the anticipation.

Nordhorn, that means the old route on the N342 from Hengelo via Oldenzaal and Denekamp to the destination Kulturhaus Niet In Het Zwart in the Mittelstrasse in Wasserstadt Nordhorn. A nice drive through the Twente countryside, although formally Denekamp is on the wrong side of the Dinkel, if you can believe JJ van Deirse's hymn on Twente (*There is a country between Regge and Dinkel / Our clean and industrious Twente ...*)

Spring shows its pleasant side, the green shades on the trees, blossom brightens the branches and the forest is light because the young foliage does not filter out all the light yet. The meadows are full of dandelions and daisies, at least the ones that have not been sprayed away with a production-enhancing herbicide, as a result of which biodiversity has disappeared.

I think ahead and keep the flight of time at a distance. Guitar Festival Nordhorn, the ninth edition in the meantime, means meeting people, friends and the music itself. I think of the encounters from the past, people that return there more often, friends that cannot be there due to circumstances, even if they wanted to, and the ones that can no longer be there with the best will in the world. And who would be new this year?

I will have to be patient. There is a traffic jam just before Nordhorn. Builders are quite busy with the road and we are slowly allowed to pass a mobile traffic light. I feel for my bag. Check it out, do I have everything with me? The notebook and pen are there. As a result, you can now read what has happened at this edition of the GFN.

I turn right in Nordhorn, pass a church with solar cells on the tower (a good initiative) and turn onto a railway crossing of the Bentheimer Eisenbahn. Once there was a bare plain here due

to the demolition of the production halls of the Nino textile factory. Gradually I see a 'construction spring' here, an elderly apartment complex has sprung up like a mushroom and they are driving piles further down the road. *Excellent investment, more than 4.8 percent*, welcomes a sign. My regular parking space at the school is free.

I strap my backpack on my shoulders and take a deep breath. Slowly hurrying I walk towards Kulturhaus NIHZ.

Four days and an evenings of guitar, with music, musicians, friends and cheerfulness.

GFN 2019!

Beforehand

The festival

The ninth Guitar Festival Nordhorn.

The Ninth sometimes forms a special feature in classical music. The Ninth Symphony of Beethoven is seen as the high point of the Classical period, Schubert's Ninth Symphony is in the annals as The Great, the Ninth Symphony of Mahler is known among music scientists as the completion of Romanticism.

How things proceeded? Bobby Rootveld and Sanna Rootveld-Van Elst founded the Kulturhaus Niet In Het Zwart in 2011 in a former shop on Mittelstrasse 13 in Nordhorn. Enough space for a concert hall, rehearsal rooms, recreation room, sleeping accommodation for guests and their own home upstairs. In 2011, the very first Guitar Festival Nordhorn took place there, which later became known as GFN.

In the early years, in addition to masterclasses and workshops (stage presentation, improvisation and jazz, for example), the festival offered a competition for soloists: professionals and amateurs. As time went on, the competitive element became increasingly prominent. This is how we find competitions for soloists, ensembles, jazz musicians, composers and multimedia players this year.

There are three competitions for soloists: professionals of all ages, amateurs under the age of sixteen and amateurs over the age of sixteen. The professional competition in particular has become a high-level event. This has changed the structure of the competition, the single preliminary round has been extended with a second chance round for players who, based on their jury assessment in the preliminary round, qualify for a second attempt.

The ensemble competition offers space for ensembles for guitar and melody instruments in various combinations. Among the participants were guitar duos, trios and quartets, and mixed ensembles with flute, mandolin and so on. In the jazz competition (acoustic) jazz musicians work together with a combo and perform in a live situation. The composition competition takes place behind the scenes, but winners are performed and receive a CD recording of their work.

New this year is the multimedia competition. Participants hand in a multimedia presentation on the theme of the guitar. The nicest and / or most creative video wins.

In the years so far I notice a shift in emphasis. Workshops have apparently received a much smaller share, the emphasis has shifted to competitions. I would have liked to visit the workshop "Artist exposure on social media" (because of my YouTube channel), but unfortunately my schedule did not permit so.

When I look at the program and count the number of participants, it seems that interest in masterclasses is declining, especially now that participation in the masterclasses is no longer compulsory for the professionals at the competition, and that the offer in competitions is overwhelming. This trend has everything to do with the way in which professionals operate in the competition circuit today. The range of festivals is considerable, and the need to build on the road through competitions has only grown (unfortunately, as I myself say). As a result, participants will already leave after the preliminary rounds if they have not reached the final. A kind of hit and run attitude.

In the early years all concerts took place at the Kulturhaus NIHZ in Nordhorn. The result was a pleasant bustle during and also after the concert and of course hard work at the bar during breaks. Partnerships with stages in the area have increased the number of concerts and also expanded the choice for visitors. More theaters are now taking advantage of the offer, but it has become almost impossible for visitors to follow everything during the festival. The master visitor then shows himself in limitation.

The GFN thus moves flexibly with the economic and cultural tide, a clear signal is that we will also see a Tenth next year after this Ninth.

The team

A festival stands or falls with the people who support it. Organization, that is the start, Bobby and Sanna guarantee that. Part of this is networking towards other festivals, for example during the tours. Musicians often participate in each other's festivals.

Then the implementation work begins. Processing applications, administration, catering, the bar, collecting and bringing artists and so on. The main players here are Fred and Angie Rootveld, Thomas Peperkamp and his girlfriend Marian, Samuel Klemke, Julian Restropo, Gergely Pázmándi and Alexei Belousov. Annette Kruisbrink, Arlette Ruelens, Jim and Ine ten Boske, Cokkie van Elst and the undersigned also joined hands where necessary. Levi also came to cheer us up regularly.

All this in a pleasant, friendly atmosphere, one of the trademarks of this festival. Team, thank you!

Novelty

This year I noticed something remarkable about the program booklet. It was so thin! I leaf through it with my journalistic interest and yes, I can already see it. The concert programs were missing.

Promptly I got visions of *Guess This Melody*, something that I am not very good at with all that contemporary music. Would this year's report be a musicological disaster?

Fortunately, I found a QRG code that led to a site www.concertprogramme.me. A great idea if you have a Smartphone and Internet. Saves a lot of paper and environmentally harmful material.

Wait a minute ... I have a Smartphone. Just got a new one from the boss. Internet ... Mobile data Netherlands 4G, that doesn't cost the boss that much. But Germany ... Then you have to switch on roaming. With the warning for extra costs. Ai, I suddenly have to think about our company rules for Internet use. Use as much WiFi as possible and as little roaming as possible abroad, otherwise our collective data quota will be used up in no time.

As a consequence: No concert program during the recitals, so ...

I followed the QRG code on WiFi at home, and made screen dumps from all the concerts relevant to me. Yes, tricky method,; -) there was no print function on www.concertprogramme.me. If you want to save paper, you should not be able to print either, that was probably the thought, otherwise the rainforest will not benefit either.

Good, I made my concert reports by number and I kept a good track of whether the artist also changed the program. With the screen dumps I could relate song to music work.

Indeed, the QRG code program is an innovative idea. Now that I think about it ...; -) how much environmental impact do all those Smartphone operations generate to read the program compared to a piece of paper?

Calculate it ...

And a small warning at the end: the site has since disappeared and if you go there, you will immediately be bombarded with a commercial purpose. I was glad that I made some screendumps, because the programme disappears after a while. Not so journalist-friendly!

Master Classes



Emma Rush

Thu Le

Day Two brought me two masterclasses, starting with the Vietnam-born guitarist Thu Le. I had met her at previous festivals in Nordhorn, not only as a skilled classical guitar player, but also as an enthusiastic jazz and pop interpreter in the lounge. She participated in the Cat. 1 competitions in 2013, 2015 and 2016 and achieved third place once.

I had *Nocturne No. 3* from Op. 4 by Johann Kaspar Mertz (1806 - 1856) with me, a piece in two parts, *maestoso* and *vivace*.

Points for attention for me were dynamics, timbre and change.

It was a nice lesson; -) a little too early for the audience, still. Thu Le played and sang the examples when needed (with my voice as a hoarse crow I never actually do that). We also discussed the sense and nonsense of competitions on the guitar. Conclusion: Necessary evil, which you actually have to get rid of as quickly as possible.

Emma Rush

The masterclass with the Canadian guitarist Emma Rush was in the afternoon of Day Two. I did not know her, which obviously says something about the extent to which I stay updated the guitar world, but which does offer openings for pleasant surprises.

And so it was, Emma Rush turned out to be a cheerful and pragmatic musician with practical ideas and the attitude that you can also make yourself comfortable when the music is served with it. With a sense of humor, she turned the lesson into a relaxing event.

I played *Nocturne No. 3* again and received useful tips about fingerings (half a barre on the first fret took the sting out of the triplet passage), attention to right-hand fingerings (a neglected area, I admit) and expanding the dynamics through excessively soft play. The latter is not easy at first, because you do not have the feeling that you will come across so softly to an audience at all. In practice, it is not so bad.

Johan Fostier

I knew the Belgian guitarist Johan Fostier from a master class and a concert at the Twenthe Guitar Festival in 2009. Yes, time does fly indeed!

I played an *Aria* by Johan Adolf Hasse (1699 - 1783), entitled *Digli che io son Fedele*, "I tell you that I will be loyal to you." Not a very simple piece, I have tackled it during my "guitar career" several times with varying degrees of success, but it continues to challenge for me.

Varying success, indeed, I was not so sure of myself in the presence of the audience. This led to an exercise back to basics.

To begin with, the tone formation. I play a lot from the wrist, which makes the tone somewhat narrow. By making the apoyando movement more spacious and moving from the arm, the sound became fuller and more powerful. I keep searching for the right angle of attack.

To be able to play from the arm, you need space. That requires a different attitude, less huddled around the guitar. Quite a transition, you have to push it back a bit from the tip of the chair. Not a thing that I managed in an instant.

Fostier emphasized the usefulness of efficiency, not making unnecessary movements. He came with the planting technique from Pumping Nylon from Scott Tennant. I have that book myself, but I never really got around to working it out. It soon became apparent that I had my fingers stuck together so tightly that I couldn't get a single tone with all the fingers on the strings, everything was stiffened, I was even emotionally unbalanced. A very silly feeling, as if after 45 years of playing the guitar you still can't and it will never be something. A crippling thought when you realize that you have the majority of your life behind you.

That reminded me of a certain masterclass at the Twenthe Guitar Festival 2010 with Mr. Frank B. My lack of skill and the clearly emphasized distance between master and student by Mr. B shocked me that much that I was inclined to hang the guitar on the willows.

This time there was, however, a big difference. A touch of humor and therefore being able to laugh at myself. Fostier did that very well, a joke at some time, a joke that softened my sense of insecurity with a smile of mildness. He showed me my value. In this way I was able to pick myself up again, where I completely drowned in with Frank B.

This masterclass first became a confrontation with my own turmoil and impatience with myself, but later after some reflection it was still a confirmation of why I have remained loyal to the guitar since I was seventeen.

So I continue with fresh courage with *Digli che io son Fedele*.

Evening Zero



The Guitar Company

On April 24th, 2019, the ninth Guitar Festival Nordhorn began with a performance by The Guitar Company, consisting of Bobby Rootveld, Samuel Klemke and Laura Klemke. Gergely Pázmándi provided the light and the effects. What appeared to be a classical concert, turned out to be a dazzling multimedia show with psychedelic features in which an anthology of pop music came along on stage.

I have been writing impressions and reviews for this guitar festival for years, but this performance did not follow a structured written approach. So much sound, video and impressions! This provided me with an exercise in psychedelic writing. All brakes loose and free association. Quite a challenge for me to keep the criticism at bay for a while in the series of writing impressions and to continue to write intuitively, even though what you put on paper makes no sense to you.

It became a piece full of literal and figurative references that spontaneously occurred to me. Which are those? Guess it! To help with this, I mention the songs that The Guitar Company produced in its own arrangement (both sound and image):

1. AC/DC: *Thunderstruck*
2. David Bowie: *The Man who sold the World*
3. De Duelling Banjos scene uit de film *Deliverance*
4. The Beatles: *Hey Bulldog*
5. Scorpions: *Coast to Coast*
6. Kula Shaker: *SOS*
7. Muse: *Muscle Museum*
8. Queen: *Bohemian Rhapsody*
9. Michael Jackson: *Billy Jean*
10. The Beatles: *Everybody's got something to hide except for me and my Monkey*
11. Johannes Brahms: *Hongaarse Dans Nr. 11*

12. Muse: *Bliss*

13. Rolling Keith is Stoned: Medley van popsongs en volksmuziek.

This story eventually becomes part of the Nordhorn 2019 Guitar Festival report on the DOS Amigos Homepage.

As a title song I want to add one of the original pieces of this performance. Which? It has become *Muscle Museum* of Muse, and of the album *Showbiz*.

The Show business in particular is about recognition and recognition of an artistic or entertainment presentation by the public: listeners, viewers, art lovers, you name it. Recognition provides fame and money. You may live on it. But can you survive too? Does it make sense to your existence?

This song is about recognition of an artist by his or her audience. Let me be honest with an urge that is not unknown to me, and perhaps also one of the reasons for this blog.

; -) A writer is always looking for readers, right? If only in potential.

I feel the danger that it becomes a hunt for the impossible, a loss of independence in an addiction to recognition. As this song from Muse aptly states:

*Can you see that I am needing
And begging for so much more
Than you could ever give...
And I don't want you to adore me
Don't want you to ignore me
When it pleases you
Yeah, and I'll do it on my own.
And I'll do it all by myself
You will never make it.*

That is the wonderful paradox of recognition, you depend on where you actually do not want that at all. But that's how it works, without being together you are alone. You need company. In this case on six strings.

Sabrina Vlaskalic Memorial

In January 2019 the guitarist Sabrina Vlaskalic died in a fatal traffic accident. A shock for the guitar world in the Netherlands, she was a beloved guitar teacher at the Prince Claus Conservatory in Groningen and one of the driving forces of the Dutch Guitar Foundation.

I met her as a musician at the 2008 Guitar Festival in Twente and later saw and heard her again on various occasions. She also had connections with the Guitar Festival Nordhorn, she brought students with her, held an information session for the conservatory training in Groningen, participated as a jury member and also played concerts.

That was the reason that a modest memorial was held, while her partner was present. A video recording of her was shown of a concert in the Guitar Salon Enkhuizen. Yes, she was like that on the guitar. Her performance of *El Delirio* by Antonio Cano was my inspiration last

year to write a story for a musician who is also a therapist. It was an atmospheric event, also because the weather outside gave expression to the mood, heavy rainfall with thunderstorms.

The ceremony ended with a recording of one of her interviews. There she discussed her own composition, which she wrote as a fifteen-year-old in sorrow for a lost competition. Surprisingly, she said that she saw competitions primarily as ways of forcing people to listen to her because there were no concert venues. A functional approach to competitions!

Night Zero: Guitar Company

Kulturhaus NIHZ, twenty-four April Anno Domini two thousand nineteen...

The light goes out. I sense my writing pad on my leg and my pen in my hand, but everything is dark, I am writing blind. I have to trust that I write my letters far enough apart to be able to decipher them later. It makes my prose windy in the literal sense.

With an ominous hissing sound, a stifling damp smoke seems to coil into the room. I get oppressive, the fog takes my breath away, my vision fades. What kind of vapor is this? I feel dizzy. Am I stoned or just tired? Bright green rays draw a forest in the mist, glittering stars burst onto vague silhouettes of the audience.

Lightning flashes crackle through the forest, a legato sequence squeals in my ears.

*My mind raced
And I thought what could I do
And I knew
There was no help, no help from you*

Helpless? What am I doing here? I start running, stumbling over the tree roots, sweat running down my back. Away from that madness! I leave the noise behind. The forest is opening. A light glare catches my attention.

Somebody there? Some company maybe?

A grinning head turns up in front of me, the years of his life pass in a series of grimaces, youth and old age shape in circular motion. It sings a melancholous song.

*We passed upon the stair
We spoke of was and when
Although I wasn't there
She said I was her friend*

My thoughts flash back on the stairs of time. Yes, years ago. 2016. At this place. That meeting sharpened my pen, brought friendship, trust and energy, but also confrontation with my own impatience and restlessness. I follow the ink from my pen on the paper of my notebook, letters stretched out in a darkened handwriting.

I have been doing this for years... report as a feast on six strings...

The head disappears into the fog. I am alone again in the forest of waving light. Alone? No, I hear something in the distance. A sun peaks through the mist, it gets hot, hot, burnt out and glowing. I hear a banjo and a guitar. They talk hesitantly with each other, tone by tone, question, answer, counter-question. Runs accelerate until they duel in harmony. They are each other's company. "I could play all day like this," they shout.

The mist thickens, the sun disappears. The green rays shine in my eyes. A highway of impressions rushes in my head, day and night, one catches up with the other, time runs back and forth, yet never stands still.

Am I crazy now? A feeling of complete abandonment squeezes my throat. I look around but see nothing, I can only go by my hearing. In the distance there is a rumor:

*You can talk to me
You can talk to me
You can talk to me
If you're lonely, you can talk to me.*

With good hope I start running towards the sound. I struggle ahead through scrub and groping lianas. Or are they waves of stiffened water? I catch a glimpse of a periscope with a big eye that stares at me with interest. Yellow? Submarine? Yellow Submarine? No, something tells me that it is the sound of strings. A guitar company. A dog barks at me. Sounds like a bulldog.

I am going crazy, silent fear paralyzes me, will I share my father's lot now?

I brusquely put the thought aside. This can not be true. No. I will not crash on that coast of madness. The sound of weeping guitars on a thumping rhythm bounces back and forth inside my skull and draws an image of a woman in a car. Her husband pulls the heart out of her body with long threads of flesh, she looks naked and unconscious. Cars rush past me on all sides, days and nights pass by in bright colors. *Hell highway.*

This is a bad trip! I realize myself, how is that possible without drugs?

The forest contracts into a cube of rays. As I walk on, I hit the solid wall. But I was sitting in a chair, right? An astronaut appears between the light effects. A cosmonaut god? He waves a book up and down, with raised finger he reproaches, his movements create a guitar solo.

*This is the age of 'Decay' and 'Hypocrisy'
Sometimes I feel like the world isn't ready for me*

Decay? Decline? I take a look around, if I escape from this, I urgently need to be checked-up...

I stumble forward, my muscles seem to be failing me, my legs feel like a mechanism that has long been in a museum. If only I had visited a gym more often. Nice and sweaty in such a sportive sleeping suit to make my muscles swell.

*Too long trying to resist it
You've just gone and missed it
It's escaped your world.*

My fingers itch. Desire for the pressure of strings. In vain, I have been without guitar for too long, no master class can save me. Back to basics is too late for me at my age. Opportunity lost, escape missed.

The fog chills me to the bone. I no longer know where I am, just that I want to escape from this false fantasy. The voice of a fallen queen fills my ears with opera. Restless, my hand forms the letters, my notepad is my only support.

*Is this the real life?
Is this just fantasy?
Caught in a landslide
No escape from reality
Open your eyes
Look up to the skies and see...*

Reality or fantasy? I look at the sky, stars of laser green slowly rotate in endless patterns on white chalk firmament. Angels dance far away to the rhythm of my childhood. So long ago!

*People always told me be careful of what you do
And don't go around breaking young girls' hearts
And mother always told me be careful of who you love
And be careful of what you do 'cause the lie becomes the truth.*

I shake my head, my heart used to be more vulnerable than theirs. In my fantasy, a romance in a dream was safer than the lie of reality. Still I found company. Simply, by experiencing life and death together. Strings brought a feeling that I had lost back to life. A white album floats in front of me, a sheet glides from a dream.

*The deeper you go, the higher you fly
The higher you fly, the deeper you go
So come on come on
Come on its such a joy*

Joy, yes, that is what I need now, a bit of anesthesia for everyday life, against the fatigue of getting hit on the rocks, to let all things go in the dizziness of a Hungarian folk dance that swings good. Rocking in an endless fall of weightlessness! Bliss of the wink of a muse.

*Everything about you is how I'd want to be
Your freedom comes naturally
Everything about you resonates happiness
Now I won't settle for less*

*Give me
All the peace and joy in your mind*

The forester smiles when he recognizes me, I slowly drift with the stream. The white firmament slowly paints black, the vapor condenses and the green rays form bars. All the music from my youth escapes through the bars and flourishes. *Hava nagila venis'mecha*, let's be happy and cheerful. *Hava neranana venis'mecha*, let's sing and be happy.

A thunderous applause displaces the music. I bow to an invisible audience. Finally recognition.

What for?

I awake with a shock, my writing pad clatters on the floor. An angel on the ledge of the fireplace smiles at me.

I notice three guitarists bowing, two men with a woman in the middle. A video image fades in the background.

The Guitar Company!

Day One



Emma Rush

Ensemble Competition

This year the registrations for the Ensemble Competition were more diverse than last year, now there were also professional ensembles participating.

Unfortunately, I missed the first participants due to a small communication failure, the competition started a little earlier than I expected. So I could only slip in the hall when it was the Vermeeren Trio's turn.

The name said it all, this was Tanja Vermeeren, loyal visitor to this festival with two of her students. They played *Flowerland*, *Caribbean Fantasy*, *Andante* by Leonard von Call, and *Morenito Do Brasil* by Giuseppe Farrauto.

Piece one and piece three were in a trio setting, with pieces two and four the members of the trio acted as a duo. *Flowerland* sounded beautifully rhythmic with a fine timbre. *Caribbean Fantasy* was a duo-combination of the youngest of the company. *Andante* by Von Call had a clear classical structure with many question-answer passages, the trio kept pace and communicated actively. *Morenito do Brasil* became a friendly Brazilian duo with effective modulation. Great interplay.

In addition to a conventional classical flute, the flute-guitar duo Esterbauer-Klenig also had a noticeably larger model.

They produced three pieces: *Entr 'Acte* by Jaques Ibert (1890-1962), a duo by Mauro Giuliani (1781 - 1829) and a contemporary piece.

Entr 'Acte brought a memory of the performance of my class mate Els Grotendorst on flute in high school. This duo played much, much faster, but they compensated for that by phrasing. The (quiet) Giuliani part with the closing *Allegro* was neatly constructed and tightly accompanied by the guitar. For the contemporary piece the maxi-flute appeared on stage, a piece with a nice atmosphere where the flautist had to take a very long breath.

The Dresdener Gitarren Quartett, two ladies and two gentlemen, came up in a classic arrangement, ladies in the middle. They played two adaptations of music by Isaac Albeniz (1860-1909) and two contemporary pieces.

The pieces from Albeniz, including *Cubana*, brought calm romance with a warm sound. The arrangements were interesting in terms of role distribution. The contemporary piece started Light Contemporary, but soon the Spanish character broke through. Entertaining, well-balanced and virtuoso.

The Dresdener Gitarren Quartett was the last participant: time for the jury to appreciate!

Concert Emma Rush

The Canadian guitarist Enna Rush gave me a pleasant and humorous master class, so I became curious about her larger work, the evening performance on Thursday.

She kicked off with *Preludio Triston* and *Candombe en mi* by Máximo Diego Pujol (* 1957). A nice relaxed performance, also in the fast passages, she knows what she wants to say with the music. We had talked about her performance of dynamics (soft start to have more reach) in the master class: She could play soft very well. The tight virtuosity of the *Candombe* concluded the piece in style.

To my surprise and pleasure, she then played *Hommage a Paco de Lucía* by Annette Kruisbrink (* 1957) in a very eloquent way. Fast arpeggio patterns that resulted in flamenco-like variations were a clear compliment to the old (now deceased) flamenco master. Rush's tremolo was tight and certainly not rushed, nice to listen to.

From *Appalachian Colors*, a hymn on the mountain ridge in eastern North America by William Beauvais (* 1956) Rush played Gold and Red movements. She used a striking capo that only covered three strings on the second fret. The piece offered a new-age-like lyric with jazzy transitions. A beautiful piece of contemporary music with a warm sound.

Brincy Ocean by Canadian guitarist Dale Kavanagh (1958 *) wrapped the sounds of a folk song in pleasantly contemporary sounds.

She concluded her program with *Suite del Recuerdo* by José Luis Merlin (* 1952), with the movements *Evocacion*, *Zamba*, *Chacarera*, *Carnavalito*, *Evocacion* and *Joropo*. Here Rush combined lyricism with power and virtuosity and played the loudest passages of the concert.

As I write this report, I see the striking fact that all composers of her program were born in the fifties. Nice! Are they my age?

The great thing about this concert was that Emma Rush remained on the lyrical side of the spectrum, nice for relaxed listening, I just needed such a point of rest.

She played an *Etude* from *Etudes Esquisses* by Gerald Garcia (* 1949) as an encore.

Concert Grigory Novikov

In his concert, the Russian Grigory Novikov combined guitar playing with storytelling, bringing an animated story about composer or music to each piece. A nice mix of music and information. In addition, he played the Saimolov guitar that the Category 1 prize winner would receive. So, the instrument had already had its maiden trip on stage.

I had heard Novikov before in 2016. Three years is quite a long time in which you can further develop yourself. That was clearly audible this evening in a positive sense, especially in *The Legend of Hagaromo*, which is still fresh in my memory of his performance back then.

Keijo Fujii thought the performance of this piece to be legendary, a good reason to add another story to this report in the form of *Angel on Six Strings*. Thanks to the excellent rendition of Grigory Novikov.

Anatoly Shevchenko signed for *Karpathian Rhapsody*. The Carpathians are a mountain range in Czech Bohemia, so a certain pun is obvious here. However, this piece was not an opera; -). Novikov said that he had received this piece from a composer friend (apparently Shevchenko), but that it had been at the bottom of a pile for ten years. Once he discovered it by accident, it surprised him so much that he had to play it with all urgency. A contemplative introduction led to a fiercely played Balkan rhythm with tremolo passages. A compelling piece!

Johann Kaspar Mertz (1806 - 1856) was present with *Fingals Höhle* from *Bardenklänge* and *Elegie*. Deep sadness hidden in virtuosity, with Novikov showing himself to be a master to lift the melody above all the arpeggio violence.

The last program item consisted of a number of Russian folk song arrangements by Sergey Rudnev (* 1955). An interesting musical idiom with, as we often encounter folk songs, a smile and a tear.

As an encore we heard *Under Cover*, also from Sergey Rudnev. A humorous persiflage on detective film music with another pistol shot at the end.

Lounge Concert Stefan Grasse

Lounge concerts are an extension of the evening concert in the relaxed atmosphere of a snack and a drink. Which may have the only disadvantage for the artist, that the concentration of a part of the audience goes more to that drink, an effect that was noticeable tonight.

Stefan Grasse has already made an appearance on Nordhorn with his own compositions in often a swinging Latin style.

He brought a nice swing a la Jobim, played a South American travel impression in Latin-blue (considering the pace it must have been a train journey) and sparkled with Flamenco-jazzy sounds in a *Pasodoble*. *Happy Tune* immediately brought me into the atmosphere of *Felicidade* and *Bedtime Story* reminded me of my own stories that I told my kids before going to sleep. An impression of a sunset in rolling arpeggios made the party complete.

Guitar cinema Samuel Klemke

In addition to his career as a versatile and much-travelled guitarist, Samuel Klemke is also involved in musical multimedia. Not only does he make films himself, he also provides the musical accompaniment to the multimedia of others, just like the musician in the cinema.

Before World War II, film maker Lotte Reiniger worked as a pioneer on silhouette cartoons. She fled the Nazi regime with her partner, but they could not get a residence permit because of their socialist sympathies. That is why they lived on temporary visas in all sorts of countries. She made her best films in France and Italy, including *Papageno*, the subject of the first film this evening. She was forced for some time to make propaganda films for the Nazi regime to get the space to take care of her sick mother.

Papageno, that is Mozart's *Zauberflöte*. Samuel Klemke played the guitar arrangements of the appropriate music, neatly synchronized with the scenes.

The second film was an ancient oldie about a trip to the moon, from a time when people thought that *a la Jules Verne* they would fly up with a giant cannonball towards the moon. They had never heard of empty air, because the male astronauts went on a space voyage with a tuxedo and jacket. Their somewhat violent encounter with the lunar natives had the appearance of European colonialism of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Samuel combined sampler effects with live play, together an interesting spectacle.

Night One: Angel on Six Strings



Paraprase on The Legend of Hagaromo

On the River

Once upon a time there was a fisherman named Jiang who went up the river for fishing with his cormorants every day. During night-time, he took his birds and boomed his bamboo raft with oil lamp on the water to arrive at the right spot just before dawn. The lamplight attracted the fish and the cormorants did the rest.

The fisherman had a cormorant that he had brought up from an early age and a clear bond had developed between them. Sometimes, Jiang imagined that the animal was speaking to him or answering his talk. That is why he gave him a name, Líng hún, which means Soul, for he believed that the bird had a living soul.

The other cormorants just chattered, but Líng hún sat down quietly on his braces and exchanged glances with him. The fisherman therefore spoke softly to the bird in the lonely hours of the night and thus the bird became a confidant.

The fish approached, attracted by the lamp light *en masse*. Jiang nudged the birds and the cormorants dived into the water enthusiastically and brought out fish. They could devour small fish immediately, but the larger fish got stuck in their throats, because it was made narrower with a sling. Jiang then brought the bird in, pulled the floundering fish from their throats and threw the catch in the basket.

The catch was good and after a few dives the birds were saturated too. They made themselves comfortable on their braces and put their heads in their feathers. Except Líng hún. The cormorant sat restlessly on his braces and stared at the surface of the water below in which you could see the fish swimming in the lamp light.

Jiang became worried: "What is it, Líng hún?"

"My heart is heavy," the bird croaked.

Jiang shot a surprised glance. The bird actually spoke to him! He had never done that before. So it had to be urgent what he wanted. He was worried because Líng hún was dear to him.

"What can I do to ease your heart? I have known you from the time that you were a peeper and you have caught countless fish for me so that I could support myself. I am grateful for that."

"I would love to hunt once in a while like when I was a kid. I remember that I caught a fish that I could barely get through my throat. The river is so calm and I see a few specimens swimming that make my mouth watering. But my sling is too tight for me, and the rope on the ring on my leg is too short."

Jiang doubted: "What will you do if I release you? I'm afraid I will be lonely if freedom calls you louder than I can."

"Do not be afraid. If you release me, I will come back and promise to show you something that will solve your real loneliness."

Jiang understood and considered his words. The loneliness that Líng hún was referring to was sometimes difficult for him, he had no other company than the birds in his fisherman's cabin, he was too quiet and timid to attract the attention of a woman. That is why he spent his evenings reading and writing poetry about joys and sorrows, something that he kept well hidden from his fellow villagers, because a fisherman could not possibly be a poet. What would the bird want to show him?

Jiang removed the sling around the neck of the Cormorant and removed the rope on the ring around his leg. Then he nudged the bird. Líng hún took off into the sky with cries of joy and circled a few times above the river in the light of dawn.

Suddenly the bird made a sharp dive into the water. After a few seconds, Líng hún emerged, a large fish floundering in its mouth. With a few strong throat movements, the Cormorant swallowed the fish. Líng hún swam around for a moment and then flew back to his bracket on Jiang's boat.

Jiang was pleasantly surprised that his confidence was not let down and decided to let the rope go from now on.

"Let's go up the river after sunset," said Líng hún, "then I can show you something that will make your loneliness disappear."

Island of the Angels

The sun is down ...

Jiang set down his bowl of rice and stared across the river. Fog patches swirled over the water. He looked at the cormorants in their cages. He nodded to Líng hún's cage and opened the door. The bird jumped out and sat down on its brace on the bamboo raft.

The fisherman wanted to light his lamp and hang it on the raft, but the bird shook its head: "The moonlight will be enough for us. Sail to that little island over there. "

Jiang boomed down the silent river with a beating heart. The moon rose and painted the waves in the reflecting water. He took another good look at the sky; it was as if he were seeing silhouettes of birds turning wide circles in front of the moon's disc.

"I'm going to take a closer look," said Líng hún, and flew in the direction of the tumult. After a short while he returned: "Carefully," he whispered, "they are not allowed to see us. Sail to the shore, under cover of the trees. "

"Who are they?" Jiang whispered.

"Patience, you will see it right away."

At the island they heard laughter and singing of women's voices. Their timbre touched Jiang's heart, he became anxious about his own desire and therefore wanted to turn around and go home.

The cormorant touched him with his beak: "Keep courage and control yourself. Fear does not help you here, you will be surprised if you persist."

Very cautiously the fisherman dragged his bamboo raft to the shore and crept along with Líng hún through the reeds to the bushes on the riverside. He crawled through the brush in the direction of the sound.

There was a clearing in the moonlight. Jiang caught his breath. Four women danced naked on the grass and together they formed a wonderful arabesque of pure beauty. A fifth played a string instrument and supported the dance with a compelling melody of silver tones.

"They are angels," Líng hún softly spoke, "they take off their wings and dance on the earth when the moon is full. Look, there are a few wings and you," he pointed with his beak, "are sitting on top of a pair too."

Astonished, Jiang touched the ground under his knees. Such softness! They were not mere feathers, the wings were a fine mesh, as if a thin mist had crystallized. Flexible, but extremely strong. He stroked the tissue in wonder.

However, he was clumsy and with a lot of noise broke off a branch from the brush. The angels were shocked. Four of them rushed to the place where they had left their wings, and in an instant, they flew up under warning cries.

The last of them, however, the string player, stayed behind and walked step by step to where she had left her wings. She looked with great fear at Jiang, who was holding her wings in his hand.

Jiang felt enchanted. How beautiful she was! It was not only her beauty that delighted him, he also saw who she was deep in herself, her love, her caring for the world and everyone who had been entrusted to her. Angels do not hide their true nature when they lay down their wings. From the moment of that first glance he longed for her and would do everything possible to win her over.

"If you possess her wings, you have power over her," Líng hún whispered, "then she must follow you and live like a human being on earth."

The angel was shocked: "Please, give back my wings. If I don't return, they will miss me, just like all those people who count on my protection."

Líng hún's statement brought Jiang into a struggle. If he kept these wings, then ...

"What's your name?" he asked.

"I can't tell you that. If you know my name, you have power over me."

"I mean no harm, and," he held up her wings, "I have these."

"Lian," was her reply.

"Lian, you enchant me," Jiang said, "now I know how love sets my heart on fire. I cannot let you go."

Lian walked over to him: "Please!" said her eyes.

"What should I do, Líng hún?" Jian asked the cormorant.

"What you did to me."

"But my heart is on fire."

"You call that love," Lian interrupted, "but do you know its true nature?"

Insight struck the fisherman. He stroked the wings for a moment and then gave them back.

Lian put them on, but didn't fly away yet: "Now I see that you are a good person who knows love. When my work is done, I will come back to you, I promise. Wait for me."

With a kiss she said goodbye and flew into the moonlit night. Jiang watched her for a long time.

"It is almost dawn," Líng hún brought him back to Earth, "we must go fishing for our living."

Jiang nodded and took a final look at the clearing. Then he noticed Lian's instrument. She had left it in the rush of the moment. A beautifully built sound box made of fragrant cedar wood, with a key attached to it with artistic mechanics that stretched six strings. He carefully touched the strings. The sound of the dance filled his ears.

"Lian," he whispered.

He took the instrument home with him, perhaps someone could find it and take it away. He packed it well and hid it in his storage cellar.

Angel on Six Strings

Lian kept her promise. After two years, she returned to Jiang and laid down her wings. She brought balance into Jiang's life and their love brought forth three children, making their household a chaotic, cheerful gang. Jiang's hard work with the fishing birds brought bread on the table and provided an example for the children, Lian's angelic patience raised them to be wise and loving people. They found their own love and destiny and left the house by the river when the time came.

Lian missed life with the children inside the walls and felt lonely in the hours that Jiang was with the cormorants on the water. She started taking long walks in the forests around the village and a few villagers who saw misdeeds everywhere spoke angry about her.

"What does a woman do in a dark forest when her husband is not at home? Why does she stay away for whole days, whether the sun is shining or it is raining? There is something vicious going on. It wouldn't surprise me if she started dancing with the spirits in the forest where she also looks for her herbs. Sometimes you hear fragments of music on the wind. Who knows what shameful practices take place there?"

Soon then they came up with countless stories about fellow villagers who had once defiled virtue. As always, they did not mention it to Jiang himself, they rather gossiped diligently after he had lifted his heels instead.

Jiang, however, was not completely blind, he asked Lian several times why she was sad, but she was ashamed and blamed her moods on the season of aging, in which seed does bear fruit no longer.

One day Jiang came home early and just saw how Lian was walking towards the forest wearing hiking clothes. At that time, he also caught the whispers of a few villagers and the shock struck him.

"What should I do?" he desperately asked Línghún, who was still accompanying him, even though his tail feathers had turned grey, "what drives Lian outside of this house?"

"Lian is looking for her happiness. Go after her, but make sure she doesn't notice you. But before you do that..." Línghún fluttered inside and tapped the door of the basement closet.

Jiang followed him and opened the door. Her wings were still there. Lian knew their hiding place, but hadn't touched them since she returned to him. Not even now, she wasn't looking for her happiness outside of this world. He couldn't suppress a sigh of relief.

"What should I look for in this cupboard, Línghún?" he asked in surprise.

"Find what is dear to her ..."

Jiang worried himself sick, but couldn't think of anything. He entered the basement closet and descended the stairs. By touch he was looking for what the cormorant meant. After a

long search, he came across a well-packed object at the back of the basement. When he picked it up, it sang a single silver tone. In a flash, he remembered exactly how he was enchanted so long ago. Would this object be the happiness that she was looking for?

Both went on the road to follow Lian, just like they did the day Jiang had met Lian for the first time. Líng hún always went exploring and informed Jiang how he could keep an eye on her unnoticedly. They traversed dense forests and climbed hills for two hours and struggled through trenches until they reached an open space that was completely covered with the most beautiful flowers.

Lian sat down in the clearing and waited. Jiang and Líng hún watched, hidden in the low bamboo wood around it.

Soon they heard the sound of wingbeats, eight angels perched among the flowers. Jiang recognized a few of those from the first times he was on the island of the angels. They laid down their wings and greeted Lian heartily.

Lian looked happy, took off her clothes and together they danced in the clearing. "Dear Lian, the dances we know without music are wonderful to do," said one of them, "but what we did when you accompanied us has never been surpassed and we are still missing your music. The way your silver tone play contributed to our happiness was priceless. Where did your instrument go?"

Lian moved in and burst into tears. The angels hugged her in shock, but she was inconsolable.

"I accidentally left my instrument behind when I found love. I went back to the island, but it was gone. I didn't mind that at the time, my life was fulfilled and it stayed that way for years. But now that I have time to enjoy what I have achieved, the thought of the passion from my childhood suddenly returns. How poorly I anticipated what I would miss, what I loved doing so much."

Líng hún tapped the bag that Jiang held in his hand. A silver tone echoed.

Lian and the angels stood still. Jiang understood why and stood up. He took the instrument out of the bag, six strings gleaming in the light.

Lian's tears continued to flow, but now for joy. She rushed to him and embraced him intimately. "My dear love," she sobbed, "you make my happiness whole again."

She took the instrument in her hands and let the six strings sing. The angels danced and some flew gracefully above the flowers, dancing to the driving melody. Líng hún fluttered cheerfully with the heavenly beings and croaked excitedly.

When evening came, the angels said goodbye and Jiang, Lian and Líng hún returned home. Now that Jiang knew what Lian was doing deep in the forest, his worries about the villagers' malicious speech were over. He put those people on their place and Lian enchanted the population with her play, so beautiful that no one would gossip about her anymore.

Thus, Lian sometimes went to the forest when Jiang was on the water, and both were happier when they were together.

In this way the years passed and both became old and grey. They both knew that their lives together were limited in time. That is why they enjoyed every day, but did not avoid the conversation about the end of life.

"Ah," Jiang once said, "you always have your wings when death knocks on your door. You can still escape, I will be at peace, because you have brought love and happiness to my life and I am grateful for that."

Lian put a finger on his lips. "Come with me," she said, leading him to the basement closet. Jiang looked surprised, because there were **two** pairs of wings instead of just one.

"Every time I accompanied the dance with my instrument, the angels brought some material from their essence. Using it, I made wings for you. We cannot refuse death when it comes, when the time comes, we must go. But now we can follow each other to where you are going after the angel of death has called."

Thus, they left this live together when death knocked on their door.

And Líng hún? He had its own wings when it was time.

Day Two



Klemke Gitarrenduo

Preliminaries Professionals Competition

Twenty-six participants this year, contenders for the first prize of the Cat. 1 Competition. 26 x 6 = 156 minutes of repertoire, or more than four hours of attention for jury and journalist, including breaks and extra break time for a participation cancelled at the last minute.

Also, this time I write a few statistics, AK (announcement) or NAK (no announcement), 1 to 4 stars * for my impression and an F when I saw a candidate for the finals in it. Example ([AK], ****, F) for an excellently communicative candidate for the finals.

My personal hobby: The Announcement Statistics. Three players failed to announce, a good score, 88% of the candidates see the usefulness of this first communication with the audience. I did signal a trend: The New Announcement, only the piece, but not the player. Come on people, not false modesty, we also like to know *who* is playing it!

Another striking phenomenon: The advance of the electronic tuner. You would almost think that players no longer trust their hearing these days. A pity, because with a number of players the confidence in the electronics turned out to be inappropriate, which unfortunately was clearly audible in their performance.

Emilie Fend ([AK], **) kicked off with a piece by Regino Sainz de la Maza (1896 - 1981). It sounded Bolero-like with a clear Spanish sound idiom. Despite the neat finishing and the

sufficiently expanded phrasing, I did not get in touch with the piece. It was nice listening from time to time, but it was clearly a merely technical showcase.

Dejan Milevski ([AK], **) brought the *Mazurka Apassionata* by Augustin Barrios (1885 - 1944). My Barrios-pleasure arose briefly in the beginning, but soon weakened, the player brought the passion a bit too thoughtfully and modestly, doing so he pulled the phrases too far apart. Later he gained in certainty and the piece came out better. The tone was nicely finished, but you have romance and rrrromanticism when you play...

Arik Goldstein ([GAK], *) left me in the dark concerning his name, piece and composer, I got his name from the list of candidates. Somehow, I recognized the piece, a Guajira-like rhythm. Rhythmically slightly chaotic with pauses that were just too long for a smooth course. I clearly heard a fight in which he overstretched himself. I started to doubt myself a little, why don't I hear anything positive? Well, that was because of the unrest that I experienced.

Ju Myong Lin tackled the first part of the *Sonata* by Antonio José (1902-1936). A broadly oriented work with many sub-themes. The challenge is to forge that into a coherent whole. The player did not succeed, the themes became sandy ground, with the flat dynamics not improving the situation.

Paul Sun ([AK], ***) made the attempt with *Fantasia* by John Dowland (1563 - 1626) and a *Capriccio* by Luigi Legnani (1790 - 1877). The *Fantasia* got the capo on the second fret and started with a transparent voicing. Only the dynamics ... sigh. Still, when the voice pattern became more complicated, the piece started to cheer because of the drive of the player. This drive also turned out to be a pitfall for clarity. The *Capriccio* had a solid pace with a surprise rest that was often used in those days. The ending gave me a smile because of the humour in the performance.

Thierry Begin-Lamontagne ([AK], **) played the first *Etude* (no. 12) by Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887 - 1959) together with a *Valse* from an unknown composer. The waltz was full of playful and technically difficult ornaments and had a very Etude-like character. Lamontagne played the piece light-hearted and slightly diffuse. The Villa-Lobos Etude did not come to my taste, unclear harmony, hurry in the performance and at times far too loud, causing the melody to perish in the sound violence.

I gradually started to believe that I was in a very critical mood at this festival. Perhaps a side-effect of the ever-rising level at this competition, which was once achieved by a few, is now almost normal for every participant.

Time for Theduardo Prasetyo ([AK], **). I could not hear his announcement, but I recognized the music, two parts from *Aquarelle* by Sergio Assad, *Valseana* and *Divertimento*. I thought *Valseana* was the best of the two, warmly played with a nice musical line and a remarkably soft ending. *Divertimento* did fascinate me less, the player was too eager for virtuosity, which came at the expense of clarity.

Eliska Lenhartova ([GAK], ****, F) played a piece by Mario Castelnuovo Tedesco (1895 - 1968) and an unknown piece that had traits of Aguado or Mertz. She brought the piece from Tedesco into a well-finished version with a lot of variation and fantasy and played it with a

beautiful tone with little noise. The second piece received the same treatment. In my opinion the best candidate so far.

Ihor Kordiuk ([AK], **) found Johann Sebastian Bach and Manuel Ponce (1882 - 1948) the most suitable composers to make his qualifying round a success. He showed ergonomic innovation with a wonderful support for his guitar and a flashy elbow support. Maybe that was why he turned Bach on very heavily? Ponce got a little more humour in the voice dialogue, but his very loud game remained a bit restless.

Bogdan Mihailescu ([AK], **) chose a *Sonata* from Domenico Scarlatti (1685 - 1757) as the entry point for this competition. In the performance with a good pace, he introduced subtle sound differences. However, the famous Scarlatti swing just did not come.

Jaime Benjumea ([AK], **) bet on a challenging piece, the infamous *Prelude BW1006* by Johann Sebastian Bach, also known as *The Stumbling Block*. The stumbling was not too bad, the candidate remained well on track. To my taste that proceeded a bit at the expense of the swing of the piece. Of course, I held my breath as the infamous stumbling pass approached, but luckily, I got some air again afterwards. Nicely played.

Until now there were not many candidates who gave me the impression that they would be finalists. Anyway, we are not yet halfway. A welcome break got me a breath of fresh air and some water to become concentrated again.

Adrik Christobal ([AK], ***) started with solid rasgueados from Federico Moreno Torroba (1891 - 1982). He danced smoothly through the piece, but I thought the soft passages could really be a bit softer.

I believe that this year I have a poor understanding of titles. Perhaps there should be an additional requirement with the announcement: *Loud and clear*.

I heard Albeniz with Hannelore Van der Elst ([AK], ****, F), but I missed the names of the pieces. Whatever the case, she interpreted Albeniz firmly, yet she retained clarity and tranquillity. The finish in the scale runs was fine. The second piece was clearly something contemporary. Her approach was methodically the same as Albeniz. I was curious how she played soft passages, because they were missing. ; -) I hope she gets the chance to do so in the finals.

Jehee Lee ([AK], **) did his preliminary round with *Tiento* by Maurice Ohana. I remembered the sound of the piece, yet Lee's particularly treacly interpretation did not refresh it. It sounded as if he was playing in delay and also made the breaks between his phrases very long. As a consequence, the story of the piece came to a halt. Purely technical (in terms of actions) the piece was okay, but the interpretation was lacking.

Franciso Lopes ([AK], *) called in Bach and then played *Shard* by Elliott Carter. Bach remained difficult as always, as I heard from the little errors and slips from time to time. The second work was contemporary. Shard means sharp fragment, and indeed as far as I'm concerned, *Nomen est Omen* was true. The player was clearly more at home on this piece, sound and expression were pretty good. With the choice of that piece, however, he lost me, those shards did not bring me luck.

Luca Romanelli ([AK], ****) came in spectacularly, he broke his footstool in two pieces. After the arrival of a spare sample, he played *Songe de Capricorne* by Roland Dyens (1955 - 2016). This was a really nice performance, he brought the story to life in the play, I kept listening. Yet I was in doubt to give him a place in the finals.

Carlina Flores ([AK], **) put her bet on the *Fandango* from *Tres Piezas* by Joaquin Rodrigo (1901 - 1999) and a piece by Federico Moreno Torroba. *Fandango* is tricky, you have to run the fire out of your slippers and the rush is lurking. The player was bothered by slips and sloppiness plus a little wrestling from time to time. Torroba sounded a lot better for her, but the haste in her play did not disappear.

Konstantin Shumilin ([AK], ***, F) chose a contemporary piece, *Just how I found You* by Andrew York. He started very well, I was impressed, but halfway he became surprised by the complexity of the piece. Fortunately, he managed to turn his surprise into certainty. It was a special piece with many tricky effects, though. That's why I thought he might have a chance for the finals.

Oskar Eres presented himself with the *La Folia variations* by Fernando Sor (1778 - 1839). It was weird, but despite the fact that I know *La Folia* quite well as a theme, I didn't become clear in one way or another in this version, it seemed to start immediately with the variations. I will search the literature sometime ... One of the challenges of playing theme and variations is keeping the increasingly complex variations musically interesting. That didn't quite work out, some parts seemed rather like an etude to me.

Oleksandr Chubarenko ([AK], ***) performed a composition by Michele (!) Giuliani (1801 - 1867): *Rondoletto Op. 4*. Well, that was a piece that immediately caused me to smile. Chubarenko took the technical hordes of virtuosity with style and remained cheerful. Involuntarily I had to think about Pavel Steidl, even though Chubarenko looked a lot more serious while playing.

Beata Atlas ([AK], ***) started to fix a capo on the third fret, a clear sign of Renaissance music. Indeed, a *Prelude* by John Dowland. She played the piece loftily in the appropriate sixteenth-century mood of sadness. The capo went off again when it was Johann Sebastian Bach's turn with an *Allemande*. She played this piece well-finished with the omission of a few repetitions. Heitor Villa-Lobos signed for the final piece: *Prelude Nr. 4*. I noticed her solid bass-line, especially in the fast passages in the middle section. A few flageolets were slightly off-target, yet soon her fingers found the right tone again. ****

Janis Neteler ([AK], ****, F) took his chances with *Gavotte and Rondeau* by Johann Sebastian Bach and an *Etude*, presumably number 3, by Heitor Villa-Lobos. The *Gavotte* became a light-hearted dance piece with the fast ornaments that were well finished. That's how I like to hear it. The *Etude* turned out to be a legato study. Musically not that interesting for me, but technically very well executed. Finals feeling.

Jesus Serrano Huitron ([AK], ****, F) took the first step to the final with two parts from the *Sonata* by Leo Brouwer, *Sarabanda de Scriabin* and *Toccata de Pasquini*. The *Sarabanda* started as far as I was concerned in the *World of Wonders*, with beautiful vibratos and a nice rubato phrasing. The *Toccata* was a clear contrast, especially in tempo, it was too fast, so I

had trouble following it. Which does not mean that it was played phenomenally. Final candidate.

Kira Telegina ([AK], ***) came up with a *Theme and Variations on a French Song* by Fernando Sor. That fits in with Sor's political orientation of his time, he was French-minded and had to flee Spain when the Spanish crown was restored. Sor composed a number of complicated variations. The contrasts of Telegina's playing were okay, but the balance between melody and accompaniment sometimes disappeared.

The last candidate: Miguel Chillon Pino ([AK], ****, F) with *Passacalle* from *Tres Piezas* by Joaquin Rodrigo. The bass theme that carries the entire piece must remain audible despite all technical and harmonic antics. In the beginning it went fine, but somewhere in the middle I lost the theme, until the player brought it back in the arpeggio passage. The very tricky scale variation was performed splendidly. I thought it was worth a final spot.

Mission completed, time to relax and head for the kitchen. Relaxing obviously did not apply to the jury. I heard some highlights, but you can't fill a complete final with that, because I only tipped five of the players. There is a Second Chance Round, so it is possible to give candidates the benefit of the doubt. I am curious who will go at once.

Concert Klemke Duo

The first half of the evening concert was played by the Klemke Duo, brother Samuel and sister Laura. Their teamwork started in the eighties! After their explosive interplay with Bobby in The Guitar Company on the first night, the stage was now for the two of them.

The entree became a well-known piece: *Adagio* by Tomaso Albinoni (1671 - 1751), a piece that may not even belong to Albinoni himself. This piece leads me directly to youth sentiment: *Adagio* from *Beggar Julia's Time Trip* by Ekseption. It reminds me of class evenings in 1970 with my portable tube pickup that became so hot that you could bake an egg on the turntable, so turning long play records was not a good idea. *Adagio* was fortunately a single, with the song *Julia* on the B-side.

The Klemke Duo brought the complete piece in a beautiful arrangement. The perfect synchronization between the players was striking.

Enrique Granados (1867 - 1916) composed a set of seven *Valses Poeticos*. There are both solo and duo arrangements of this piece for guitar. The version that the Klemke Duo played had much more richness of sound than the piano original. I heard a beautiful tone painting in which elegance and tenderness formed a beautiful combination.

Diapason by Jacob ter Veldhuis (* 1951) turned out to be an interesting contemporary composition in which question-answer play in all kinds of sound colours predominated. I heard a clear story in it until the last section became hardcore contemporary, then I normally lose contact. However, after the section of atonal violence, the piece died out in unprecedented magic.

I already knew the *Chaconne in G* by Georg Friedrich Händel (1685 - 1759) from the famous recording of Ida Presti and Alexandre Lagoya. The Klemke Duo clearly added a dimension to

that. Exuberant decorations with an increasing virtuosity characterized this rather long piece, I guess Händel had a considerable job writing this doen.

Enthusiastic applause was rewarded with an elegant encore: *Rappel des Oiseaux* by Jean Philippe Rameau (1683 - 1764). The little bird happily and virtuously danced out of the program.

Great concert!

Concert Gerhard Reichenbach

After the break it suddenly became a lot busier in the hall. ; -) that indicates the arrival of a fan club, and indeed, Gerhard Reichenbach had a number of students with him and was also known locally.

He lingered for a moment at the death of Sabrina Vlaskalic, whom he had personally known and of which he had also recorded a video tape when she entered a competition as a fifteen-year-old. As a tribute, he decided to deviate completely from the program and play a full Baroque program around Buxtehude, Bach and Scarlatti.

The *Fantasia* by Johann Sebastian Bach was a complex and well-played power training for the guitarist. Thereafter, the long lines of the *Prelude in D* gave the piece a metaphysical atmosphere.

Dietrich Buxtehude (1637 - 1707) was one of Bach's teachers. To visit him in Lübeck, young Johann Sebastian took a very long walk through Germany against the will of the church council. We heard from him the *Suite in E minor*. A four-part suite in a pleasantly transparent style and somewhat more light-footed than Bach himself.

A number of *Sonatas* by Domenico Scarlatti contain an interesting style figure from those days, the sudden stop, the sudden stopping of the music as a dramatic effect. The drama was also in the unpredictability, which Reichenbach clearly demonstrated in his performance of the *Sonatas*.

The *Partita Nr. 2 in C minor* closed the performance. A bit of a youth memory for me, because I came across this piece for the first time in the performance of Ekseption with Rick van der Linden on an ARP2600 synthesizer (there was a fat bass line in it!). Reichenbach played the piece tightly and clearly conveyed the complex lines.

As an encore we left the baroque on the way to the Wild West. At least Ennio Moricone became quite famous with the music of *Once upon a Time in the West*. Reichenbach played a romantic melody that undoubtedly served as the background for a love scene.

Lounge Concert: Sampler Songs Suite

Time for a contemporary composition by Jim ten Boske, performed by Bobby Rootveld and Samuel Klemke (both on guitars) and Sanna van Elst on recorders. It became a piece in which ingenious use was made of a sampler, with a matching video on a large screen as the background. The video was mixed by Bobby and Samuel.

An interesting multimedia spectacle!

Day Three



Thu Le

Second Chance Round Professionals

In the first editions of the festival there was a single preliminary round for the professionals. The six finalists emerged from this round. Due to the rising level, however, the differences became so small that the festival organization decided to set up a Second Chance Round. The preliminary round provides two finalists and six second chance candidates who must decide who belongs to the four remaining finalists. It was noticeable that the players were more relaxed than yesterday, I heard more music in the pieces than in the preliminary round.

It was funny to see the solidarity among the remaining candidates was better than in the preliminary round, many came listening despite the early hour and the applause on entry came noticeably faster than yesterday (at that time I sometimes had to play the clapper, I am positioned strategically at the press spot).

Theduardo Prasetyo started off with *Variations on an Italian Song* by Mauro Giuliani. A clear example of nineteenth-century pop music. It turned out to be a sample of techniques on a not so very interesting theme. The player performed them nicely and phrased well. The last variation turned out to be the most interesting.

Hannelore Vanderelst was, unfortunately, hard to understand in her announcement, so I gambled on Brouwer. She played the piece with a clear sonorous sound, which I sometimes found a bit on the hard side. Her performance was transparent and the tremolo breathed well.

Paul Sun brought an early bird in the morning with John Dowland's *Fantasia*, this piece also got a second chance. You could hear the difference; the beginning was beautiful and the coral design of the piece became pretty clear. The voice dialogue came out better than yesterday, just like the original decorations. The cheerful character, however, was unfortunately missing today. He had a nice ending with *Campanas del Alba* by Eduardo Sainz de la Maza. A nice regular tremolo that perfectly followed the phrasing of the piece.

Janis Neteler took his second chance with a *Prelude* by Johann Sebastian Bach and *Toccata de Pasquini* by Brouwer. The *Prelude* went well, but not spectacular. Brouwer came out a little less exciting than I hoped, it became more of a technical showcase. Unfortunately!

Beata Atlas started a *Sarabande* by Johann Sebastian Bach and something contemporary without announcement. She played the *Sarabande* broad and transparent, she breathed peace despite the elaborate decorations. With the contemporary piece she placed interesting contrasts in dynamics and tempo on a melody with a striking sonorous bass line.

Eliska Lenhartova closed the row with a *Sarabande with Double* by Johann Sebastian Bach and the last two parts from the *Sonata Op. 47* by Alberto Ginastera (1916 - 1983). The *Sarabande* went smoothly with original decorations, in the *Double* she kept the tempo pleasantly on the low side, which brought out the contrasts well. The quiet part of the *Sonata* received the desired tension in the apparent calm, Lenhartova put down the deep dissonant chords nicely, they really bloomed. The last part reminds me, as usual, of the *Toccata* from *Brain Salad Surgery* by Emerson, Lake and Palmer. The transparency of that piece was a bit disappointing; it all became a bit fuzzy.

Amateur Competition

This year the amateur competition only included the category above the age of sixteen. Four participants. Due to a cancellation it started a little earlier than I expected, so I missed the first candidate Tanja Vermeeren. A pity, because she has been a loyal visitor for years.

Candidate number two, Wouter Noordam. He had three pieces on the stand, the *Prelude in D minor BWV 999* by Johann Sebastian Bach, *Sarabande* by Francis Poulenc (1899-1963) and *Etude Nr. 3 from Op. 60* by Matteo Carcassi (1792 - 1853).

De *Prelude* demands a good concentration of the player. Noordam brought it up and played the piece smoothly, including the difficult fingering with the low F and the notes on the fifth fret. I already heard a section of *Sarabande* in his master class with Fostier. The structure of the piece worked out well, playing with the sound turned out to be a challenge here and there. *Etude No. 3* is known for the tricky hand movement in the beginning. The player managed to lift the melody nicely above the accompaniment.

Janette Couvée has been participating in this competition for years, this time with *Empty Fridge* by Annette Kruisbrink and an arrangement of a piece by Astor Piazzolla (1921 - 1992). *Empty Fridge* (; -) a drama in a student life) sounded relaxed with a bossa-feeling,

even though the arpeggio section proved to be just as difficult to maintain at that pulse. Piazzolla's music is also quite difficult in "simple" arrangements, but the player bravely fought her way through the pitfalls, so that the piece retained its coherence.

Leonie van Woudenberg continued the competition with *Weather Forecast* and an arrangement of an aria from the opera *Lucia di Lammermoor* by Gaetano Donizetti (1797-1841).

Weather Forecast was very similar to a waltz with here and there a Satie-like melancholic sound. At first the weather forecast seemed to indicate rain, but in the end the sun broke through the clouds. Nicely played.

The aria from the opera had hit potential indeed! Now I understand why many people in the nineteenth century whistled the melodies on the street. Van Woudenberg clearly brought the melody to the stage and also managed to let the grandiose sound of the opera play a part in the accompaniment.

Kevin Wiesner closed the competition with a *Romanze from the (Grande) Sonata in A* by Niccolò Paganini (1782-1840). The slow part, okay, but with Paganini that doesn't mean that you don't have to be a virtuoso.

The player started the theme somewhat hesitantly, a little later the flow entered the piece. In this piece it is difficult to connect the fast decorations with the slow flow of the piece, for most decorations this turned out well. In the last section, Wiesner was completely at ease and played the theme as intended.

Results turned out to be:

1. Kevin Wiesner.
2. Wouter Noordam.
3. Janette Couvée.

Participants, congratulations!

Concert Thu Le

The Vietnamese guitarist Thu Le has been a visitor of the Guitar Festival Nordhorn before, she has participated a number of times in the Cat. 1 competition. She also travels the world in the concert circuit. If you follow her on the Internet and Facebook, you will come across a wonderful mix of glamour, homeliness and guitar skills. Intriguing. That was confirmed when she told about her new guitar before the show. It looked well-built, it sounded great, but had a special feature that the public could not see: The "dots" at the fifth and seventh fret were inlaid with Diamonds! That's glamour indeed!

She started in an inspired way: *Serenata Espanola* by Joaquin Malats (1872-1912). Playfully, dancing, elegantly and flashy. Here I got my inspiration for my story *Angel on Six Strings*, a story that plays in the vicinity of her native country, the Li River is located in the Guangxi district that borders Vietnam. With the motto "My wings are six strings".

The opera came along in the *Fantasia* by Luigi Legnani. Virtuoso and smooth play in all colours of sound.

Roland Dyens' arrangement of a *Waltz* by Frederic Chopin (1810 - 1849) brought Romanticism on stage. The guitar version sounds a lot more light-hearted and dance-like than the piano versions I know.

Thu Le did not forget the music of her native country. She brought an arrangement of a North Vietnamese folk song. Characteristic was the eastern voicing that seamlessly connected to a melody that contained both lightness and melancholy. A nice homage to her home.

Off to the Balkans with *Six Balkan Miniatures* from Dusan Bogdanovic. I sometimes heard them play at the competitions of recent years. With her interpretation, Thu Le did justice to the composition, fast rhythmically interesting passages alternated with deep melancholic melody lines.

Once again, she made contact with her homeland through an arrangement of a Vietnamese song about a woman who is getting married to a family, but suffers from homesickness because she is living far from her birthplace. The melancholy and nostalgia in that piece were very clear in her highly inspired rendition. A special feature of this piece was that it demonstrated the price guitar of guitar builder Michael Batell. More about him on Day Four!

Back to cheerfulness with a favourite of Fred Rootveld, our loyal bar guard and logistics manager at this festival: the famous tango *El Choclo* by Angel Villoldo (1861 - 1919) in an arrangement by Roland Dyens. Swing and melancholy, just like a tango from Argentina should sound.

We stayed in South America with *Felecidade* by Antonio Carlos Jobim (1927 - 1994) in another arrangement by Roland Dyens. Jobim wrote this piece for the cult film *Orfeo Negro*. It made me just as happy as listening to Dyens own album *Nuages*. Thu Le played a jazz band in miniature. Awesome!

The atmosphere was good, an enthusiastic audience persuaded Thu Le to play two encores, a piece in the Latin atmosphere with middle eastern hues by Laurent Boutros and a light-hearted and virtuoso *Valse Venezolano* by Antonio Lauro (1917-1986).

A concert for the musical gourmets.

Concert Anton Baranov

Anton Baranov walked onto the stage with a copy of a nineteenth-century Lacote guitar and kept a standing position for whole performance because he was wearing the instrument with a shoulder strap. An interesting experience, a "Stehgitarrrist" on stage!

With a number of *Country Dances* by Dioniso Aguado (1784 - 1849), he made a good start. Elegant and cheerful performance, the movements of the standing player gave the sound an interesting effect.

Second piece: *Serenade* by Franz Schubert (1797 - 1828), also known as *Ständchen*, in an arrangement by Johann Kaspar Mertz. Beautiful piece and I thought it sounded nice on a guitar of a type that Schubert could have played himself.

A number of *Capriccios* by Mauro Giuliani brought everything between flashy runs and romantic moods. Yet it was quite clear that Giuliani was very show-minded in these compositions.

Time for Russian material, a *Melody* and a *Scherzo* by Alexandrov. *Melody* turned out to be a very melancholic piece where the slow vibrato almost pulled the atmosphere over the top. *Scherzo* changed the atmosphere to that of a cheerful Russian folk dance.

Finally: The well-known *Fantasie on Das Klinget so Herrlich* from Mozart's *Zauberflöte*, composed by Fernando Sor. Also known as the *Mozart Variations*. A well-played performance with a wink of humour. It sounded so nice and different - and *herrlich* - on this guitar.

The audience was in an enthusiastic mood here. Saturday Night Fever? This resulted in two encores of nineteenth-century salon music. *Castille* turned out to be a dramatic song that made it seem like Andre Hazes, the famous Dutch croon singer, had come to life on the guitar. The second piece turned out to be an old acquaintance, *Les Clochettes* by Alfred Cottin (1863 - 1923). It is nice to hear a piece that you have played yourself.

Lounge Concert Duo NIHZ and Gergely Pázmándi

In the Lounge there was room for Sanna van Elst on recorders, Bobby Rootveld on guitar, Gergely Pázmándi on saxophone and last but not least little Levi on the drums. They brought a collection of old acquaintances from the Klezmer repertoire of Duo NIHZ, where Gergely improvised on the melodies and picked up a solo here and there.

Day Four



Johan Fostier

Michael Batell guitar building presentation

Gitar Festival Nordhorn has been sponsored and visited by guitar builders for many years. Unfortunately, the luthier Sergei Saimolov could not be present, but this year's newcomer Michael Batell from Berlin was there and gave a lecture.

Coincidentally, the day before I had a chat with his guitar-building partner Harley, who makes the rosettes. He turned out to be a fellow technician, a former aerospace technician on Cape Canaveral, Florida, USA, who worked in the Space Shuttle era. A nice chat by techies like ourselves (we spoke each other's language a bit) and before you know it a life story will come along, that is the atmosphere of this festival.

Michael Batell started to build his first guitar in 1971 and sold it for 150 dollars. He then set up his own workshop in stringed instruments and harpsichords and also specialized in instrument restoration. He has supplied a huge amount to educational institutions in the seventies. However, in the economic crisis of the 1980s, the instrument market collapsed and he went bankrupt. He made ends meet at that time by making wooden parts for houses and boats.

He eventually moved to Berlin where he devoted himself full-time to instrument building. His mate Harley comes there a few months a year to make rosettes, an accurate job that depends on the size of the sound hole.

Batell started building with Ramirez models, experimented with innovations for a while, but nevertheless went back to classical construction. He does, however, try to build the guitars in a lightweight way and uses weight-saving materials.

He had a nice presentation. It was funny to see how he imported wood such as a cedar in the form of a crate for a few instruments that he let fly into from the States. The crate material was used to build new instruments.

It was also instructive to look at the various constructions that he showed, such as the top of a Viola da Gamba and a Harpsichord mechanism.

I did see: the construction of the prize guitar for second prize is in good hands.

Finals Professionals

Six candidates survived the preliminary round and second chance round. Time for the national Sunday afternoon event. The room was more crowded with audience than I had expected.

Thierry Begin-Lamontagne started off with *Partita No. 2 BWV 826* by Johann Sebastian Bach, the *Tarantella* by Mario Castelnuovo Tedesco, the *Serenade* by Vicente Asencio (1908 - 1979) and a piece called *Ulaanbatar*, after the capital of Mongolia, composed by Mathias Duplessy.

The *Partita* immediately brought the of the ARP2600 synthesizer played by Rick van der Linden with the big bass and the solid phased piano in the middle part. Lamontagne brought beautiful, fluent, swinging voicing with an extremely transparent Fugue.

The *Tarantella* was very virtuoso, almost rushed. He played the contrasts nicely and played the piece in a kind of visual form, almost like film music.

The *Serenade* required rapid detuning, because twenty minutes is twenty minutes in the finals. With this piece I immediately got associations with *The Old Castle* from Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*. A nice resting point in the program with a warm sound.

This was silence before the storm of *Ulaanbatar*. In Mongolia I think of Jenghis Khan and wild hordes on steppe horses. The piece was beautifully played, it appeared very cinematic music with an exciting ending in which the horde seemed to have left, but still came crashing again. I wondered who was left on the steppe when it became quiet.

He played a balanced program with a high entertainment value for me. You don't hear that entertainment factor much during competition finals where often technological showcase music plays a dominant role. I particularly noticed that Begin Lamontagne played extremely concentrated and inspired from start to finish, as if he wanted to prove himself in particular.

Konstantin Shumilin came in second with a Scarlatti *Sonata*, a *Sonata* from ..? [not understood] and one of the *Portenas* (seasons) by Astor Piazzolla.

Scarlatti composed the beautifully played *Sonata* with elaborate decorations, but the rush was lurking with the player. The bass line received a nice swing.

The *Sonata* turned out to be something contemporary (; -) was to be expected). The first part started in a contemplative mood and got a little more swing at the end. Nicely played. Then I

lost touch with the story, it just kept on rippling, not only in terms of composition, but also in terms of playing. Endless ... frankly extremely boring. Pfffft ...

The *Portenas* by Piazzolla brought back some life. The first part had the Piazzolla sound, but was a little too polished to my taste, I missed that raw sound that characterizes Piazzolla. The guitar agreed, because the instrument became displeased and detuned. In the last part, the real Piazzolla popped up, but there were not enough breaks to compensate for the loss of the atmosphere. Unfortunately!

Jesus Serrano wanted to reach the prize podium with three pieces: *Hungarian Fantasy* by Johann Kaspar Mertz, an unknown supposedly contemporary piece and then *Red Fantasy*, a supposedly contemporary piece.

I love Mertz's music, but the way Serrano played it, I really don't have to hear it like that. Hard drama in the intro and beyond, with emphasis on háááárd, louuuud! well, you don't hear Mertz in this way that often. I was surprised that Serrano was able to play even some soft passages. All at the same race track pace, by the way. Quite indigestible for me.

I was glad that the unknown contemporary piece was indeed unknown to me, because in that case I never have to hear it again. There was something like *La Folia* in it, it sounded quite exalted. The piece didn't bother me, far too technological, no music. The shock effects intensified my frustration.

Red Fantasy... I had previously called it *Red Bull*, gives you wings, you know. I clearly saw that flying by the antics on the neck. The piece consisted of individual fragments, some of which sounded interesting, with the Latin-like fourth piece as the highlight. The technique was very good, but all those spotlights on the shop window of "look who's playing" with the sacrifice of what I experience as musicality, can nevertheless please me less.

I was so glad it that we got a break!

Paul Sun entered the scene with striking red shoes. I wondered if this would still have an effect on the repertoire, because the shoes are dancing in the fairy tale *The Dancing Red Shoes*.

He started without announcement. I had already signed a little angry skull in my report, but he cheated on me, the announcement came after the first piece. However, do I have to have my ears tested or not? I didn't understand. So, I only treat the pieces by number.

Piece 1: A piece of romance, that lingered on just a bit too vague. Piece 2 was a theme with variations. Technically very clever, but I had no click with it in the musical sense. Some variations sounded original and a few variations brought a story nevertheless.

Piece 3 started with an interesting rhythm pattern, after which I lost sight of the intentions of the composer. The piece was, to say the least, not quite my thing.

Piece 4 was the best for me, with a poppy start and a jazzy feel. Finally, my foot taps with the music again!

The player gave a technically excellent performance, yet I thought his repertoire had less entertainment value, not to say that I didn't like it at all.

The second last candidate was Eliska Lenhartova. I was curious what she was going to bring, because I had built sympathy for her play from the two preliminaries. It became a *Bourrée* (no, not the one made famous by Jethro Tull) by Johann Sebastian Bach and a number of movements from *Hommage a Boccherini* by Mario Castelnuovo Tedesco.

The *Bourrée* went well and was easy to follow in terms of structure. Still a pair of slips, bad luck ... from which she recovered well. Killer Bach tries to strike again! The subsequent *Double* was complex in structure and unfortunately lost transparency in its implementation.

The *Andantino* from the *Hommage* danced romantically to the end with a nice melody, but in the beginning, I missed some intention in the performance. More clarity came towards the end.

The *Tempo di Minuetto* stood out due to its wide spreads on the fingerboard. Lenhartova conveyed the lines in the piece well and added a bit of humour to the middle part.

Presto furioso became fireworks. Well played, but in terms of expression there was something I could add to make it a top performance.

To be honest, I am not copying it myself, but as a listener I say: The movie can be played a little more exciting.

The last candidate again, there was Bogdan Mihailescu. He played Vicente Asencio with two parts from a Suite (*Calma* and *Hasty*) plus Dusan Bogdanovic with *Sonata 2*.

Calma was really calm indeed. Pleasant music that largely remained within the old tradition and very occasionally touched the boundaries of contemporary. Mihailescu played it tenderly. The second part *Hasty* was indeed a hurry. A very accessible piece with just a few spices here and there.

With Dusan Bogdanovic's *Sonata 2* the entertainment for me was over, a terrible piece. Mihailescu played two parts. The first part had a fairly busy start, the player was technically clever, but the mixed feelings about the composition itself dominated me. I lost contact and in fact only heard parallel technical constructions. Part Two turned out to be of the same kind, so the *Sonata* was consistent anyway. This work was probably fun for a professional jury, but I didn't enjoy myself at all with this piece. You can do better, Mr. Bogdanovic!

Concert Alberto Mesirca

Everything comes to an end, which also applied to these four days plus an evening festival. The last evening was traditionally well attended.

Samuel Klemke played the support act with the winning composition of last year's Composers Competition, *Canberra Sonata* by Constantin Blyoch. An interesting contemporary piece with many classical fragments. Eastern motifs play an important role in the slow movement. Canberra is a city, so a piece that depicts a traffic jam cannot be missed. Modern Times! The quiet end of the suite was surprising.

Then it was Alberto Mesirca's turn, the house musician of Kulturhaus NIHZ who has supported the festival from the very beginning.

Mesirca specializes in music by Domenico Scarlatti and has published revised editions of a number of his *Sonatas*. With three smooth and elegant Sonatas, Mesirca showed that he is a special performer of Scarlatti's work.

Variations on a Moldavian Hora by Ian Krouse has often been part of Mesirca's program. This time I noticed how many of the variations feature special thrills. So, listening again to an excellent interpretation always reveals new details.

Another piece by Vicente Asencio, the *Suite des Homenajes*. The parts of this piece pay homage to Scarlatti, De Falla and Federico Garcia Loca. Indeed, the style of these composers is evident in this original composition. Attractively played!

The next piece became a world premiere, *Minuta* by Filippo Perocco. An interesting piece that consisted of a melody pattern on stopped strings. With all the damping, the left hand looked like a spider slowly crawling up and down the neck.

The final piece was *Introduction and Caprice* by Giulio Regondi (1822 - 1872). Boy, boy, what a virtuosity in the decorations while the whole remains so lightly. Okay, Alberto has put the entire Regondi repertoire on CD, but with this he amply surpasses his performance on that medium.

The concert had now officially ended, except that Alberto Mesirca came up with a hefty encore: *Capriccio Diabolico*, the homage to Niccolò Paganini by Mario Castelnuovo Tedesco. Quite an achievement to present this long and challenging piece impromptu. ; -) Alberto Paganini is getting faster every year, towards the world record!

A beautiful concert, as we are used to from Alberto!

Video Competition

This year there was a multimedia competition for the most appealing guitar video clip. The prize went to Armin Kula and Nova Mesaros for their interplay between music and animation. The video combined a trip through a house with sketched windows and unexpected vistas with guitar sounds, a kind of dungeon master excursion (;-) for those who still remember the popular Amiga Role Playing Game in the early nineties).

The winner was a surprise for me for the simple reason that I have not seen anything of a presentation from the participants. I was quite curious about their contributions. Afterwards it turned out that they should have put them on YouTube themselves, with a link to the guitar festival.

Mmmm ... it wasn't obvious for me to search for it. Perhaps it is an idea to put the participant videos on their own Guitar Festival Nordhorn Youtube channel for a short time for those interested during the festival. ;-) After the festival, remove the videos again, before the idea goes around the world.

Concert Johan Fostier

The official closing of this year's Guitar Festival Nordhorn: Johan Fostier. I still remember him from the Twente Guitar Festival in 2009. Quite a while ago, so I was curious about his development since then.

Preludio Romantico by Emilio Pujol (1886 - 1980) formed a romantic and slightly Spanish introduction to the concert. Nice in tone.

Three *Sonatas* from Domenico Scarlatti brought us back to the Baroque. Beautifully played with a unique contrast to the excellent performance of Alberto Mesirca. I particularly liked the quiet *Sonatas*.

Isaac Albeniz added to the atmosphere with *Capricho Catalan*, *Mallorca* and *Catalunya*. A small tour through Spain with a great warm and dark sound. You could almost say that there is a Cedar top on the guitar.

The *Sonata* by Eduardo Lopez Chavarri (1871 - 1970) turned out to be an interesting unknown piece. Fostier was given the opportunity to fill the room with sound. The first part ended somewhat suddenly and on closer inspection the piece did not have the quality of the well-known composers of that time. Nevertheless, fascinatingly played.

The *Impromptu* by Emilio Pujol brought a bit of romantic peace with a tender melody, after which the *Scherzo Vals* by Miguel Llobet (1878 - 1938) elegantly jumped and flashed us back to the lesson again.

Inspiracao by Anibal Augusto Sardinha (1915 - 1955), also known as Garoto, was a tenderly orchestrated homage to a teacher. A moving sign of appreciation for a teacher's competence.

With an encore - a South American piece with the characteristic Argentinian blow with the fist - Fostier rewarded the enthusiasm of the audience.

Various Results

After the concert it was time for a number of results. First of all the professional competition:

1. Jesus Serrano (including audience prize)
2. Paul Sun
3. Bogdan Mihailescu

In brief: As far as winners are concerned, I have never disagreed with the jury from the beginning of the festival. This time, however, I **fully disagree** with the selection of the winner. For me the musically interesting program of Thierry Begin-Lamontagne stood out. It is incomprehensible to me that Lamontagne was not on the podium, okay, the jury decided, but the techno race track of Serrano had not even received a prize from me. Perhaps he was interesting for the professional audience, I myself had little pleasure in it and found his interpretation hard and musically mediocre.

Nevertheless: winners, congratulations!

The prize winner of the composer's competition was the piece Yeti by Michael Luis. The composer himself was present this time. Next year at this time he can listen to it, a public performance is part of the prize.

Lounge Concert Vit Gutkin and Lena Folk

With Vit Gutkin on guitar and Lena Folk on flute, we got a nice conclusion to the festival in the Lounge. Delightful and swinging South American repertoire, Bossas, Modinhas, a single Rumba and some Samba.

And thus, the ninth edition of the Nordhorn Guitar Festival came to an end. It was real enjoyment. I will try some kicking the habit with a day off first and then try to get used to the life at the office again ...