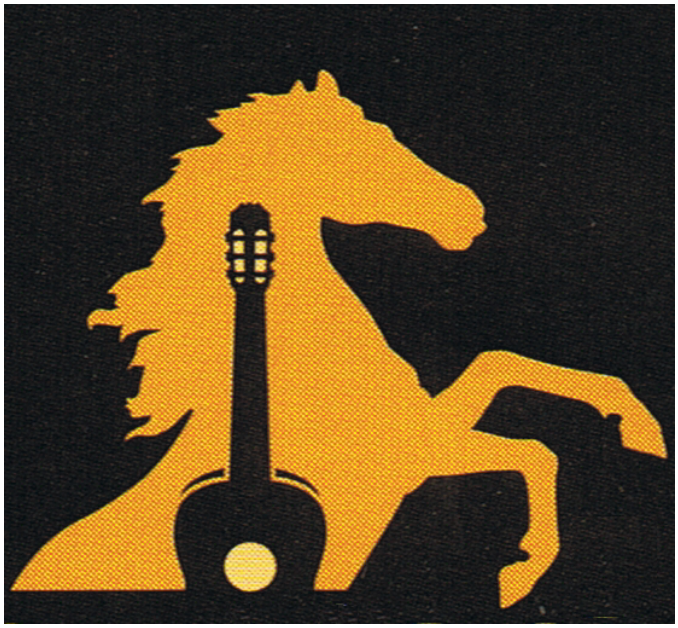
Twente Guitar Festival 2012

Blue Monday



It's Monday, 21th of May 2012. Long ago it used to be the birthday of my grandfather on the mother's side, I remember. The thought just came along, my head is dull and still so filled with impressions that there is hardly room for the everyday reality.

I make a round to the notice boards of the company that I used a few weeks back to attach some flyers of the Twente Guitar Festival 2012. Well, they were still there. Not bad, this time I experienced no competition from a colleague that considered notice boards only suitable for trade union announcements and took off my guitar festival flyers within a day last year.

I take a look at the back of the flyer and read a few names. Laura Young, Fernando Espi, Fareed Hague, Gillain and Heynen, SoloDuo, Reichenbach.

The last name invokes other memories with me. Meyringen, Switzerland, July 1982, my honeymoon. According to the novels of Sir Coynan Doyle the local waterfall –the Reichenbachfall- was the scene of the final battle between Sherlock Holmes en Dr. Moriarty. Both gentlemen disappeared in the raging waters and left Dr. Watson as the only witness of a tragedy. There is a monument at the site for this detective with his characteristic hat and pipe.

Whatever happened, the events that were announced on the flyer, the concerts, they are history now, just like the complete Twente Guitar Festival 2012. Four days I have lived in another world for the larger part of the days. As usual the return to the normal issues of the day is awkward.

Again, this guitar event wrote history, at least in this report. In that way I stick to the memories a bit in order to prevent a Blue Monday after all this musical joy!

The Festival

From the first edition in 2006, the goal of the Twente Guitar Festival is the organisation of an event that satisfies both guitarists -professional, semi-professional, student and amateur- and other interested. That's the reason why the festival has master classes and workshops for most guitar disciplines. Not only the classical guitar is covered, there is also room for flamenco, jazz and other musical genres in which the guitar has a role.

In 2006 the festival started as a three-day event in the Concordia Theatre at the Oude Markt in Enschede, the last stop before Germany in the east of Holland. Soon three days appeared too short, so the festivals from 2007 up till the present day covered four days. It also became clear that the room in the Concordia Theatre was insufficient. Fortunately, Enschede has a concrete temple of music, the Artez Conservatory, that is located just a few blocks away from Concordia.

Concordia is used for the concerts and the competitions, preliminaries excluded. The Artez Conservatory is the place to go for master classes, workshops and the preliminaries. It also accommodates a marketplace for luthiers, music publishers and guitar and CD retailers.

The Twente Guitar Festival is organised by the Foundation Twente Guitar Festival with board members Jaap Majoor, Niels Ottink, Paul Driessen, Reinout Kok and Gerard Kroeze. Obviously, the work of these gentlemen does not restrict itself to the four festival days. They start timely with negotiations with artists, fund raising with sponsors (yes, quite a challenge in these days) and planning and organisation of all aspects of the festival. Subscriptions must be processed, finances require attention and master class and competition schedules need to be drawn up. Quite a job indeed!

After all these years it has shown that the organisation is adaptive, experiences are evaluated and lead to improvements where necessary. An improvement for this year was the programme of the finals of the cat. 1 competition. Now the audience actually knew what the finalists were playing if the finalists fail to make announcements. Another novelty was the *lunch and meet* happening.

Besides the board members, the Twente Guitar Festival has a fair number of volunteers for all kinds of activities. Family, friends and acquaintances provided extra support. Niels' parents, for instance, were busy with the *lunch and greet* and the CD sales.

In this way, again one of the biggest guitar events in Holland took off. Two lunch concerts, four evening recitals, an open-air show on Ascension Day, the competition for the professionals and conservatory students, the competition for the amateurs in two categories, workshops flamenco and jazz, the master classes and a presentation by a luthier.

Day One

Laura Young

Groove with Fareed Haque

Every year it is a surprise how the schedules will develop. With a large number of activities, it's quite a challenge to make sure that all events are planned in sequence rather than simultaneously. Sometimes, however, concessions must be made. Consequently, I had little time to visit Groove sessions last year.

This time the schedule was perfect concerning both group arrangement and timing. On the Thursday, Friday and Saturday the Groove activities were planned quite early, from 10 to 12 in the morning. Just a matter of going there in time.

This year Fareed Haque would play an important role in the Groove sessions. He is a fusion guitarist that connects a great variety of styles, amongst them classical guitar and jazz. He visited the festival together with his band Math Games (guitar, bass and percussion). Besides a touring musician he is professor in Jazz and Classical Guitar at the Northern Illinois University. A remarkable combination indeed!

He started the workshop just like a professor starts his college. With a marker and a whiteboard. He opened with a clear explanation about the development of the jazz in the past years.

Once upon a time jazz was related to basic forms like the blues. (Seventh) chord progressions, melody and arpeggio were a clear indication for improvisation. Additionally, Jazz used to be a social happening, musicians went jamming in the clubs and developed according to the *learning by doing* principle.

In the fifties, jazz musicians revolted against the traditions and started to play in modes. Now scales in various forms became the basis for improvisation. People learned a lot about musical theory, but according to Fareed they also unlearned to use their ears. A jazz musician that knows all modes and scales is not necessarily a good improvisator.

In his workshop, Fareed Haque went back to basics from the time before the fifties. In brief, he explained something about the chord steps, the suspense and the impulse for solution with chords. Then we started work with the chord progression about C7, F7 and G7, the well-known “1-4-5” progression in C, but now in seventh chords. With a variation in rhythm patterns and taking turns for the solo we soon achieved a lot of fun in playing.

Next day we went a step forward. This time the complete band Math Games (Fareed Haque, the bass player Alex Austin and the drummer/percussionist Greg Fundis) was present in the practice room.

Fareed Haque continued his lecture about jazz and the role of the musician in the band. He did not identify solo players and accompanists, he only mentioned musicians that were in service of the groove. Their task is to keep the groove going. To this end each band member provides his contribution, the “parts” of the whole, which is the groove. This requires an awareness of all musicians concerning each other’s parts. Improvisation comes to connecting to, filling in and conclusion of parts. So there are no accompanists that are slaved to the soloist, there are no ego trippers and everyone contributes his part to the whole. Consequently, the solo passages must have a clear beginning and end in order to enable the other musicians to step in. So unlimited vague fiddling is out of the question.

This concept of the parts of a whole is a popular subject in many philosophical and religious movements. In music, it’s all dependent on practice.

My practice of that day started less positive, my D string had broken. It happens more often with these Hannabach MT850s, sometimes shops even offer an extra D-string with their packages. Unfortunately, Trekel’s stand in the Conservatory canteen did not sell strings separately. I had a package with me, but still it’s a shame of another open package.

It was fun playing with a complete band. Again, it appeared that I came further with listening than with counting measures. At times I lost synchronisation, but the groove brought me home again. Yet it was not that simple to let loose and I noticed that my urge for control caused some tensing up. When I succeeded letting go, it felt as a relief indeed.

The others, Peter, Paul and Jim joined in nicely and played their parts. In the meantime Fareed was quite willing to correct if a soloist started messing around and lost contact with the band.

Gradually the tremendous enthusiasm of the members of Math Games became obvious to me. These guys already made fun during rehearsals and were continuously trying new ideas. I became quite curious about the Saturday night!

Say Hello lunch

A new feature this year was the Say Hello lunch. Coffee and sandwiches plus a free concert by Paul Driessen who tested all of Jan Zonjee's guitars. In itself this event required some time to start up. Many contestants of the Cat. 1 competition had not arrived yet and at the same moment the events on the Grote Markt outside had started. Consequently, the number of visitors to the Say Hello lunch was pretty low.

The luthier Jan Zonjee had built up a nice stand with his guitars and briefly introduced them in a presentation. As a luthier, he is a late-bloomer, he started to be a full-time luthier at the age of 45. He does not restrict himself to classical guitars, he also builds steelstrings and bass guitars. He uses walnut for the bodies as a melodious alternative to rosewood.

Building guitars is not his only occupation, he also organizes courses in guitar building and manages various students. I liked that concept of an apprentice system. In the past, the master-mate idea was quite common amongst instruments builders, currently I do not hear a lot of it.

Zonjee had brought in some instruments built by himself and by pupils, including a Ukelele and a Senorita guitar. A perfect opportunity for a fast interplay between Paul Driessen and Fareed Haque on "small" and "large" Ukulele!

Master class Fernando Espi

I found the weather on this day insufficiently pleasant and warm to visit the outdoor happening on the Oude Markt. So, I stayed inside to attend the master class by the Spanish guitarist Fernando Espi. I had a time slot with him on this afternoon and decided to watch the lessons of others first.

The first student was a fellow amateur guitarist, Peter ter Beek, who achieves impressive results considering the brief period since he started to attend guitar lessons. He took a nice book with him that contains pieces from Renaissance to Rock on a comfortable level. Fernando Espi performed as an alert teacher with a thorough explanation of several practical issues for a beginning guitarist, from efficient use of left hand movement to the "planting" technique for the right hand.

The following visitor was one of the participants of the Cat. 2 competition. He played *Tango en Skai* by Roland Dyens and *Mallorca* by Isaac Albeniz. Here we found some interesting discussions. The guy was quite impatient with himself and showed clear anger and stress if things did not work out as he planned and expected. With pieces like *Tango en Skai*, however, some pitfalls are quite obvious, it has numerous opportunities for slips. Espi made it quite clear that technical problems need to be solved one by one and not all at one time, so patience and concentration is required. A "system" (as he called it) of trial and error and continuous failure is bound to fail in the end, as we saw clearly demonstrated. So Espi

showed the student (and me!) that a bit of patience with the material and the player himself is quite beneficial.

I had my master class literature ready, *Praeludium* by Frederik Rung (1854 - 1914) and *Les Clochettes* van Cottin (1863 - 1923). I learned about the balance between melody and accompaniment, the suspense in the melodies and harmony, and the drive in the music that needs some emphasis.

It was a fun master class. Fernando Espi has a contagious enthusiasm and a sharp analysis of technical problems. Yet he finds solutions that can be managed by both professional and amateur players.

Spending some time

The conservatory closed at six o' clock PM sharp and the evening concert would not start before eight. So, I had some dead time to spend. It made no sense going home, because my Love had brought me here to save parking fees (Enschede charges 2 Euro and 30 cents per hour, just calculate what you have to pay for a day like this) and asking her to pick me up and bring me back would leave little time for a relaxed meal at home.

By chance I had some bread left (because of the Say Hello lunch) and I could pick up some chips, the famous snack bar *De Muur* (*The Wall*) is just around the corner. Well, the chips appeared not that tasteful indeed! Some chip shop owners mean to support business economy by means of throwing stale chips from previous baking sessions in the frying fat again. Results is an unpleasant mix of rock hard sticks and casual fresh chips. To add insult to injury, the shop-owner had a not quite customer-friendly business instinct: If you order "chips with mayonnaise", you get the most expensive variant by default. At least, that's what I noticed on the price list. Anyway, the guy did not ask me anything.

So, this most expensive bag of stale rubbish was no success indeed. Bang your head against *The Wall*!

Fortunately, I met Jim ten Boske on his walk. He has been part of the festival from the early start and it is fun to have a chat with him. At the time we separated, the evening concert was much closer!

Concert Laura Young

The Canadian guitarist Laura Young made the start, playing the first concert of this festival. She had chosen a daring starter indeed, the *Chaconne* from *Partita BWV 1004* by Johann Sebastian Bach (1675 - 1750). That is a piece that requires a sharp mind from the beginning! She excelled in the "quiet" passages of the piece and had a striking dynamic approach.

She remained in the Baroque era with two *Fantasias* by David Kellner (1670 - 1748). She played it with a baroque elegance indeed, yet she did not drown in ornamentation and that's a good thing. Her powerful approach benefitted this enjoyable material.

Then it was time for two arrangements of a composer that is seldom heard on the guitar. Two *Cello Suites* by the German romantic composer Max Reger (1873 - 1916). I remember Reger as the composer of heavily orchestrated and almost bombastic orchestral and organ works, so I was curious how his material sounded on guitar/

Suite 1 Op. 131 appeared a lovely but very melancholic piece that almost exceeded the possibilities of the guitar. I liked the *Adagio* best. *Suite 3* from the same opus showed its best in the slow movements. In the faster movements, music seemed to drown in the violence of virtuosity.

After the Romantic era, the programme offered room a contemporary work, *El Castell del Moro Musser* by Feliu Gasull (*1959). Laura Young's story about this piece shed some light on the backgrounds. It was an impression of an old Moorish castle in the fantasy of a child. In reality, this place was a scrapheap where children used to play. Young played this piece with a clear Flamenco signature and a powerful and atmospheric approach.

The last piece was *Koyunbaba* by Carlo Domeniconi (*1947). Sometimes it is a disadvantage that you know a piece well and have heard it well-played too. Laura Young played the piece with virtuosity, yet she was a bit careless at times and failed to keep the balance in the last tremolo section.

Her encore was a section from a potpourri of a *Zarzuela* (a Spanish opera form), probably *Marina* van Emilio Arreta in an arrangement by Francisco Tarrega (1852 - 1909). I came across the theme as *Tango Marina* by Julian Arcas (1832 - 1882). Apparently, each country has its all-time hits!

Day Two

Gerhard Reichenbach

Preliminaries Axis Concours Cat. 1

Since the first edition, the Twente Guitar Festival has a competition for professionals and conservatory students. An event like this is a good idea, it might quickly become a meeting place for competition nomads that may develop into top guitarists later.

The very first festival did not have preliminaries, everyone played the finals. That grew into a prolonged event on the last day of the festival that exceeded the schedule so much that the evening concert started too late. It was a revelation to me indeed, I had never seen so much guitar auxiliaries (cushions, ergoplays etc.) before.

As a consequence, the Cat. 1 Competition has preliminaries since 2007. The Spiegelzaal in the Artez Conservatory was the arena for this. This year, the turnout of candidates was a bit less than we were used to, 15 players started the struggle that would yield 5 candidates for the finals.

Toshiyuki Kumagai entered the stage first and started with a movement from *Sonate III* by Manuel Ponce (1882 - 1948). At least that was what I read from the programme, because he failed to tell the audience what he was up to. He played the piece tenderly and almost woolly. His finish was great, just the breathing spaces were too long at times. Heitor Villa Lobos (1887 - 1959) has returned again in the arenas, this time with the ill-famous grating and squeeking *Etude 12*. I must admit that the noise was not too bad in Kumagai's interpretation. Additionally, his performance of the piece became stronger on the run.

Daniel Antonie frankly admitted (☺) that he played Legnani and Castelnuovo-Tedesco. Luigi Legnani (1790 - 1877) composed a set of *Capriccio's Op. 20*, number two of this set was on the stand. I still remembered the race-track performance of this piece by Eduardo Fernandez. Fortunately, Mr. Antonie kept the balance in a slightly lower tempo. Yet the end of the piece came as a surprise. It is commonly known that Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco (1895 - 1968) composed difficult guitar music and this *Tarantella* was no exception. It appeared a very mean piece in the scale fragments. Daniel Antonie dangerously approached the crash barrier at times, but recovered skilfully.

I had met Lore Raus a few times at competitions in this region. Nice to see that people come back! (Until they have won, of course!) She played two movements from *Homenaje a Andres Segovia* by Annette Kruisbrink (*1958). Lore had to get on-board a bit during the first movement *Llanto*, but soon she played the tranquil piece with a rich intonation. The last movement *Recuerdo* appeared to be a complex composition with numerous pitfalls in the runs.

Aktas Fatih Erdogan was an old acquaintance, I even met him two weeks ago at a competition in Germany. He played a piece by Dietrich Buxtehude (1637 -1707), one of Bach's teachers. Bach's illicit visit to Buxtehude in Lübeck yielded him the anger of his patron in Arnstad. The pieces were two movements from the *Suite in E minor*. Erdogan played the *Allemande* neatly with transparency in the voicing. The *Gigue* had swing and a few slips. It was nice to hear that there were turns in Buxtehude's music that you hear with Bach too. Apparently, Bach listened well to his teacher!

I had met Jakob Bangsø two weeks before in Germany, even in the finals of the competition. He brought two pieces on stage. The *Sonata K32* by Domenico Scarlatti formed an aria-like and well played transparent start. Then it was time for non-nonsense passion by means of the *Fandango* from *Tres Piezas Espanolas* by Joaquin Rodrigo (1901 - 1999). Bangsø played it exultantly jauntily with a clear drive. The virtuoso sections were flawless and this time the technique was subservient to music. I got a sense of Finale!

I met Jorrit Douwes together with Erdogan and Bangsø at the Nordhorn Festival. There is a clear case of cross-fertilization here! At that occasion, however, he did not play himself. He made up for that, playing the first movement from *Sonata Romantica* by Manuel Ponce this time. I like this composition with its romanticism and variety, yet the sudden rests keep surprising me. Douwes played it romantically, a bit shy and sometimes too tranquil in the beginning, but with growing eloquence in the end.

Andrea Monarda performed with the favourite song of emperor Charles V, an old acquaintance from Dutch history books. This song was *Mille Regretz* by Josquin des Pres in a skilful arrangement by Luis de Narvaez (who lived in the first half of the sixteenth century) that is called *Cancion del Emperador.* Monarda put the capotasto on the second fret and played the piece quite fast. Then he returned to relative modern times with an *Etude* by Heitor Villa Lobos. Number 10 this time, a slur study that I have not heard often. Nice!

Padet Netpakdee appeared, sat down and said nothing. Consequentially I could not notice that the programme had a slight mistake, his first piece was not listed. Some baroque-like piece, played clearly but also slightly robotic. Then I got in phase again, *Etude 7* by Heitor Villa Lobos. Netpakdee played the first section much, much too fast to recognize the music in the piece. He greatly improved in the middle section, there his play extended. In the reprise of the first section I heard that he had found as well that he started too fast. His slower tempo made the music much clearer.

Jurriaan van Eerten presented himself with *Sakura* by Yuquijiro Yocoh (*1925). It has been quite a while since I heard this piece the last time! As usual with theme and variations it is difficult to maintain the atmosphere. The second variation seemed to be completely detached from the tender koto sound that characterizes the piece. On the run, Van Eerten succeeded to regain coherency.

Nelly van Alven was one of the few ladies in the company. She started the *Prelude* from the *Suite in A minor BWV 997* by Johann Sebastian Bach in a remarkable way with a capotasto on the third fret. I know this custom with Renaissance music, with Bach’s baroque it seems rare to me. She played this prelude fiercely with a little lack of dynamics to my taste. For Heitor Villa Lobos’ *Etude 12* she had to remove the capo (else you will not make it in the higher positions). The grating and squeeking was significantly better than her colleague Kumagai and the sound was mindblowing. It was a pity that she paid less attention to phrasing, now the *Etude* only sounded like a study!

Ieva Baltmiskyte had decided to repeat the *Tarantella* by Mario Castelnuovo Tedesco. Technically he played the piece much better than Daniel Antoine, and he showed a tremendous urgency. Unfortunately, that caused a lot of hurry that affected the performance of the piece.

Menno Bruggenhout appeared with a piece by a seldomly played composer, *Scherzo-Vals* by Miguel Llobet (1878 - 1938). Bruggenhout used his imagination and phrased the piece well, including a little cliff-hanger in the repeat of the first theme. I guess he should have played louder to show off a bit, this waltz could use that.

Tim McVeigh-Pedersen entered the stage sooner than everyone expected. Well, that did not matter. He started with *Sonata K178* by Domenico Scarlatti, a piece that I had not heard before. Nice arrangement and well played. Then *Fandango* from *Tres Piezas Espanolas* by Joaquin Rodrigo was up. He set off in a brisk tempo and took a lead on Jakob Bangsø. Unfortunately, the piece lost clarity and transparency because of the high speed. The virtuoso scale passage from the last section flashed by and became a little fuzzy. Nevertheless, I got a sense of the finals here.

Roel Goedhart played his preliminary with the *Tango* by Emilio Pujol (1886 - 1980). A fun and joyful piece with a nice passage in harmonics. His performance was stressful in the beginning, but things became better soon, Goedhart concluded the piece in festival mood.

The last candidate was up: Again, someone I already knew, a finalist from one of the competitions in the past. Oman Kaminsky Lara took off with a few movements from the *Suite in G minor BWV 996* by Bach. Because I had heard him before, I went away in time to participate at least some time in the rehearsals for the festival ensemble. If Oman Kaminsky played like he did in Nordhorn, he would be in the finals for sure.

Festival Ensemble

Last year we had a festival ensemble for the first time. Directed by Lars Wùller, we rehearsed a piece for four voices and bass, an enjoyable event during the repetition and performance on stage alike.

Last year's success was the reason to repeat the manoeuvre this year. Lars Wùller provided an arrangement for guitar ensemble of *Hungarian Dance Nr. 11* by Johannes Brahms (1833 – 1897).

If you only know the most popular of Brahm's *Hungarian Dances*, the name of the piece would strike some fear in your mind, because they are pretty rapid. Fortunately, Nr. 11 is one of the dances with moderate tempo. I even remember another arrangement for four guitars. The famous Segovia Guitar Quartet, the only Dutch guitar quartet with an official fan club, played the piece on their CD *Fuego* back in the nineties.

Lars Wueller would conduct himself, but unfortunately sickness prevented this. Fortunately, the organisation had found a quite capable stand-in.

At home in my study I already noticed that *Hungarian Dance Nr. 11* was much more complicated than last year's *Neuenburger Impressionen.* Consequently, I only studied part 1.

Last year I had been frightened for damage to the fragile top of my Kwakkel guitar because I shared the second voice with a quite active little boy that wildly moved around his headstock. Consequently, I had to play quite defensive, with my arm on the right spot to catch possible

blows. Well, this year I did not want this, so I took my good old Contreras study guitar with me. Its sound was good in this line-up.

I barged in in the second rehearsal hour after the preliminaries of the Cat. 1 competition and could start immediately on Guitar 1. My preparations at home appeared quite useful, the ensemble played even faster than I studied at home. After a few rounds, however, I could manage.

Again, there was quite some time to spend between the end of the rehearsals and the performance in Concordia, so I strolled a bit on the Oude Markt with my guitar, sat down near the fountain and played a few pieces to warm up. My play yielded a bag of peanuts, unfortunately the bystanders kept their money in the bag. Apparently, the consumer applies budget cuts for culture too, just like our right-wing government!

There was a good scenario for the set-up on stage, so everyone reached his/her place without damage to guitars and stumbling over music stands. Then there was the challenge of getting in tune with all those guitars! So, I started performing as “first tuner”. After the appearance of the photographer for the atmospheric pictures, the players on stage went in the mood!

The final rehearsal, once again the beginning and the end of the piece, could not ruin the atmosphere.

The concert hall filled up and tension rose. The announcement was quick and there it was: the moment of truth! We started all at the same time, we finished together and in between we played a very familiar Brahms. Good job, folks, the applause was well deserved.

The ensemble concluded with the chaos of stands and guitars while leaving the stage. That did not take long, we made room for Gerhard Reichenbach, the soloist of this evening.

Concert Gerhard Reichenbach

The German guitarist Gerhard Reichenbach is known as concert guitarist and music teacher. I heard him for the first time this evening and I got a bit enchanted by his easy and informal presentation. He started to change the programme right away!

The first two works were according to programme. A few contemporary pieces, *Introduction e Samba* by Buck Wolters and *Jongo* by Paulo Bellinatti. Wolter’s composition appealed to me most, Belinatti’s piece unfortunately did not resemble the Brazilian sound from his album *Lira Brasileira*, his composition was just too contemporary to my taste.

Then Reichenbach played the best piece of the evening, at last in my opinion. It was the programme change, *Sonata Andaluza* by Manuel de Falla (1876 - 1946). A nocturnal-like beginning in clear Spanish harmony, develops into a ballad with striking dynamic climaxes and a Spanish dance feeling, and sinks after an interesting sequence of warm chords into tranquillity. I must admit that Reichenbach’s dynamics and accuracy were much better than with his first two pieces.

Just before the break we had a piece of fireworks: *Gran Jota Aragonesa* in which Francisco Tarrega uses all kinds of effects to turn the very simple dance theme into a concert work. We even heard a drummer that accompanied a joyful march! A dazzling and unfortunately often string buzzing performance!

After the break, the winners of the preliminaries of the Cat. 1 competition were announced. Finalists would be Nelly van Alven, Toshiyuki Kumagai, Tim McVeigh-Pedersen, Oman Kaminsky and Jakob Bangsø.

Gerhard Reichenbach returned on stage with three *Sonatas* by Domenico Scarlatti. An elegant and light-hearted start of the second part of his recital. He continued this mode with a charming romantic piece called *Reverie Op. 19* by Giulio Regondi. The tremolo section reminded me of the songs of the gondoliers of Venice!

The highlight became a little night at the opera! Mauro Giuliani smartly exploited the immense popularity of the opera's by Gioacchino Rossini (1792 - 1868). He arranged many of Rossini's famous arias in his six *Rossinianes* and brought the opera to the living rooms. Provided that you had the technical capabilities as a guitarist, of course, because these pieces are challenging indeed!

Reichenbach had little trouble with *Rossiniana Nr. 4* and played both the bombastic and lyrical arias with a swing.

Day Three

Fareed Hague

Concert Fernando Espi

After the master class on last Thursday I was quite curious about Fernado Espi's performance. I was not disappointed indeed!

Already with the first piece, *Capricho Arabe* by Francisco Tarrega, I heard an approach that I liked. No hurry, tranquillity in the play, striking dynamics and a beautiful palette of tone colours. He took his time with the runs in a tasteful manner, particularly the ones that most guitarists attempt to play (too) fast.

Next was a joyful piece of Spanish, *Serenata Espanola* by Joaquin Malats (1872 - 1912), immediately followed by *Granada* by Isaac Albeniz. Fernandi Espi had no trouble with the music of his compatriots! Here again a tranquil approach, rich colours and well-balanced dynamics.

The *Gran Jota Aragonesa* by Tarrega gave me some reference material for yesterday's concert. For me, Espi's subtle and colourful approach was the favourite! The Tarrega sound continued in the two pieces by Trinidad Huerta (1800 - 1874) that followed.

A homage to and a paraphrase on Bach became Espi's own composition *Homenaje a JS Bach*. The sound and development of the well-known (and well-feared) Prelude from the fourth lute suite were quite obvious!

Thus, we enjoyed the fine play, the beautiful sound and the sensitive approach of the music. A tremendous lunch concert indeed!

Master Class with Laura Young

It was time for one of my master classes. A pleasant one, because Laura Young appeared to be an enthusiast and warm personality. I played my little *Gavotte* by Cottin again and she reacted enthusiastically on the *lovely little piece*.

I should apply more vibrato, she said. So, she showed some exercises that trained vibrato movements and relaxed the shoulders at the same time. It did work, but it remains tricky to implement what you learn in your play right away.

Write down dynamics in the score, else you'll forget! was her next hint. She was right, I never scribble fortes and pianos, I note down a fingering at most. I'll remember it next time.

I had some difficulty playing a clear melody with the 'm' finger. That brought us to nail shapes. She had a very simple solution: remove edges and follow the shape of your fingers. No slides and jumps for the string to snap on, just make it the natural form and apply some polishing in the end. Now I am back at the point of two years ago. I will try this method for a while, if I keep the nails relatively short, there will be more flesh to the sound too.

She was quite enthusiast about my glass file. Indeed, it is a file that enables accurate work, removing only little bits without a lot of wire edges. Yet she feared the glass file would fare just like her wine glasses at home, that had suffered from gravity effects quite a lot.

Humour and fun, that helps to remember all tips. A pleasant master class!

Amateur competition Cat. 2 and 3

As a consequence of the timing of my master class, I missed the Cat.3 competition (three participants) and the first section of the Cat.2 competition. That was bad luck, because the very morning of today I had made a chat with one of the Cat. 3 participants Jonne Visser that was going to play a challenging piece of Baden Powell (The Brazilian!). Whatever, the results of the Cat.3 competition were 1) Maarten Oomes, 2) Daan van Hoof and 3) Jonne Visser. Jury comments were that the level had been extremely high this year. People, congrats!

I also just missed Vera Hukker's contribution, but I guess that we will hear more from her! So, I barged in when Matthias Van Cutsem appeared on stage with the *Prelude* from *La Catedral* by Augustin Barrios. That went well and my enthusiasm became greater when he added the *Andante Religoso.* To my surprise he did not stop there, because he concluded the piece with *Allegro Solemne* just as supposed so. Well played!

The next player was Marieke Mulder, a guitarist of my own generation, that played quite fairly the *Andante* from the violin sonata *BWV 1003* by Johann Sebastian Bach. I recognized the arrangement by Jaap Majoor, because I had played it myself. ;-) The guitar world is small! Marieke played at a brisk tempo and continued bravely against all setbacks (yes, I know these movements and turns that are quite risky on a tempo like this).

Jerome De Wulf played something contemporary – if players announce their pieces at least I know *what* they are playing, so guess what, he did not open his mouth – and I found his play a bit standoffish. Tone and dynamics were kind of OK, but I did not particularly like the piece.

Hans Jansen is an old acquaintance from the previous competitions. He started with a Soleares that included all kinds of commonly known Spanish themes between *Malaguena* en *Guarijita.* Playing competition is stressful and this year I could vividly imagine his strife for the best. He finished with the well-known Cuban film theme *Un Dia en Noviembre* by Leo Brouwer. He separated melody and accompaniment and I now know by experience that there are some pretty mean spots in this piece. The passage with the fourth finger on the twelfth fret E and the bar on the seventh fret for instance.

Dries Verheyen decided to start with an extract of *La Catedral* by Barrios, the first two movements to be precise. It looked like that he found some ease of his tension, chewing chewing gum. At times that resulted in funny facial expressions indeed! The comparison of the performance was in the advantage of Matthias Van Cutsem, I must admit, but his courage to play this tricky piece is admirable. Then he had an unannounced surprise, the *Fantasia* by Silvius Leopold Weiss (1686-1750). The *Prelude* was a bit patchy, I guess some legato will fix this. The same more or less applied to the *Fuga*. I am confident, however, that with time he will gain track of the piece!

Ferron Daal performed with a surprising arrangement of a *Tango* by Astor Piazzolla (1921 - 1992). Unfortunately, I could only *recognize* Piazzola's style because of the lack of the player's announcement. He played it enjoyably and briskly with at times some spontaneous

carelessness. His play sounded unpolished at occasions, but I do not doubt that he will grow in time.

A well visited Cat. 2 Competition this year. Results: 1) Matthias Van Cutsem, 2) Vera Hukker en 3) Jerome De Wulf (I did not fully agree with the jury on that point). Participants, proficiat!

Concert Fareed Hague Trio

Saturday night it was time for a full power and plugged performance of Math Games (Fareed Haque, bass player Alex Austin and drummer Greg Fundis). Despite the fact that the American connectors of the cables had some contact problems, the performance became a running train where you jumped on and did not dare to jump off before the end station was reached.

I never visited a lot of pop concerts or listened to bands playing plugged in small rooms. The only occasion I remember were my ringing ears after a concert by Earth and Fire in the Vrijhof at the then Technical University Twente in the progress of my student introduction back in 1977. So, my ears are not used to a lot of noise.

OK, Math Games played loud, sometimes even pretty loud, but not ear-ringing. That was a good thing, because now I could enjoy it. Folks, such a weird and fresh piece of jazz-rock. Or is it called Fusion?

Fareed Hague excelled on jazz guitar, Moog-guitar (pretty sustain effect) and even classical guitar. Alex Austin was leaning on his double bass and supported the groove perfectly. Sometimes he switched instruments to electric bass and gave the groove a different sound.

My absolute idol of this evening was the drummer Greg Fundis. That’s a bit of youth sentiment, long ago I would like to learn to play drums. Of course, my parents prevented this furiously (playing drums is asking for trouble in an apartment building) even though I could imitate all rolls and ruffles from my records, including bass drum movements. Fortunately, I fell in love with the classical guitar later, it made much less noise and particularly my in-laws loved this music.

It was unbelievable what this guy did with his drum kit and percussion computer. A pleasure to watch and to feel in your stomach!

What Math Games showed this night was a demonstration of what Fareed Haque taught during the groove workshops. Fun during playing, quickness of response, listening to each other and obedience to the groove.

I did not memorize any titles, they were all own compositions, so I don’t have to look up composer birthdays. Yet I have been enjoying this brick of jazzy sound wall!

I frankly admit that my ears were ringing indeed when I left the hall. Fortunately, I had recovered the next morning!

Day Four

SoloDuo

Groove with Jim ten Boske

Jim ten Boske contributes since the first festival in 2006 with groove and improvisation sessions. Being the professor for Light Music on the Artez Conservatory this really is his *métier*! According tradition he starts each session with a question: “What do you want to learn today?”

This time the group was that small (it was quite early indeed!), that I could give the answer myself. I wanted to learn a practical basis for learning to arrange, an art that connects music to music theory. One of the major components of arranging existing work is the analysis of the harmonic and melodic structure, in other words chords, keys and modulations.

I happened to have two practical cases with me, the well-known *Andante* (in A minor) by Fernando Carulli and a *Rondo Allegretto* (in A major) by the same composer. Fine practice material because many composers from that time submitted meticulously to the rules of western music theory.

The first task is finding out the key of the piece and the possible transitions to other (for instance parallel) keys. These determine the scale that you have to use. *Andante* appeared to be in A minor with an excursion to the parallel major key C major. *Rondo Allegretto* was in A major with an excursion to A minor in the middle section.

You need the scale in order to find the chord progression that is needed for the arrangement. The chords are figured according to the sequence number of its fundamental within the scale. For instance, if you have the scale of A major (A, B, C#, D, E, F#, G#), then the A major chord has number one, the D major chord number four and the E major chord number five. Particularly this chord progression 1-4-5 is immensely widespread in western music. Thus you will find the chords A, D and E(7) as an accompaniment of a simple song that is in A major.

In this way, we have analysed both Carulli pieces in two hours and converted these pieces to enjoyable duos. In this way, it is possible to turn simple solo pieces quickly in an ensemble, a social happening for a number of players, particularly if you obey the principle of opposite movement in the parts.

Jim's explanation was structured and to the point, he indicated tricky exceptions to rules, bu he kept it outside the main story. For that matter, I need to read (and understand) the well-known book by Theo Willemzen! Well if I do not succeed, I can make a start with *Musical Theory for Dummies*!

I'll give it a try, practicing arrangement. This is the best example of van "Doing is Learning" concerning musical theory!

Concert Michel Gillain and Ann Heynen

Ever heard of a combination flamenco guitar and a nyckelharpa? Well, I did not. Yet it exists, and Michel Gillain (guitar) en Ann Heynen (nyckelharpa) were living examples. Michel Gillain is known in the flamenco-scene and Ann Heynen is active in Flemish folk music as an instrumentalist and composer.

A nyckelharpa? What's that? Well, I compare it to a bowed hurdy-gurdy. On the neck of the violin-like instrument you'll find a set of machines that enable to change the string length and thus the pitch. For tone production, a bow is necessary. An interesting instrument but extremely hard in timing, because both machines and the bow cause a delay in tone production.

Both musicians played a number of melodies from the Sephardic tradition. Sephardim were Jews that landed on the Iberian Peninsula - Spain and Portugal – before and during the *diaspora* and lived there for a long time under Visigoth and Moorish rule. In 1492, they were expelled from Spain by the Castilian king's couple Ferdinand and Isabella after the *Reconquista,* if they refused to convert to Christianity, that is. This couple happened to be the sponsors of the ill-famous Inquisition too. Many Sephardim refused to abandon their religion and left, for instance for Antwerp and Amsterdam in the Low Countries. In those days, the Sephardic music formed the basis for flamenco music.

This relation between Sephardism and flamenco was elaborated in this recital. Particularly for the old melodies guitar and nyckelharpa formed a beautiful and lyrical combination. For the modern and faster flamenco, the interplay was less effective, the guitar had enough by itself and the nyckelharpa suffered from the tone forming delays because of the speed of the music.

It was a nice and easy start to another musical day. Michel Gillain had some interesting stories about the music, so in all this session was quite informative.

Finals Cat. 1 Concours

The national Sunday afternoon event of the Twente Guitar Festival: The finals of the Cat. 1 competition. 5 candidates with 20 minutes playing time each.

Nelly von Alven let the audience know who she was and what she was going to play. First the *Prelude* from *Quatre Pieces Breves* by Frank Martin (1890 - 1974). A contemporary piece that showed her good side with reference to clarity and dynamics.

She showed personality and courage on stage with *Le Rossiniane Nr. 1* by Mauro Giuliani. This weekend I had already heard that Giuliani's potpourris from Rossini's opera music were a challenge for the player and this *Rossiniane* was no exception. Von Alven switched well between moods and temperaments of the arias, showed jauntiness at times and skilfully countered a few problems in the performance.

Toshiyuki Kumagai was second. He followed a new trend on competitions, the music by Mario Castelnuovo Tedesco. He played for the prize with *Sonata Ommagio a Boccherini*. In the *Allegro con Spirito* he showed a clear structure with joyful play. The *Andantino quasi canzone* brought a Siciliano like song with a nice atmosphere, even though he exaggerated the drama in a faster passage slightly too much. With the last movement, *Vivo ed Energico* he returned to clarity and a nice drive on the pulse of the music.

Then he played quite unannounced a movement from *Whirler of the Dance* by Carlos Rafael Rivera. This piece keeps reappearing on competitions. Even though I do not like this particular piece, I found that he played the heartbeat of the dance quite well.

Tim McVeigh Pedersen was the last player before the break. He started with a *Sonata* by Domenico Scarlatti that was quite unknown to me. Here Scarlatti clearly exhibited the influences of Spanish folk music on his work, it sounded like a Baroque Fandango. Pedersen played virtuoso, but unfortunately also a bit hurried.

Leo Brouwer was heard on stage again with one of his *Sonata's*. It had three movements. *Fandangos y Boleros* became a beautiful tranquil interpretation in the slow section and again too much hurry in the fast passages. *Sarabanda de Scriabin* combined the tranquility of a Sarabande with the serenity of some pieces by Scriabin. Now Pedersen took time for breathing, doing the piece justice! The concluding *La Toccata de Pasquini* became his best piece because of the interesting contrast between slow and fast passages.

After a short break is was the turn of Jakob Bangsø who represented the Scandinavian guitar world playing the challenge of *Passacaglia* from *Tres Piezas Espanolas* by Joaquin Rodrigo. He kept the bass motive going in a nice legato melody, for the most of the piece that is. In the virtuoso passages, however, I lost contact with the key motive of this piece, the melody got drowned a bit.

After Rodrigo, Bangsø was tuned up for his last piece, the well-known *Sonata Op. 47* by Alberto Ginastera.

He played the *Esordio* powerfully, took effective risks and breathed in the music. Well finished! The *Scherzo* reminded me as usual of *Toccata* (also by Ginastera) in the Emerson, Lake en Palmer version. Bangsø carefully elaborated the effects. Tranquility returned in the *Canto*, and the player succeeded in creating the mysterious atmosphere. The *Finale* was a worthy conclusion, Bangsø kept playing with a perfect finish and integrated a story in his interpretation.

The last candidate was Oman Kaminsky Lara. Hearing him, it immediately became obvious with me that his play had grown significantly since the last time on this festival. His starter was an intensely sad *Elegie* by Johann Kaspar Mertz. He interpreted the piece well with nice and subtle differences between corresponding passages. It was a pity that he overloaded his guitar in some loud sections. Yet the piece at a certain time kind of perished in beauty.

His best piece, but considering his facial expressions also a heroic struggle with the Muse, became a *Sonate* by Leo Brouwer. The first movement *Fandangos Y Boleros* started mysteriously with a passage in harmonics. Then the sharp edge of conflict emerged, with a clear contrast between anger and quasi-tranquillity.

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

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

That was it, the finals! Time to go home for dinner.

Near the railway station I met Tim McVeigh Pedersen. Apparently, he had left for a walk right after his performance, because he asked me how the others had played. It looked like he was quite dissatisfied with his own performance, at least that's what I sensed when he asked me an opinion on his playing.

Well, I am not a born reviewer. Yet I told him what stroke me most, his hurry, particularly in the Scarlatti piece. It shows a little bit under what stressful conditions the players perform in the finals. Nevertheless, slowing down is extremely important: *Take your time, or others will take your time!* So that was my advice as a listener: take your time for the music.

;-)) I sincerely hope that he did not take me for a jury member!

Later that night it appeared how the others had played in the opinion of the jury. 1) Oman Kaminsky, 2) Jakob Bangsø, 3) Toshiyuki Kumagai, 4) Tim McVeigh Pedersen, 5) Nelly von Alven. Finalists, congrats with the result!

Concert SoloDuo

Once Frederic Chopin would have said *There is only one thing more beautiful than a guitar… two guitars!* I guess this statement could be authentic, because Chopin took off to Paris in 1830 after the fateful November Insurrection in Poland. In those days, he could have heard from Fernando Sor and his guitar duo's in the French capital. Maybe he even heard one!

I fully agree with his statement. I have played duo myself for 15 years. A very interesting aspect of duo playing is the interaction between players. It's also the pitfall if this interaction fails, because striving for playing as one requires abandoning the solo idea.

This field of tension shows from the name of the ensemble on this last festival nigth: SoloDuo, consisting of Mattio Mela and Lorenzo Micheli. I remember Lorenzo Micheli from his exquisite concert on the very same Twente Guitar Festival in 2009.

The gentlemen appeared in a very close formation, so the sound would come from almost one spot supporting the idea of two playing as one. The division of roles in the ensemble (lead/accompaniment) appeared virtually non-existent, just with the announcements the gentlemen had different roles, Lorenzo Micheli told the stories.

Many will remember the Assad Brothers and the way their play intertwined seamlessly. Well, SoloDuo matched this and even went beyond a few times on this evening. Such a unity in interpretation, intention and musicality!

Lorenzo Micheli started with a brief introduction in which he paid homage to a duo that was quite well-known in the fifties and sixties, the Duo Presti/Lagoya. Part of the repertoire of SoloDuo consisted of their transcriptions of popular classical pieces.

The first piece reminded me strongly of one of my unsuccessful attempts to ensemble playing, thirty years back at the school of music. The piece was *6 Variationen uber ein Sarabande von GF Haendel* by Ferdinand Rebay (1880 - 1953), I vividly remember the theme that was the prelude to disaster!

After a short introduction about Rebays tragic life (he lived in Austria as a Jew in the Second World War) SoloDuo showed for the first time that they were a unity.

An important part of the recital of SoloDuo was dedicated to the music by Mario Castelnuovo Tedesco, a contemporary of Rebay that did escape the clutches of fascism. Following Bach, Tedesco composed 24 Preludes and Fugues for guitar duo in his set *Les Guitares bien tempérées.* The Presti/Lagoya duo actually inspired him to do so.

Das Wohltemperierte Klavier by Bach has a quite formal structure and obeyed the strict rules of form and composition from Bach's time (although Bach implemented some striking novelties). Tedesco composed his Preludes and Fugues in a much freer format. Some pieces are arrangements of existing melodies, others use forms from dance and folk music, etcetera. The result is a varied palette of atmospheres that is so nice and interesting to listen to that I do not have trouble playing the two CDs with this music in a row without getting bored.

SoloDuo played four sets of Preludes and Fugues and clearly showed that they more than mastered Tedesco's complex music. Tremendous play!

This evening SoloDuo played two original settings as made by the Presti/Lagoya duo. First *Clair de Lune* by Claude Debussy. The serene atmosphere of the nightly moonshine was well played. Second the *'French' Suite BWV 816* by Johann Sebastian Bach. A feast of baroque virtuosity, it looked like I heard one harpsichord (;-) with nylon strings).

The finishing piece became *Variations Concertantes* by Mauro Giuliani, both gentlemen had no trouble whatsoever with the technical challenges of our well-known Italian (well, under guitarists, of course)

The audience rightfully jumped on the chairs with a standing ovation. A few nice encores concluded this tremendous guitar duo recital.

That was the end of the festival. Time for a drink on the sidewalk café. It had been pleasant weather all day, so prospects were good.

However, dark clouds gathered above the Oude Markt, the wind started blowing and the first large rain drops thinned the drinks that were exposed to the weather. It was a suggestive scene indeed, it looked like the dark clouds of budget cuts that threatened cultural activities in Holland this year. Particularly the regional music schools were hit hard and many had to close down.

I do hope sincerely that next year the sun will be shining again, on a new Guitar Festival Twente in 2013!