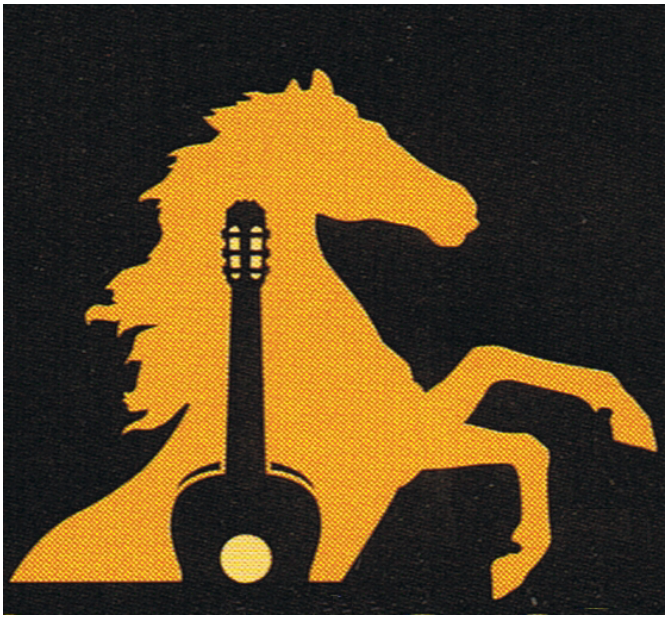
Twente Guitar Festival 2008



There it was again, the long awaited third edition of the Twente Guitar Festival. With respect to holidays it had a perfect timing: in this week, we had the Queen's Birthday, Ascension Day and for many people the 'Day after Ascension' which is often part of the 'shorter working hours' regulation in Dutch companies. Once again, the organisation of the Twente Guitar Festival Foundation (Bobby Rootveld, Jaap Majoor, Niels Ottink and Paul Driessen) and a lot of family, friends and supporters were ready to make this event a success.

I had subscribed for the masterclass by Yves Storms and an additional package *Let's Improvise*. The latter package even included a workshop Flamenco, a nice opportunity to get a taste of this 'guitar application'.

I had written a report on the first festivals with great pleasure, so I decided to describe this one too: Third Time Lucky! ;-) If things proceed nicely, I will be able to publish a Twente Guitar Festival Anniversary Book in two years!

My impressions are quite subjective indeed. I am no historian. Obviously, I am not claiming that these ladies and gentlemen are completely objective (*the victor writes history,* remember...), but they have graduated as historians anyway. So please find comfort from the fact that I consider myself subjective if you read something you do not quite agree with: my opinion and impressions are just one from the many possible.

Organisation of the Festival

At first sight it seemed that the organisation of the festival did not differ much from last year: three days of masterclasses and workshops in the Artez Conservatory,

competitions and recitals in the Concordia Theatre and finally an open podium in Concordia as well, all adding up to four days.

According to schedule there were masterclasses and workshops in the morning and the afternoon, with some free time for the lunch concerts. Consequentially you had to have a bit of luck with your schedule if you wanted to attend the preliminaries for the professionals and conservatory students, to listen to all competitions for the amateurs and to take a look with the Scharpach guitar exhibition. It is almost impossible to take these events into account in the schedules with almost 60 participants.

I wrote ‘at first sight’. True, because at second sight, there had been quite a number of refinements in the concept. I’ll mention a few:

- Chanterelle Music Publishers had been invited with a stand. They have quite a collection of sheet music, so it was a pleasure to browse a bit through scores which are quite rare in the shops in the direct environment. Additionally, they had a large collection of guitar CDs, even more than Broekmans and van Poppel in Amsterdam! A perfect opportunity to spend some pocket money.
- The luthiers from Scharpach Guitars had a nice room for demonstration of their guitars. The had hired a classical guitarist for a demonstration of the sound of the instruments ‘at a distance’, but it was also possible to play the guitars yourself. I must say that I am a bit enchanted by their classical model! I’m afraid that it will take some time to reserve the budget.
- (Extremely useful) There was a locked room for safe storage of your guitar during the lunch- and evening concerts. A pleasant circumstance and quite a relief, even though I have not heard about problems with stolen or damaged guitars in the previous festivals.
- The announcements via email (city maps, master class and workshop location, schedules and the list of competitors for the Scharpach Competition) were well done. The schedule required some playing with the magnifier in Adobe Acrobat, but some screen dump software enabled to make a readable printout.

In brief: every year the organisation has used the experiences of the previous festivals for improvement of various aspects. Well done!

The Suggestion Box was new this year. A nice way to submit useful tips and questions which may help next year’s organisation!

Day One

Zoran Dukic

Promenade

Do not feel surprised about the title of this section, you'll notice it on more spots in this report. In the nineteenth century, the Russian composer Modest Mussorgsky wrote his *Pictures at an Exhibition* in memory of his friend, the painter Hartmann. In this piece, there is a lead theme -which is called *Promenade*- which forms the bridge between the various movements of the piece, i.e. the musical pictures at the exhibition. The Promenades in this report have the same function, forming a bridge between the impressions of the festival, painted in the characters of the alphabet. Hence the name!

Back to the story: just like last year, my Love dropped me off at the Enschede railway station. From there it's just a short walk to the Artez Conservatory, the place to go for checking-in. I was a bit too early. Fortunately, it was lovely weather, with a perfect opportunity to chat with a few candidates for the competition, who were gathering near the entrance and raring to go inside for the first master classes.

I found out that the competition home and abroad is a major means to gather experience, make public appearances and to build a network, as *a apart of* the musical training. Apparently -or maybe specifically- in classical music the presentation and networking with future employers (musical agencies) have become extremely important.

Anyway, at ten o' clock the gates opened. It was time for the check-in and a warm welcome by the organizers.

Workshop Jim ten Boske and Paul Driessen

Just like last year, Jim ten Boske and Paul Driessen opened the series of workshops around improvisation and popular music in front of a large group of guitarists. *La Bamba*, a three-chord song (C, F, G) which virtually everyone knows, formed a nice subject for an introduction in strokes, syncopation, accompaniment and solo. We had a large group, so the brainchild of Ritchie Valens got an orchestral approach. Very entertaining, it was a nice introduction for a large number of participants.

Concert Ulrich Steier

Ulrich Steier has the lectureship classical guitar at the Artez Conservatory, here in Enschede. Last year I attended a master class with him, and I remember him as a capable and motivating teacher. This year it was his turn to open the Twenthe Guitar Festival as a player with the first lunch concert.

His easy and clear announcements were enjoyable. It's good to hear something about the pieces and their composers. Ulrich Steier was rightly indicated as a good example in the Workshop Stage Presentation.

His first piece -*Prelude Nr. 1* by Villa Lobos- was a reunion with a good old friend. The years may pass, but this piece keeps its song, irrespective of the modern guitar trends.

He continued his recital with *Suite Castellana* by Moreno Torroba. This suite presented a homage to the Spanish *Zarzuela*, an opera/operetta genre which is still popular in the theatres of the Iberian Peninsula. The typical Spanish modulations in the melodies were characteristic for the piece and passed on the atmosphere of such an operetta-like play quite well.

The third piece brought us back to modern times. *Five Impromptus* by Benett. Despite the fact that Ulrich Steier played the pieces well, the music itself did not appeal to me. I am no real devotee of this musical genre.

Ulrich Steier proceeded with a piece of his favourite composer. Unfortunately, this man never composed anything for the guitar, so an arrangement was the only way to play the music. The composer was Ludwig van Beethoven, the piece was the first movement of the *Mondscheinsonate*. Quite a venture on the guitar, because the characteristic sound of this *Adagio Sostenuto* is caused by the sustain of the piano. Steier made it a very guitaristic performance in its own right. It makes me curious how the second part of this sonata -the *Allegretto*- sounds on the guitar. Maybe next year?

To play the next pieces, Ulrich Steier changed his classic Spanish guitar for an Alto Guitar, an invention by the Swedish luthier George Bolin. On this guitar, you can play lute literature without the tedious double string courses (which saves you a lot of tuning work!) The instrument has eleven strings, so the head alone is a remarkable example of luthier's technology. I guess it's quite a challenge to strike the right bass string on a poorly illuminated stage.

Steier proceeded with one of the most moving lute pieces by Silvius Leopold Weiss -it is moving me already with the first chords anyway- the *Tombeau sur la mort de M. Comte d'Logy*. It was a wonderful interpretation.

The next piece on the Alto Guitar was one of Ulrich Steier's own compositions -*Pictures*- which appeared pleasant to my ears. It is quite exceptional to hear a modern composition on a lute-like instrument like this.

You would not expect the following piece to be played on a lute. Nevertheless, Eric Satie's *Gymnopedie Nr 1* appeared on the boards very well. The extra low strings gave the slow rocking motion of the piece an extra dimension.

Ulrich Steier closed his recital with two pieces from the lute literature, twice John Dowland. The joyful *Lord Strang's March* was the first piece, in which a simple catchy theme unfolded itself in multiple complex divisions. The final piece was Dowland's masterpiece, the *Fantasia*.

In my early twenties, I heard this piece for the first time on the LP *Tabernakel*, a (not quite successful) lute experiment by the rock guitarist Jan Akkerman. Well, Ulrich Steier played it much, much better and with great consistency among the musical lines.

In brief: this recital was a successful and enjoyable way to open the festival.

Workshop Stage Presentation

For the third festival in succession, the workshop Stage Presentation by Bobby Rootveld was a useful happening. Three years ago, I started as a soloist, last year I came with my former duo partner, and now I was there as a soloist again.

I took a ride on stage, forgot all basic principles (introducing yourself and announcing the pieces), felt something like *alone again*, hurried too much during playing and suddenly found my fingers glued to the fingerboard. It must be the sense of being a soloist again, so weird! Anyway, it was a good thing to be aware of, it provides a kind of sense of purpose, of things to work on.

The lesson from the workshop is: "everything you are doing on stage belongs to your performance." It appeared that studying the music for performance is not the only thing. Subjects of rehearsal also are the way you enter the stage, your first contact with the audience, the way you sit down, tuning, announcing the music, receiving the applause and finally leaving the stage.

Despite my flash in the pan of the first ride, I took the opportunity for discussion of one of the annoying phenomena of musicianship: performance stress. Even the most experienced musician suffers from them, I noticed with some of the participants. I must say that I felt relieved that I was not the only one.

How to deal or not to deal with it, that's the question. Apparently, lots of musicians use rituals for that, so it seems. Some have a specific way of hitting the stage, others eat a

number of bananas just before the recital in order to slow down their metabolism, which apparently has a de-stressing effect. I also heard about moments of meditation before playing, and the application of alcohol or medication like so called ‘beta-blocking’ drugs to decrease the inhibitions.

It was a good thing to talk about it. My second ride went way better.

Bobby came up with a last hint, a book by Denis Azabagic about performance stress. I guess it’s about *On Competitions, Dealing with Performance Stress*, a little book (about 32 pages) which is published by Mel Bay Publications. I think I am going to order and read it!

Workshop Let’s Improvise, Jim ten Boske

This year I subscribed for an extra package called *Let’s Improvise*, I thought it would be fun to do some more with improvisation. So, after the workshop Stage Presentation, I walked to Jim ten Boske’s classroom. The organisation had assigned the participants to groups of two or three people, in this way I became a member of Group Green. When I entered the room, it appeared that the schedule had slightly shifted, Mats, a member of Group Yellow was still there.

Never mind, just a matter of drawing up chairs. The first thing Jim asked us was what we liked to do. Well, that’s the correct start of an improvisation, just *knowing* what you want to do: choosing a key, a chord progression and a rhythm.

The result was an improvisation based on one chord by three guitarists. It was great fun to find that this simple concept remained interesting for more than ten minutes, which happened to be the moment that Andre -the other member of Group Green- entered the room.

Andre had been participating with a Flamenco workshop, which I consequently had missed by now. Small mistake... but never mind, we went on right away with a nice basic instruction in finger picking.

Promenade

The afternoon program was over, so I made a call to my Love for the ride home. Time for a lovely meal at home and some chatting about my adventures of the day.

Concert Zoran Dukic

My guitar teacher Robert had warmed me up for this recital in advance, so I was eagerly looking forward to this concert. I have never heard Zoran Dukic playing, which is no surprise because I usually do not travel around the world to listen to all kinds of guitar concerts.

There were a few things which stroke me during his recital.

First of all the precision of his play: I heard no squeaks, no finger noise, no unnecessary ringing of strings. At the moment, I am trying to integrate these aspects of finishing touch in my play, so I am a bit aware of the extra effort and actions it takes besides playing notes. Zoran Dukic did it all, effecting the music while his extra efforts definitely did not affect the music!

The second thing was his clarity in the quiet passages. In these passages, he showed himself as a true master, every single tone remained clear and transparent, without sinking in a swamp of humming noise.

Dukic's first piece was *Sonate* by Antonio Jose (1902 - 1936), a challenging moderately contemporary work in four movements. The architecture and structure of the piece was nice and clear, which is perfect for a 'no-further-than-neo-classics' listener like me.

Jose's day of death (1936) plus the historical fact that the Spanish Civil War was raging in that time, gave rise to the assumption that his death was unnatural. Which is correct, because he was taken prisoner and shot by Generalissimo Franco's rebels.

Zoran Dukic played the Sonata with a virtuoso approach and tremendously played quiet passages. *Pavana Triste* included a beautiful dynamic climax.

We would hear this sonata quite a few times more in this festival: apparently Jose's composition succeeded the *Sonata* by Ginastera

After Jose's masterpiece, it was over to Manuel Ponce with his *Sonata Meridional*. Dukic's interpretation presented this music in beautiful warm Mediterranean water colours under a Mexican sun with a decisive finishing touch in the virtuoso passages.

I knew the *Romanza* by Miguel Llobet which followed, because the Naxos label published a CD with all his guitar works. Despite the fact that musically Llobet lived more or less in the shadow of his teacher Francisco Tarrega, he had a characteristic romantic style. Who does not know his Catalan Folk Song arrangements? Dukic did *Romanza* justice: an incredibly tender performance.

After romancing there was some dancing: *Scherzo Vals*. An extremely virtuoso waltz with fast runs and the splendour of a *Valse Brilliante* by Chopin. A perfect way to start the break in high spirits!

After the break, Zoran Dukic showed an aspect of his artistry we had not experienced yet: a nice story about the music he was going to play. The programme mentioned a number of *Caprichos de Goya* by Castelnuovo-Tedesco, based on paintings by the Spanish painter Francisco Goya.

In his days, Goya was a social critic who incorporated a lot of social and political commitment in his work, quite unusual for his time, some say he was the first to do so. Unfortunately, the subjects of his criticism, the clergy, the nobles and the rich, were not amused, so Goya spent some time in jail to think about his views, a time which severely affected his mental health. Dukic told a lively story about the paintings behind the *Caprichos,* which made me listen to the music much more specifically.

After listening to Dukic's attractive and colourful interpretation, I just had to compare Castelnuovo-Tedesco's work to another masterpiece which has Goya's paintings as subject: *Goyescas* by Enrique Granados. Dukic recounted that Castelnuovo-Tedesco considered the *Caprichos* one of his best works. I do agree: beautiful music!

From Italy we went to Paraguay, the music by Augustin Barrios. Well, what can I say? I love this music and Zoran Dukic made this liking even better. The *Caazapa* was a piece I had not heard yet, a swinging dance with Latin accents.

Astor Piazzola closed the ranks with *Invierno Porteno* and *Muerte del Angel*.

It is funny, before the Twente Guitar Festivals I was hardly acquainted with Piazzola's music. I knew a few loose pieces and the two CDs by Gidon Kremer with arrangements of the tangos for violin and small ensemble. Now that has changed, also caused by the skilful arrangements which succeed to catch the atmosphere of a complete tango orchestra (including Bandoneon) on one or two guitars.

This arranging skill was particularly obvious with *Invierno Porteno*. Well, Sergio Assad is not just anybody for a job like this. Dukic's play became a homage to both the composer and the arranger: fiery and passionate alternating with sweet, lyrical and oh so transparent.

It was an extraordinary concert. The audience gladly expressed its appreciation with a standing ovation. Zoran Dukic returned the gesture with a tenderly played encore: *Testament d' Amalia* by Miguel Llobet.

Who was this Amalia? Well, that's the subject of a topic elsewhere on this web site.

Serenade

With this festival, I experienced a phenomenon which troubles me lately: because of all the impressions I was too restless to go to sleep right away. A nice opportunity to make some notes about the adventures of the day on my computer.

Internet is an essential facility for this. Background information about music and composer can be readily found. There is Wikipedia and all the other information to double-check.

Yes, internet is nice. I must say, however, that all these paths to information are inviting, almost forcing you to explore in some way. I call this phenomenon *The Luring Link*. For instance, I was looking up something about Antonio Jose and before I knew I was in the middle of the Spanish Civil War, General Franco's biography and the failing colonial adventures of Spain in post-World War One Morocco.

Well, never mind, a bit of historical knowledge is useful. Because everyone who fails to learn from history, will have to experience it again, isn't it?

One of the major questions -specifically on the Internet- is: 'what's the truth?' Everyone drops his or her own truth there. Well, because of that you can at least compare truths

and distil your own truth with reasonable probability. What about the Absolute Truth? I guess it's somewhere in the middle. Please do not try to pull it left or right, because that's the cause of a lot of hassle. That's what I learned from the history of the Spanish Civil War anyway.

Day Two

Harry Sacksioni

Promenade

After an early lift by my Love, I was at the door of the Artez Conservatory even before ten 'o clock. Fortunately, the door was open, the porter wanted to leave me in and the coffee machine delivered some nice hot coffee in exchange for 40 eurocents. The start of the workshops would take some time, so I had the opportunity to make my own open podium in the canteen. Guitar out of the case, and let's start playing!

Just like last year, Elizabeth Day appeared while I was playing. This time no Ayres and Allemandes, but Dutch lute music by Nicolas Vallet: *Onder een Linde Groen* (the carillon player of the Grote Kerk of Enschede knows the tune too) and *Slaep, Soete Slaep,* as a little serenade to the jury and the organisers of the festival.

After the classics, there was some time left to practice some chords with one of the members of Group Yellow. The clock runs quick if you are enjoying yourself!

Workshop Let's Improvise, Paul Driessen

Another episode of the package *Let's Improvise*. Groups Green and Yellow had a lot of fun elaborating *La Bamba* under direction of Paul Driessen.

Concert Duo '78

During the lunch concert, the stage was the domain of Duo '78: Ivette van Laar, vocals and Jaap Majoor, guitar.

They started in Spanish style with music which was very close to Flamenco music: four songs by the writer/poet Federico Garcia Lorca (1898 -1936). His dying day looks familiar, and yes, it is, he shared the fate of Antonio Jose. He was killed by the followers of Franco because of presumed leftist sympathies.

The songs presented many moods and atmospheres, with a strongly Spanish sound. Considering Lorca's history, I found it a pity that I do not understand Spanish.

Back it went to the time of the Elizabethan melancholy: the sadder the better. *Flow my Tears* by John Dowland. It's quite true, this is a depressing song, but it is a beauty at the same time. This song is rightly considered one of his best works. After the tears there was the hope for return: *Come Again,* by John Dowland as well. This song was far more hopeful.

It is told that Schubert conceived quite a lot of his song accompaniments on the guitar before noting them down for piano. Listening to *Nachtstueck,* this hypothesis seems true. The piece included some typical Schubertian turns plus a lot of Romantic melancholy, because the song described a death scene in which the victim breathed his last after a final glance towards the stars in the nightly sky.

After the nineteenth century lyrics, it was time for twenty first century poetry, set to music. Jaap Majoor had arranged four poems from the compilation *Zee van Willekeur (Sea of Wilfulness)* for voice and guitar. It was striking how at home he felt in his composition, how he supported the song and executed the solo passages. The composition did offer quite some space for dynamics, and he took this opportunity well. I could not completely follow the texts of the poems, but the arrangement was very effective.

After the *Zee van Willekeur* it was time for the non-arbitrary music theory. Ivette van Laar sang and recited a *Sonate voor Stem* (*Sonata for Voice*) by Theo Loevendie, in which she *a capella* exemplified the theory behind the sonata in an imaginative way.

In the last century, Benjamin Britten -with guitarists well known because of the *Nocturnal* on a theme by Dowland- arranged a lot of English-, Irish and Scotch folk songs and wrote quite contemporary accompaniments to them. I remember one of his

arrangements -*Down by the Sally Gardens*- which I was meant to play together with a singer when I had enjoyed just three years of guitar instruction. Unfortunately, the structure and complex rhythm of the piece were a bit too much for my humble capabilities.

Ivette and Jaap played four folk song arrangements by Britten and performed them forcefully.

Their last piece -*Bachianas Brasileiras Nr. 5* by Villa Lobos- has the status of national anthem in Brazil, everybody is able to hum it along. Originally Villa Lobos conceived the piece for six cellos and voice. The structure of the piece, however, beautifully fits the guitar - voice combination. The performance of this piece featured various singing techniques for the melody, only the middle section actually had lyrics. The long melodical lines a la Bach -the piece's name is not *Bachianas* for nothing- were very well performed.

Conclusion: This concert was a joy to my ears. And... all the pieces of the recital are recorded on the CD called *Zee van Willekeur*, together with a number of bonus tracks.

Preliminaries Scharpach Concours Category 1

Last year I missed the preliminaries for the professionals and the conservatory students because of the scheduling of the master classes. This year, however, I had opportunity to attend!

I will give away one of my impressions in advance: I guess Bobby Rootveld's Workshop Stage Presentation must be compulsory for the participants of Category 1, just like the master classes.

At least 16 out of 22 contestants just sat down and started playing without a word. It is surely true that the jury knows what will be played, but the unsuspecting audience had to play the *Guess Who and What?* game every time.

I am sorry that because of this I do not know the name of every piece which was played. In that case I'll confine myself to a gamble or an impression.

So here a hint from a truly interested listener: please tell *who* you are and *what* you are going to play. This is not only profitable for my musical education, but I will also remember the name of a guitarist which has been playing well, specifically when going through CDs in a shop or browsing a concert programme.

Well, back to business. When I sat down in the Orgelzaal of the Artez Conservatory, I felt quite a lot of chilling air circulation, while it was not warm at all. Popularly said: it was quite draughty. I hope the guitarists were not affected.

Every candidate had a time slot of about eight minutes to show his or her skills on the guitar. The timekeeping was strict but fair (a stopwatch was used). Nobody exceeded the time limits.

The information package which I got via email included a candidate list, so in theory I am able to write an impression about every contestant I listened to. No, definitely no jury review, just some listener's impressions.

;-) I do hope that I noted the candidates in the right order, because else I am the one who is out of synchronisation here. One of the problems I experienced during the preliminaries was the sudden change of the contestant order: In some cases I had to guess the candidate's name by his or her looks, so if a made an error, I am truly sorry!

Catherine Struys opened the competition with the slow movement from the *Sonata Meridional* by Ponce. She played it with a beautiful and powerful tone and polished dynamics.

Irina Kulikova was second. I guessed her piece a composition by Mertz or Coste. A few days later it appeared to be *Andante and Rondo* by Aguado, so I was not far off! She played this virtuoso piece clearly, slightly modestly but very concentrated

After Kulikova, Endo Yosuke hit the stage. By the sound of it, he played a Fugue by Bach. He took off well and played the complicated dance of voices with a clear intent. Unfortunately, fate stroke and Bach showed himself a killer for the memory, the player got his wires crossed completely. I could sympathize with him. ;-) My Love does so with me, so she would rather not be in the audience when I perform on some stage.

After some time, he found back the thread, but later the game appeared to be over.

Jorge Castaneda was the next player in the row. I recognized his first piece: *Tarantella* by Mertz. Wow, what a pace! It was a shame that the clarity of the piece suffered a bit from the high tempo. After Mertz, he played some Renaissance music. Because a lot of Renaissance music is anonymous, I should hardly miss the announcement, isn't it? He played this piece at a much more comfortable tempo, even though some of the runs showed restlessness.

Fabian Freesen performed with the *Prelude in E* by Bach. I had heard him practising in the canteen, at that occasion he played it even faster than Ana Vidovic! On stage, he took things easier and permitted the music to sing. I liked the performance. His second piece -something by Brouwer, I guess- was very virtuoso, good shot!

Anna Bragina played a contemporary piece with beautiful long harmonics. It sounded to me like a Japanese piece. She played best in the quiet passages, the loud sections - there was a very long crescendo in the piece- were far from transparent.

After the break, we saw Jan Sanen, who played the same piece as Anna Bragina. Comparing the performances is obvious. He probably exactly followed the text and phrased far less. The challenge of the piece was to build up tension while maintaining its quiet pulse. Unfortunately, this pulse disappeared in the crescendo. Still hats off having a shot at the prizes with such an awkward piece!

Lore Raus presented a *Sonata* by Scarlatti, which one of the 550, I don't know. She played with a powerful touch, using effective two string trills to keep the clarity in the piece.

The next player was Daniel Schatz. He performed a Japanese piece, later I found out it was *Equinox* by Takemitsu. Indeed, the quiet atmosphere of a clear summer night. He interpreted the fragile moods well.

When Bo Ye Hwang started to play her piece, I lost my way. It was contemporary music, but without background information it is hard to focus yourself. The composition was rather fragmented and chaotic. It looked like a multi-movement suite, but I did not hear any clear relationship between the sections but the chaos. Far too High Tech for me!

Magdalena Kaltcheva played a piece which sounded quite familiar to me, it had to be Albeniz! She played the piece with fervour, eying her guitar with the proud glance of a genuine *Dona Espana.* A pleasure to watch!

Stephane Dupont announced that he would play two movements from a *Sonatina* by Morel. The slow movement appeared to be a beautiful introvert piece which was spiced up with some virtuoso passages. He played it coherently. The fast movement, however, became a bit fuzzy. ;-) Or it was just too fast for my ears!

Klyushin Pavel started a piece which looked to me like *Fandango* from the *Tres Piezas* by Rodrigo (yes, I should keep my guitar literature better). He played it firmly and consistently in structure, which is music to my ears.

A second break provided for some recreation, because over twenty candidates is quite a run for the audience and certainly the jury.

After the break Guan Cang stepped up, playing a piece that had to be something by Bach. The many ornaments made recognition a bit hard. After the baroque piece he played something classical, but this remained a guess for me too. One way or the other this guessing diverts the attention from the music, which is annoying. It's surprising how much direction the name of the composer and the piece provides you!

Jean Francois Macq announced that he would play *Saudade Nr 3* by Roland Dyens. I was wondering if I would recognize the piece. After the intro it became clear, I had heard Robert playing the piece: nice and swinging with lots of virtuosity. I was so impressed! Everything seemed to proceed perfectly towards the end of the piece, but alas, then the player tempted fate, corrected his tuning while playing and dropped out of rhythm completely. Such a shame!

Jona Kesteleyn told that his piece would be the first movement from the *Sonate* by Antonio Jose. Thanks to Zoran Dukic I was acquainted with the piece. This music is of a different kind like we heard with the *Sonata* by Dyens, so you are not swinging along, but Kesteleyn nevertheless performed well.

Sabrina Vlaskalic entered - no that's not the right word- in her stylish long dress she *strode* on stage, installed herself elegantly and started to play a serene piece. Doing so she showed a passionate expression both musically and physically, playing together with her guitar in arabesques as seen amongst lovers. Phrases and poses were in perfect harmony! After the slow passionate movement, she started the virtuoso finale. After she finished it -I guess in her opinion it was far from perfect, even though I did not agree- she shot an angry glance at her poor friend guitar and strode off the stage in a bad temper. Well, this is passion! *La Diva!*

Floria Nica made a quite different appearance. Again in this case I noticed my lack of musical education, but I guess it is hardly possible to know all guitar repertoire at first hearing. She played two pieces, one which was interesting in dynamics and the other did not touch any string with me. That's my problem with contemporary music: the frustration of hearing words but failing to understand the message.

Finally, it was the turn of Carrero Suarez. In the canteen, I had heard him practising real *powerplay*, even with a towel between the strings for damping, it sounded quite strong. He played a piece from the Latin idiom with firm but relaxed virtuosity.

Officially all candidates had hit the stage now, but after some discussion in the jury, two extra players appeared. Well I was quite lost here, so I have no impression of these guitarists. I feared that my candidate list would be out of step with reality, but there is little I can do about that!

Anyway, it was a rewarding experience to see the preliminaries. I have deep respect for the jury who had to choose the best from all these candidates, while quite a lot of them had little difference in quality.

Another thing I found a joy to watch was the way the guitarists were on stage and approached the music physically. Particularly the facial expressions told a personal story which not only enhanced (or sometimes weakened) the intention and atmosphere of the tones, but gave away something about the feelings with the piece as well. It's a joy to watch how a player in deep concentration sometimes merges with what he or she is playing. That makes me curious about the story which is playing in their heads.

A cabaret performer once declaimed such a musician's 'story in the head' in a little corny-humorous way during his performance of the *Mondscheinsonate* on piano, in terms of 'I'd rather like to hang out in front of the tele' or 'oh dear, I think I have forgotten my packed lunch'. Well, I guess the candidates were much more concentrated on their music!

I'll take a little advance on the next story about the evening concert: the finalists appeared to be Magdalena Kaltcheva, Irina Kulikova, Sabrina Vlaskalic, Floria Nica and Daniel Schatz.

Last year we had four gentlemen and one lady in the finals, now it was the reverse. To my surprise Jean Francois Macq (playing the Dyens *Saudade*). Well, I am no member of the jury indeed! I was very curious how our finalists would do next sunday!

Promenade

Listening to the preliminaries was an intensive experience, so I was quite tired out when I left the Orgelzaal. A phone call to my Love was sufficient for the prospect of a nice bit to eat with free ride in advance!

A Night with Harry Sacksioni

With me, the name Sacksioni calls up quite a dose of youthful memories. I was seventeen and I had just bought a very old and hardly playable guitar from my sister's boyfriend to take the first steps on the guitar, as an autodidact, because guitar lessons were not included in the education package at that time.

I had more or less fallen in love with the guitar when I attended the grammar school in the Sweelinck Comprehensive School (formerly Moreelsestraat Comprehensive School) in Amsterdam. Note that this is not the Conservatory with the same name, ;-) I did never get that far! The building where I spent the larger part of my grammar school days was in the Gabriel Metsustraat, just besides the American Embassy.

To every crush, specifically the ones which do not work out as you hope for, belongs a certain extent of yearning. It was not different for the guitar, a crush on the guitar requires a good instrument. I did the yearning and shooting loving looks through the shop windows at Sacksioni's Guitar Shop in the Ruysdaelstraat, one tram-stop from school and within range for the walk during odd hours.

Just to make things clear, although the first name of the owner of the shop is Harry too, according to the FAQ of his web site he is not related to Harry Sacksioni.

I used to stroll along and sometimes back, admired the guitars in the shop window, sighed and yearned. Ah, if I possessed such an instrument! Then my guitar career would start in earnest!

Unfortunately, the collection of the budget for this would take about three years, even with the savings from a small newspaper round. Three years! An interminable period in the view of an adolescent with budget problems.

There was another similarity with crushes. I just did not dare to face reality, enter the shop and just try out the instruments. The old battle between desire and shame for vulnerability. ;-) Maybe I was just afraid to see my dream replaced by the harsh reality that I could not play a single note on that guitar!

Well, things went right a few years later. I bought my first self-earned guitar with Hampe at the Spui in Amsterdam for 120 guilders and presented myself for guitar lessons at the School of Music in Enschede (yes, there was a move from Amsterdam to Enschede in between). Thus started my guitar training and a hobby which has lasted for over thirty three years, hopefully with options to extend far beyond my retirement.

Another youthful memory of mine is Harry Sacksioni's first album. In those days he was a completely unknown guitarist who surprised me and many others with tracks like *Scarborough Fair*, *Meta Sequoia*, *Blos*, *Tranen*, *Huiswaarts*, *Goofy*, *Lappenballerina*, *Breekbaar* en *Elixer*. Lovely music, still heavily influenced by the Troupe of the cabaretier Herman van Veen and his arranger Eric van der Wurff.

I came across this album from 1977 in the record library of the *Bellettrie Bibliotheek* of the Technical University Twenthe (in those days I was a first-year student there) and was quite impressed as a (starting) guitarist. Such a nice piece! Later I got this record myself from a friend in exchange for another LP (*Live in Japan* by Deep Purple, if I remember correctly) and I have kept it ever since.

After I made some advancement with the guitar lessons, I purchased the sheet music of Sacksioni's first LP and extended my repertoire of Anonymous, Calatuyud, Carcassi, and Sor with Sacksioni. I started with *Scarborough Fair*, then I played *Goofy*, *Breekbaar*, *Blos, Meta Sequoia* and *Huiswaarts*.

Huiswaarts was new for me, it was a finger picking piece which was hard to read from the score. Further the pieces had -in my 'classical' experience- weird times (like 12/8 or 5/4), which is not surprising, because Harry Sacksioni noted his songs for playing and not to create highly classical structures in notes. I found out that reading syncopation (like in *Goofy*) was tricky for a beginner like me, specifically because it added to the 12/8 meter. Later you find out that it is a tricky way to write down triplets, but never mind!

Harry Sacksioni published some more books, but I remember only the song *Bidvogel* from the album *Om de Hoek.* For his later work, you needed a band to play with you, and I had none at home.

Well, those were the days. Early guitar love... and some youthful nostalgia connected to Amsterdam, because this girl-friend -who gave me that LP- and some others were the last link between Amsterdam and Twente, a link which has been broken for ages now.

Fortunately, life goes on and new links replace the broken ones. Anyway, the above-mentioned pieces by Harry Sacksioni obtained a place in the department popular music of my repertoire, and I still play them at times.

In the early nineties, I have heard Harry Sacksioni playing for the last time. That was on the Second Segovia Festival in Hengelo, and even in those days he had long left the style of his first LPs. The memory of his concert is vague, because my own not completely successful stage performance on this festival caused me more worries than I could 'amuse away'.

The weird thing about nostalgia is, that it presents a snapshot which seems to be changeless in your mind. You cherish something which used to be there, but might have changed completely, or even have disappeared. It is striking that you forget that time goes on for yourself and the object of your nostalgia alike.

The Twente Guitar Festival offered a nice opportunity to check my statements about nostalgia: Harry Sacksioni was there as a player and as an instructor. Saturday would be my workshop with him, his concert was bound this evening.

The organisation was afraid that the Concordia Theatre would be too small, so they organized the concert together with Podium Twente in the Grote Kerk on the Oude Markt -the historical town square- in Enschede, just 20 metres away from Concordia. I knew that the Grote Kerk was regularly used for concerts and recitals, I have been there once amongst the hundreds of amateur musicians who played a Christmas Carol under the direction of the famous conductor Jaap van Zweden.

The organisation was quite right, the capacity of the Concordia Theatre would not be sufficient, because the church with over 400 places was quite full even before the concert started. Fortunately, I succeeded in getting a nice place just besides the mixing console (Thank you, Paul Driessen).

'Here you will have the best sound!', he said, and he was right. On that spot, the sound crew was continuously busy readjusting the sound, based on electronic measurement and the sound in their own ears. In another part of the church you might be bothered by all kinds of physical phenomena like nodes, antinodes, standing waves and resonances which the crew could not hear, so the sound experience could be quite different there.

A church is a difficult location for music which is played fast, because the sound of reflections and echoes sometimes does not return earlier than you played the next ten notes, causing sometimes (also musically) nasty interference. It's quite a challenge in spaces like this to produce a sound which is a clear reproduction of what you are actually playing.

With Harry Sacksioni's performance this difficulty was not different. Before the break the sound was overwhelming and the mixer crew was quite busy to make the best of it. The basses predominated and the details of licks and runs disappeared in the big mess of reflections. In the beginning of the concert I got the impression that I was almost played off the hall. It annoyed me at times, because I like to hear *some* transparency in the sound and structure of the music!

Before the break, Sacksioni played his fast tracks. Virtuoso and motivated, matchless and hard to follow. :-) At times, you would call him Tommy rather than Harry Sacksioni (freely after the fingerpicking virtuoso Tommy Emanuel).

This section of the concert smashed my nostalgia. Suddenly I was aware that time had not stood still. Harry Sacksioni had left the time of the fragile songs like *Breekbaar* far behind and chosen his own way. As a matter of fact, I had done so too: my then passion for ragtime, blues and Sacksioni's pieces had long been replaced by Renaissance, Baroque, Classical and Romantic, combined with some 'classical' arrangements of pop songs at best (the three *Popsongs* volumes by Cees Hartog served this purpose well!)

He went a long way, I must admit! In the near future, he will celebrate his 40th anniversary as a stage musician. Quite a run! If I would skip early retirement, I would make that in my job just before I got 65! Harry Sacksioni is quite happy on stage, that is clear!

This became quite obvious from his entertainment. He informed the audience extensively about the ins and outs of the pieces and charmed them with anecdotes and jokes and the casual more serious tone (for instance how your attitude is changing after becoming a parent), causing the evening to obtain a relaxed light-hearted mood. In was a concert with a high degree of conference. That's some getting used to if you are used to classical guitar concert with no or minimal announcements and non-stop playing!

Harry had his own humoristic vision on the audiences for guitar concerts: 'those guitarists watch every move you make, but they do not listen...' Well, there was ample time for listening on his concert, because he did things that fast, that even a quick eye could not keep up.

After the break -fortunately for me- his programme was quieter. Just a bit more nostalgic for me. It was funny to hear, that in one of his conferences he told about his own sense of nostalgia: the soccer pitch from his youth in Amsterdam, which was replaced by a modernistic apartment building: a memory from the past which will never return.

I can share this nostalgia. I spent my grammar school days in Amsterdam and played quite some hours street soccer on a pitch on the Museumplein. Well, that pitch is gone as well and Amsterdam went its own way: decentralized town councils, parking garages instead of parks (like on the Mercatorplein), 6 euros per hour parking fees, old neighbourhoods demolished and new ones (more expensive) built-up, corruption of the previous streets of grandeur. My youthful memories *are* past.

His last song -an encore- was back to the basis: unplugged. Someone said she liked that best. So, fragile in that great hall.

Yes, I guess that I'll look up the score of *Breekbaar* (i.e. fragile) next week.

Day Three

Alberto Mesirca

Promenade

For me the Saturday was the busiest day: three workshops *Let's improvise* and my master class with Yves Storms. Consequently, I missed category 3 of the Scharpach Competition and could attend only part of category 2.

I was in nice and early, so I could use my 'private' open podium again: the almost deserted canteen of the Artez Conservatory. Apparently after two days off some life came back to the conservatory, because quite some musicians who did not play guitar 'sneaked' towards the rehearsal rooms. I even saw the members of a brass band, I guess they had a tattoo in town.

Yesterday I played classical, today it would be popular music. In this way I got my hands warm nicely for the workshops.

Workshop Let's Improvise, Jim ten Boske

This time I was there alone with Andre of Group Green. Again, Jim's first question was: 'what shall we do?' We already knew, Andre and I just had been a bit playing with *Samba Cordao* by Joep Wanders. Because he was planning to specialise in Latin rhythms, it was a good plan to proceed with the samba.

Four measures from *Samba Cordao* were sufficient for a great deal of fun: I played the accompaniment and Jim and Andre changed solos regularly. It yielded some nice runs.

The lesson of this time: improvisation simply comes to take a venture.

Workshop Let's Improvise, Paul Driessen

After a quick stroll to the other side of the Artez building we ended up at Paul's. This time we worked a bit with the chord progression of *Manha de Carnaval* by Luis Bonfa.

Paul had a great knowledge about the musical theory around chord progressions, scales and modes. Unfortunately, I did not know that much, ;-) In my impression Phrygian had something to do with a region in the classical Greece, which is far from a modal name in music theory.

Long time ago, I started to read in a book about musical theory by Theo Willemze, a well-known teacher on the Enschede Conservatory (which is Artez Conservatory now). I soon lost my way, music theory can be quite complex, and put the book aside.

I found out there is *Music Theory for Dummies* and even *A Complete Idiot's Guide to Music Theory*. They would make a nice start, because a bit of skills in music theory comes in very handy in improvised music. It seems weird I guess, but improvised music is built on spontaneity and a thorough knowledge of the musical material.

Concert Duo NIZH: De Toverfluit

Every Twente Guitar Festival has a concert of an art form in which the guitar is used in another way, apart from the classical solo performance. The first festival we had the cabaret by Andre Manuel, the second time we had an unforgettable night with Klaus Rentzel's *Gitarobatrix*, and now Duo NIZH (Sanna van Elst en Bobby Rootveld) would perform a programme for the kids.

Children form a critical audience which make great demands on entertainment and immediately show criticism and appreciation. When I entered the theatre and observed the stage, I noticed that there would be no lack of entertainment, attributes were around everywhere.

Before the performance started, the stage was completely dark. Soon the eerie masked magician Mu appeared, who announced that he was a little sick (Mu-sick). The slightly frustrated magician decided to cross the musicians and enchanted the instruments such, that the concert would be a utter failure. Satisfied with the result, the magician chuckled to himself and disappeared from stage.

When Sanna hit the stage, everything looked alright, except for the fact that her partner was late. A few minutes later, a sweating Bobby popped up. Sanna reprimanded him firmly and Bobby had a lot of fantastic excuses which made all traditional stories about closed railroad barriers and open bridges obsolete. Specifically, the excuse about the

inedible peanut butter which had converted into faeces was a hit with the children in the audience.

Soon the destructive consequences of Mu's enchantments on Bobby's instruments became obvious: his guitar broke in two pieces, his maracas disintegrated against the ceiling, his tambourine turned to parts and he almost lost his voice.

Bobby had to play a piece on his own, but he did not dare to. Sanna was unrelenting, he had to play! Bobby demonstrated his stage fright, struggling with a chaos of attributes (music stand, guitar stand, foot stool, etc.) which served a kind of performance ritual. He succeeded to play his piece with great effort. The funny thing was hearing him bragging about his brilliant performance afterwards.

Sanne played the stern teacher, Bobby the rebellious child. This role play appealed to the children, they sometimes like juggling better than playing their instrument before an audience.

The story went back to Magician Mu. He had passed a bad youth as a bully's victim at the Magician's School in Symfonia. In this way, he changed from a lovely song writer into a musician's tormentor, which was musically acted out by Bobby and Sanna.

Bobby and Sanna came up with the idea to placate Mu, in order to improve his behaviour. In order to achieve this, the children played his favourite song on recorder. After everyone had promised that the bullying was over, the happy end was there. All enchantments were lifted and the concert could start.

At this time, there were only two minutes left. Just enough time for the *Guarijita* from their first CD!

During the play, Sanna's recorders ruled the roost with fragments of *Flow my Tears* and the 16th century *Nachtegaeltje* (by Van Eijk). Bobby was quite busy with the theatre aspects of the show.

This programme was a nice example of entertaining children with music and theatre. Most kids strung along enthusiastically.

Workshop Let's Improvise, Harry Sacksioni

I was curious to this introduction to Harry Sacksioni as a teacher. It turned out to be a relaxed happening around the basics of finger picking, together with Andre of Group Green and another guy who was playing jazz guitar.

I must admit, that I was not that fast in 'twiddling my thumbs', I am rather a music reader than someone who is good at pattern memorization. So my fingers regularly tripped over each other and the strings likewise. Never mind, Harry patiently put the fingers back into place again for the next attempt.

Nevertheless, finger picking is a long way to go for me. Years ago, I did play some songs with this technique, but I had learned them from sheet music. In this way I rather

interpreted the material as arpeggios in classical movements. Which provides a different accent than the twiddling thumb pattern.

Harry Sacksioni announced that he was going to publish a finger picking method soon, which covered the technique from basics to advanced in both TABs and score. I guess it is interesting to read how he has documented over 40 years of playing experience.

Scharpach Competition, Category 2

After the workshop, I had to make a run towards the Concordia, so the easy Promenade had to be omitted. I was just in time for the first candidate of the Scharpach Competition, Category 2, i.e. the amateurs over 16. As a consequence of the schedule of my master class, I would be able to listen to a few candidates only.

The first candidate was Joost van Dam. He announced to play *Arpege* by Francis Kleynjans and *Prelude Nr. 1* by Heitor Villa Lobos. The *Arpege* had a pensive sound and a prelude-like structure: it definitely had the typical Kleynjans sound, it is music with a touch of humour. Finally, Joost van Dam played the *Prelude* by Villa Lobos by heart.

Benoit Ducene was next. He played *Unruhe* and *Scherzo* by Johann Kaspar Mertz, followed by *Wild Nature*, an own composition.

Unruhe was the right name for the piece and its interpretation, he started restlessly, but corrected in the end. *Scherzo* was much more relaxed and was even played humorously. In *Wild Nature* the player was in his element. Consequently, his technique and dynamics were much better than in Mertz's pieces.

Unfortunately, there was a pause here: a few candidates did not show up, or did not know that they were competitors, and the ones who were part of the competition were not ready yet.

Time went on, so I had just time for one candidate more: Minke van der Stelt, who was in the Category Three competition at the first Twente Guitar Festival, three years ago. She played *Meta Sequoia* by Harry Sacksioni and *Berceuse* by Leo Brouwer. It was quite clear that in the end her heart was with the Berceuse: she played a nice and polished interpretation. With *Meta Sequoia* she incidentally dropped some leaves, err... notes.

Well, then my time was up, so I did not hear the eventual winners. Bad Luck!

Master Class with Yves Storms

Again this year I had requested a master class with Yves Storms. The first time I met him -at the first Twente Guitar Festival- I was impressed by his knowledge and skills in both the guitaristic and musical historical fields. The first time I went as a soloist, after the duo master class of last year, I now returned as *Alleinspieler*, i.e. soloist again.

This year I took nineteenth century music with me, the *Melancolie* by Napoleon Coste from his *Recreation du Gitariste*, and like ‘backup’ a *Bolero* by Julian Arcas. I had learned the pieces by heart, just to find out how I would perform this way. Well, I was not disappointed!

The Frenchman Napoleon Coste was a student of Fernando Sor. After Sor’s death, he soon became the leading guitarist of France. Unfortunately for what is was worth, because he lived in a time of sharply declining interest in the guitar. He broke his arm in an accident, which perforce caused him to end his concert career. Nevertheless, he went on teaching and composing for the guitar, leaving a considerable repertoire after his death. Unfortunately, nor Coste himself nor his next of kin made a lot of royalties from his compositions, as a consequence of the lack of interest by the music publishers, Coste had to publish most of his music on his own and even today there is not much in it.

Coste’s music shows a lot of the melodic aspects which also appear in Sor’s music, augmented with early Romantic elements. The *Recreation du Gitariste* is a nice collection of music of ‘medium’ difficulty, ;-) until you arrive at the *real* polishing of the pieces! The collection consists of a number of short pieces (up to two pages, perfect for a reading musician like me, prevents you from having to turn pages) which are easy on the ear.

Julian Arcas was one of Francisco Tarrega’s teachers. In his time, he was a celebrated guitarist who toured all over Europe. In a number of his compositions he included elements of traditional Spanish songs and dances, like the *Bolero*.

In the *Bolero*, I had been puzzling with a few passages in the higher positions, causing me to suffer a bit from ‘acrophobia’. I thought it would be a good idea to tackle this problem.

We spent most of the time with the piece by Coste. I played *Melancolie* once completely, and then started to work on the performance. We covered quite some aspects with reference to the musicality of the piece. They came down to playing a story with question and answer, statement and refutation, sadness, consolation and gleam of hope. All using techniques like apoyando with the thumb to support the melody line in the bass part. ;-) Well I was not quite used to playing apoyando on the bass strings.

Yves Storms had a very meaningful Dutch (no, to be more specific Flemish) expression for apoyando, the word ‘steun’ which litterally translates as ‘support’. A very to the point word, considering the effect on the melody. In many ways, the Flemish Dutch is a much richer language than the ‘official’ Netherlands Dutch!

Serenity, relaxation and breath are the important aspects in this delicate and fragile music. I found out that I am sometimes too hasty and impatient to finish a note or phrase completely. This is partly caused by over-anticipation of tricky spots, and partly by an inherent restlessness which increases under (performance) stress conditions.

Well, these were the subjects of this master class. Phrasing, breathing, serenity, the clear approach, tension and relaxation. Sufficient material for practising in the near future.

An hour like this is gone in a minute. Fortunately, there was some time left for my ‘acrophobia’. A change in fingering appeared to be quite helpful.

In brief, Yves Storms offered a master class which will be advantageous to me. An hour is short, but hours like this are very valuable to me!

Promenade

After the master class, it was too late to go home and have some dinner. So, I landed on the outdoor cafe of SamSam with a number of guitar friends and had some titbit from the menu. It was lovely weather and fairly warm for an outdoor meal, until the sun disappeared behind the houses. Well, the coat served me well.

The Scharpach Competition Category 2 appeared to be a long run, quite a lot more amateurs had found the courage and ambition to present their skills in public. Fortunately, the cook of SamSam prepared food quickly enough for the last guests to be in time for the evening concert.

Concert Alberto Mesirca

We started with the price-giving for the amateur categories of the Scharpach Competition. Unfortunately, I had not been able to hear any of the winners. The winners of Category 3 were Vera Hukker (1), Jaques Camous (2) and Martin van Son(3). Vera has been a participant during the first Twenthe Guitar Festival as well. The first prize in the second category -above 16 years of age- was for Koen Claeys. Manu Claeys was second and Mikhail Kuchersky turned out to be a good third.

The Italian guitarist Alberto Mesirca hit the stage for the third evening concert of the festival. Until quite recently he was unknown to me (I know, I do not read sufficient specialist journals for the guitar). This changed on the Saturday before the Twente Guitar Festival.

On this Saturday I was in the old synagogue in the village of Borne, about 10 miles from Enschede. Here the Duo NIZH played their new theme program around Yiddish music. There my wife and me met Alberto Mesirca who played a couple of pieces as a try-out for his performance in the Dutch radio program *Spiegelzaal*. I was impressed by his musicality and technical skills. Consequently, I was looking forward to this concert, being quite curious about the pieces he was going to play.

Alberto Mesirca entered the stage in a very modest, unobtrusive and almost timid way. This modesty changed completely after he had struck the first strings: we observed a musician in optima forma with a clear and specific goal: surprising, astonishing, touching and entertaining the audience with his music!

Almost instantly I remembered how Denis Azabagic hit the stage of the Waterstaatskerk in Hengelo almost fifteen years ago on the last Segovia Guitar Festival: just as quietly and modestly like Alberto Mesirca, astonishing the audience while he filled the concert hall with his play.

Just consider the fact that Denis Azabagic has grown into a great and versatile musician since (which we have clearly observed during the final concert of the last year's (second) Twente Guitar Festival). After Alberto Mesirca's concert my only conclusion could be that (in my humble opinion) he has at least the same great potential like Mr. Azabagic in his youthful days. I hope the world will hear many more concerts from Mr. Mesirca!

Quite some time ago I read a paper about the so-called *state of flow*, a state of mind in which you are perfectly concentrated and focused, in which everything seems to come your way without any effort. A state in which details seem to merge into a perfect whole. A musician may experience this with a performance which is so perfect and natural, that afterwards he or she does not remember how it was achieved and even has forgotten which pieces he or she has played.

Well, I noticed that you can have this state of flow as a listener too!

From the first second to the last, I have been enjoying myself immensely. I did not inspect any programme, my only clues where the whispered titles of pieces amongst the audience. To me it was not important *what* Alberto Mesirca played, I was able to concentrate completely on the sheer fact that he was *playing* and on the emotions, he was passing on.

OK, I must admit that this sounds fairly soft, but I just cannot describe it another way. It rarely happens to me that I am so concentrated while listening, that I forget about the program and stick to music recognition completely.

Inspecting the programme afterwards, of course I can write *something* about the individual pieces.

Alberto Mesirca started with *Homenaje pour le Tombeau de Claude Debussy*, the impressing homage which De Falla composed on the death of one of the masters of the Impressionism: Claude Debussy.

Next were two members of the Spanish School of Pedrell: Enrique Granados and Isaac Albeniz. It keeps striking me, that Albeniz is closer to the Spanish folk music, while Granados has cultivated the raw material of the Spanish Traditional.

Mesirca's performance of Granados' Spanish dance *Andaluza* reminded me of the great performance of this piece by Alicia Delarocha on the piano. His interpretation of Albeniz' *Granada* pictured the sultry summer evenings in the Mediterranean on which the sun sets early, but the heat of the day lingers in a much more enjoyable manner.

Back in time it went to Domenico Scarlatti, who wrote 550 sonatas for the instruction and enjoyment of his crown princess who paid his gambling debts when necessary.

Observing the musical level of these sonatas, she must have been a quite capable harpsichord player. Mesirca played them virtuoso, effectively ornamented and clearly in structure.

Castelnuovo-Tedesco was the composer of the *Cappricio Diabolico*, a name which turned out to be quite correct. Mesirca mastered these sheer diabolical runs without problems!

The next piece was quite a bit of virtuosity: *Introduzione e Capricio* by Gulio Regondi, a 19th century guitarist and composer who dazzled his audiences with an unbelievable number of notes per second. Mesirca kept up perfectly and -I guess- beat Regondi himself.

After the break, Alberto Mesirca started with a number of studies, *Tre Studi di Virtuosita e Transcendenza* by Angelo Gilardino. He played them as a homage to the composer, whom he is personally acquainted with.

The name of the studies explains something about their purpose, a kind of transcendence from virtuosity to music, in other words using technique and virtuosity for the purpose of the final goal, i.e. music. The studies appeared complex material in which quite a number of technical aspects were exercised.

The final piece was *Sonate* by Antonio Jose. It was no use to compare the interpretations by Zoran Dukic and Alberto Mesirca, both had their own right and did all credit to Jose's composition. In fact, the only thing I did as a listener was comparing the possibilities of expression that both players used.

After the last piece, the audience went absolutely wild. Alberto Mesirca showed his appreciation for the enthusiasm of the audience with various encores. I remember the *Prelude* by Villa Lobos, the one with the harmonics in the melody, best.

Conclusion: I went home with an absolute sense of *Woooow*!

Day Four

Roland Dyens

Promenade

Today, I decided to drive myself. It was a Sunday, so I guessed parking was free today. I found a nice spot at the ‘quiet’ side of the railway in Enschede. *Parking free except for shopping Sundays*, a note on the parking meter stated. Well, it was dead quiet, so I guessed it was no shopping Sunday.

After a short walk, I was in the Concordia Theatre again, waiting for the lunch concert of the day. I was lucky to meet Alberto Mesirca, so I got the perfect opportunity to congratulate him with the great performance of the night before.

Concert Lapis Lazuli

Today the quite hot Concordia Theatre was the domain of Lapis Lazuli, the violin-guitar duo consisting of Uta Preckwinkel and Paul Driessen. They play ‘popular’ music in a very broad sense, according to the title of their programme *Ins Blaue Hinein* (which is German for *Just like That*). Their repertoire includes everything between Latin, swing, jazz and folk.

I remembered Lapis Lazuli from the supporter's concert for *The Friends of the Twente Guitar Festival* (which alone is worth the contribution!) and found that they made well played and entertaining music.

For a change, they made their announcements in German. No problem, I had been paying attention well in my German lessons on High School.

Lapis Lazuli played nice, relaxed and at times speedy music for violin and guitar, jazzy, a bit country and many stages in between. They played a number of catchy own compositions.

Technically the presentation was excellent, the amplification was clear, balanced and at a comfortable volume! Paul Driessen started on a -by the looks of it- Godin, but soon switched to the e-guitar that he used to compose his first songs.

Both the violinist and the guitarist got and used all opportunity to excel, Uta and Paul did this with apparent fun. In the hot and humid Concordia Theatre, this caused some beads of sweat, causing Paul's impressing and abundant hair to block his view on the guitar. Fortunately, a girl in the audience could borrow him a headband. It looked like the good old sixties. *Wow, cool man, Peace!*

Summarizing: it was nice music to listen to and it was quite difficult to stop tapping with your feet!

Promenade Agitato

During the concert, I heard a remark which made me think. Somebody mentioned the shopping Sunday. I would not expect a shopping Sunday on a day like Memorial Day (the 4th of May in Holland), but it did alarm me. Suddenly I realized that the Enschede Moloch of Parking Fees had to be fed on shopping Sundays!

So, I made a run to my parking place. Little chance, because the traffic warden had made his round only ten minutes after my arrival and raked in his daily bonus: fifty-one Euros through the drain. *Outrageous!* There are a lot more traffic offences which are cheaper, but much more dangerous for the fellow road user.

What happened? Shopping Sundays are considered no Sunday, so you have to pay parking fees. It is beyond me how a statement like this remained unnoticed by the Christian Democratic section of the Enschede council: what about the famous Sunday's rest? *Pecunia non Olet* (money does not smell) the classical Romans used to say.

Well, I did not want to invest anything more in this maladministration, so I parked my car outside the boulevard area (i.e. the Enschede town centre) in a foul mood. It was quite a walk back to the Concordia Theatre, with a forced march I just made it in time for the finals of the Scharpach Competition.

Finals Scharpach Competition Category 1

With cramp in my calves because of the quick march I slipped into the Concordia Theatre just in time for the start of the Finals of the Scharpach Competition Category 1.

With the friendly cooperation of Liz Day (she provided me with a list of participants and pieces) I was able to write a little report of each of the players.

Magdalena Kaltcheva went first. Her interpretation of *Romanza* and *Andantino variato* from the *Grand Sonata* by Niccolo Paganini made me forget my anger about the parking fine. And that was striking, considering the fact that even the great Beethoven could express his anger about *der Verlust einer verlorenen Pfennig* in a virtuoso piano piece. This parking fine was quite a few pennies more...

The piece by Paganini is known as one of the more difficult from the guitar literature, but Magdalena Kaltcheva interpreted the piece with a relaxed touch.

A *Sonata* by Scarlatti and a movement from the *Libra Sonatina* by Dyens completed her programme, which remained within the 20 minutes regulative playing time. She deserved a warm applause, specifically because she had cheered me up!

The second candidate was Floria Nica. She played a number of movements from *All in Twilight* by the Japanese Takemitsu. It was very subtle and fragile music, just like the Japanese sketches on rice paper. She performed in a meditative mood.

An *Allemand* by Dietrich Buxtehude -a contemporary of Bach, who was admired greatly by the latter- was her second piece. I did not know that Buxtehude had composed lute music. Well, even if he did not, there might be an arrangement! I felt a bit surprised, because she played the piece in a tempo and atmosphere which belongs to a slow movement like a *Sarabande*.

She concluded her programme with two *Balkan Miniatures* -*Siroko* and *Vranjanka*- by Bagdanovic. It became clear to me that I had no perfect connection and affinity with contemporary classical guitar music.

Irina Kulikova was candidate number three. She indulged us with a beautiful interpretation of *Andante and Rondo* by Dioniso Aguado, a slightly less spectacular *Vals nr. 4* by Augustin Barrios and the best piece, *Sevillana* by Joaquin Turina.

I considered *Sevillana* her best piece, she played it decisively and dansant and appeared to be far beyond the difficulty of the material. In brief, it impressed me.

Then it was the turn of Sabrina Vlaskalic. She entered the stage less extrovertedly than with the preliminaries. Once she started playing, however, it again became a handsome sight how she merged with her music in passionate and almost amorous arabesques. I could not help remembering the matches of the tennis players at the Wimbledon tournament, where they sigh and cry in harmony with their exertions. The only problem is that guitar music volume is a little bit too low to permit these background noises.

Back to the music: she started with two movements from Rodrigo's *Elogio de la Guitarra*. Rodrigo provides difficult material, but she played it well. Vlaskalic continued her programme with *Introduction and Rondo* by Aguado. A perfect opportunity to compare Vlaskalic to the Aguado interpretation of Magdalena Kaltcheva. I think, Vlaskalic's performance was more passionate.

In some way or another she must have played her repertoire slower than she expected. At the moment, she wanted to start the *Walk Dance* by Tadic, the jury whistled her back: she had exceeded the regulatory time. Vlaskalic tried to budge the jury for a moment, alas to no avail, the jury remained strict. This aroused her anger, causing her to struggle -just as passionately as she was playing- between waiting for the applause or immediately leave the stage *molto agitato*.

I have read somewhere that with some competitions exceeding over one's time is a reason for disqualification. Considering the results of the competition, fortunately the Scharpach Competition did not have this rule.

Daniel Schatz had waited the longest time before he could play his programme. From the preliminaries, I remembered his performance with atmosphere.

He started well with *Equinox* by Takemitsu. Just like *All in Twilight,* this piece was very fragile, requiring quiet musical brush strokes and soft colouring.

Unfortunately, he went on this way in his remaining programme: he was more or less wet-nursing the music. In my opinion, this is not the optimal treatment for the *Prelude from the first Lute Suite* by Bach and the *Sonata* by Antonio Jose, these pieces require a firm and decisive approach.

For Daniel Schatz, the stopwatch had no mercy either, he had to terminate his programme prematurely.

As usual after the competition, speculations about the winner were all around. The jury would be quite busy to select the best player from the ladies (I guessed Daniel Schatz did not have the best chances for the win).

Promenade

The Scharpach Competition ended at a quarter past four. Ample time before the evening concert which would start at half past eight because of the (Dutch version of the) Memorial Day. Thus, I walked to my parking lot outside the city boulevards (about a mile's walk) and drove home. Nicely in time for a birthday party and a nice dinner.

The parking fine ticket smirked at me from the co-pilot's chair, but at that time it did not bother me that much. I guess I will take offence (and I actually did) about the greed of the town of Enschede as soon as the giro form arrives.

4th of May, 8 ‘o Clock

The last day of the Twente Guitar Festival was on the 4th of May, the day of the Commemoration of the Dead in Holland. The organisation was well aware of this and announced this the nights before. For that purpose, the concert hall of the Concordia Theatre would be a place to participate in the commemoration.

Like it happens every year since 1945, the Commemoration of the Dead is announced by bell tolling. The moment the bells fall silent, exactly at 8 ‘o clock, the moment is there: two minutes of silence.

Two minutes, a tranquil moment which says everything... We *must not* deny it, we *must certainly not* forget it!

A few years ago, there was a discussion whether we should stop with the 4th of May at a certain time, or not. The arguments -one of them was that the direct victims of the war would die out after a certain time- to make such a decision were not clear to me. I am dead set against this: we *must* remain aware of the things which have happened in the past and are even happening at the very moment! If we lose this conscience, it will keep happening in the future, irrespective what flag or banner is waving above these atrocities!

I remember the Commemoration of the Dead from my early childhood, my parents rightly held it in high esteem. Both my father and mother were survivors of World War Two, my father was even evacuated to the countryside, because there was insufficient food in the cities. Their generation knew the meaning of war: starvation and fear.

Being a child, it is quite difficult to understand why you have to be silent in those two minutes after 8 ‘o clock. It more or less resembled being quiet in church during the service on Sunday. You were silent out of reverence, a word which is nowadays often translated as respect. This reverence applied to the 4th of May as well. It was a tribute to all those people who gave their life for freedom.

Later you learn about the historical backgrounds of the Commemoration of the Dead and you start to understand why this moment of silence -and above all awareness- is absolutely necessary. It is a moment of silence which not only commemorates those who have sacrificed themselves for freedom. Commemoration also concerns the victims of all kinds of ideologies: Holocaust, Armenian Genocide, the political purges of Stalin, Mao, Pol Pot, Argentina, Chili, the list is tragically long and even nowadays there seems to be no end in sight.

That’s why we -in my opinion- must continue the commemoration and try to take some action, even if it’s just a small bit.

That was the reason why I -and many people with me, because the Theatre was full- commemorate the dead on the 4th of May. I do it for myself, but also on behalf of my father who taught me this awareness, but at this time has completely forgotten all the things he has ever taught me.

Results Scharpach Competition Category 1

At about half past nine the moment was there: the result of the Scharpach Competition Category 1 and the final concert by Roland Dyens.

The jury decided the following ranking and prizes:

1. Irina Kulikova from Russia.
2. Magdalena Kaltcheva from Bulgaria.
3. Sabrina Vlaskalic from Serbia.
4. Floria Nica from Canada.
5. Daniel Schatz from Israel.

Congratulations Irina! I guess your performance of *Sevilliana* was the deciding factor.

Just before the prize giving ceremony it was time to appreciate the efforts of the organisation -Bobby, Jaap, Niels and Paul- and all volunteers. Chapeau, folks! A great achievement!

Concert Roland Dyens

Until a few years ago, I had never heard of the guitarist/composer Roland Dyens (;-) another lack of education for me). Many years ago I had struggled for some time with *Tango en Skai*, but the fast runs from this piece were too much for me, my effort to master this piece was in vain.

Things changed when Robert Horna became my guitar teacher. He is a big fan of Roland Dyens' compositions, being quite busy with studying a complete Dyens programme. In that way, I got a taste of *Songe de Capricorne* and *Saudade nr. 3,* my introduction to Roland Dyens as a composer.

Another pleasant introduction followed: two CDs *Chansons Francaises*. Such a beautiful arrangement! For example, these moving chansons by Jaques Brel (*Ne me quitte pas* and *Chanson des Vieux Amants*) or the ages old *Plaisir d' Amour* by Martini. Such a nice and original arrangements! Later I heard that they were very difficult to play, almost more difficult than a Bach suite... Well, what can I say?

It might be clear that I was curious about this concert!

Roland Dyens entered the stage in a calm and relaxed way and announced that he was going to play an improvisation first, just to catch the atmosphere and to get acquainted with the audience. He played various phrases and structures, with jazzy elements an a number of technical *tours de force*. It became clear soon, this guitarist was a real *One Man's Band,* representing a complete ensemble like a jazz trio.

Something which stroke me right away and stirred my admiration was his focus on the musical line and the melody. He accompanied his melodies with the most complicated and difficult technical structures. Nevertheless, it seemed that his technique was

completely natural and entirely for the purpose of the music. It looked like that the word *technical problem* did not exist in his guitar library.

This flexibility and ease was apparent in all his pieces, in his own compositions, in his arrangements and in the works by other composers. I have been listening breathless all the time.

A second aspect which stroke me was his dynamic approach. He was able to play very loud and powerful, but he never overstretched the guitar. His dynamic range was quite large. In some cases, the audience on the first ranks (I was on the balcony) had a clear advantage in hearing all the music.

Unfortunately, I must stick to an anthology of the pieces played by Dyens. The only thing I have done was listening, I have taken no notice of the titles of the pieces. At a certain time, I have put aside my notebook, it was no use writing while I was possessed by this music.

Before the break, Dyens played *Songe de Capricorne,* which I remembered by Robert's demonstration. Another piece he played was *Anyway*, one of the compulsory pieces for the Guitar Foundation America competition. *Very difficult with some music, maybe...* he made a remark about the specification for his composition with a touch of humour concerning the way things are at competitions. Additionally, he played a number of arrangements of popular songs, like the ones by Jobim. Specifically, in his arrangements, Dyens showed himself a master in playing ensemble on one guitar, with bass part, accompanying chords and a clear melody line.

After the break, Dyens made an excursion to Fernando Sor with a *Bagatelle* and the *Theme and Variations* on the song *Marlbrough s'en va-t-en guerre*, a melody which is known with the British as *He's a jolly good Fellow.* I remembered this piece from an album of Narciso Yepes. On this album, in the last tremolo variation, the melody seemed to submerge in the tremolo accompaniment.

Well, not so with Roland Dyens, all technique in theme and variations were completely for the purpose of the music, causing a clear and transparent performance whatever technically happened between the melody notes. Really spectacular!

He continued his programme with arrangements of a number of jazz standards, amongst others *Take the A-train*, *Night in Tunisia* and *Nuages* (the well-known piece by Django Reinhardt). Again, Roland Dyens played a complete jazz trio.

His arrangement of *Bachianas Brasileiras nr. 5* by Villa Lobos appeared a masterpiece of technique and musicality. Just give it a try: 6 cellos and a voice on a single guitar!

I guess it is quite obvious that the audience went wild and appreciated this beautiful performance with a standing ovation. Roland Dyens returned this gesture with two encores. One of them was a piece, specially requested by Fred, Bobby's father, who was one of the volunteers and supporters who made the festival a success. This was

Tango en Skai, played by the master and composer himself! A worthy homage to the complete supporter team of the Foundation Twente Guitar Festival!

After two encores -alas- the party was over: The Third Twente Guitar Festival had come to an end!

Finally

Four days with the guitar in such a pleasant atmosphere, it's bound to create a Blue Monday on the job. It is not easy to concentrate on operating instructions and maintenance procedures after a dose of music like this.

'We have started the organisation for 2009', was Paul Driessen's statement. I must say, that the back side of the programme showed promising information with respect to the next time.

This promise also showed from the way, people said goodbye to each other: "See you next year!" A clear sign of continuation, apparently the Twente Guitar Festival is becoming an event where people like to come back to.

A great job, guys! I am looking forward to next year!

;-) Don't forget to subscribe in time!