



*Eleftheria Kotzia.*



*Jorge Cardoso.*



*Conservatoire Royal de Bruxelles.*



*Duo Yves Storms & Elisa Kawaguti.*



*Duo Buenos Aires.*

# FIRST BRUSSELS INTERNATIONAL GUITAR FESTIVAL

27 - 30 April 2012

By ELEFThERIA KOTZIA

**BiGuitar**  
FESTIVAL

I WAS delighted to receive an invitation by Hugues Navez, head of guitar at the Conservatoire Royal de Bruxelles, to perform and give a masterclass for the first Brussels International Guitar Festival (BiGuitar FESTIVAL). Later on, when I heard the line up of the other invited artists, I was thrilled. A good number were friends, dating from the period of my studies in the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Paris, who now teach in music conservatoires and academies and have respected performing careers on their shoulders. So it sounded like the last four last days of April would be a 'Fete de la Guitare', as well as being a reunion for me.

I was rather impressed to hear upon arrival that most of the concerts were sold out.

Was it the choice of artists, the repertoire, or the time of the year (the first weekend of May)? Was it the 'Espace Senghor', an ideal festival location, an art deco building with a superb concert hall and a smaller hall that could host the lectures and masterclasses? Or was it the thirst of the public, of the guitar aficionados, the guitar students, and the teachers? Was it because, for the first time, an International guitar festival was organised in Brussels? Or was it all of it together?

The opening night was a triple act. Hugues Navez with the Ravenstein Quartet opened proceedings with the Boccherini *Fandango Quintetto* and the Maximo Pujol *Tangata de Agosto*. A nice contrast with Valerie Duchateau who followed with arrangements of songs by Barbara, Dadi and Django Reinhardt. Jorge Cardoso ended the Friday evening in his inimitable style and repertoire.

The other evening concerts were divided in two sections. On the second day of the festival concerts were given by myself and the violin and guitar duo 'Elisa Kawaguti and Yves Storms'. I prefer to not comment on my concert, but I was impressed by the perfect balance of this duo. Storms didn't have to push the instrument once, and the superb violinist, Kawaguti was able to give a range of dynamics and intense emotions without covering the guitar once. On Sunday night we heard the 'Accords Guitar trio', consisting of three terrific young players from Belgium, and the exciting guitar and bando-

neon duo 'Buenos Aires' with Eric Franceries and Jeremy Vannereau. On the last night, unfortunately, I had to miss The Ensemble de Guitares du Conservatoire Royal de Bruxelles, and the French virtuoso Emmanuel Rossfelder. All the evening concerts were of the highest standard and sold out.

Jerome Mouffe gave an afternoon concert as did the Duo Stein Erik Olsen & Olivier Chassain. Their programme, rendering a homage to Ida Presti, included a good number of her compositions that I hadn't heard before, recently edited and published.

The masterclasses took place in the smaller hall during the day. I was very happy to see that the students were equally distributed between the teachers. I dislike the division of the 'best' for one teacher and the 'less good' for another.

The small hall was perfect for the lectures, which I found very interesting.

Frederic Zigante talked about the new Villa Lobos Editions and Paul Raspe about Nicolas Alfonso, the father of guitar in Belgium. It was fascinating for me to hear in his introduction the history of the guitar publications in France and Belgium since the 17th century.

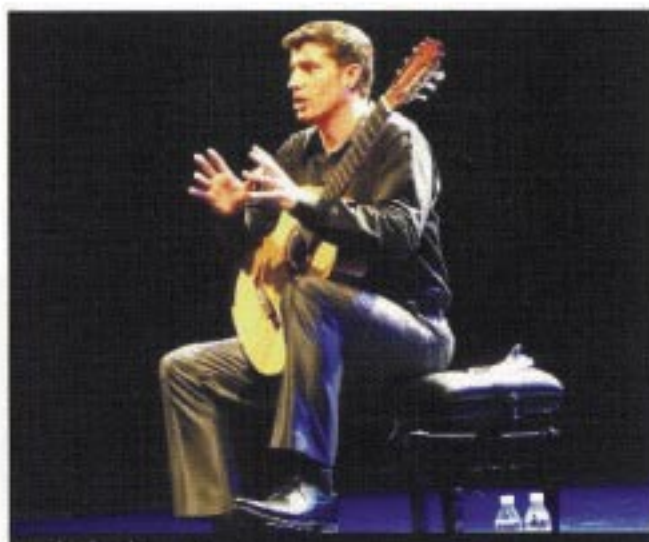
The questions after the lectures didn't stop; often there is an uncomfortable silence when one asks 'any questions'?

CDs and music were on sale; unfortunately, I couldn't visit the Salon of Guitar makers since I had to prepare for my concert. Luthiers such as Pappalardo, Hopf, Ramirez, Zeidler, DeBeys, Peirelinck, and Guitarreria.eu were present welcoming the many visitors. Ah, I must not forget; it was good to have a Greek restaurant nearby where most of us chose to eat.

In the period when we complain about reduced audiences, and when the European Commission Offices, just around the corner from the festival, are spreading worry, misery and announcing cuts, the artistic and financial success of the first Brussels International Guitar Festival seems barely true- or a miracle.

I was so glad I was there and I can only admire and thank Hugues Navez, founding president and artistic director of the Festival, and his team for the energy, optimism and 'meraki' (a rough translation of this Greek word could be: passion/enthusiasm) that they had in abundance.

I can only wish that this continues at the same level of success.



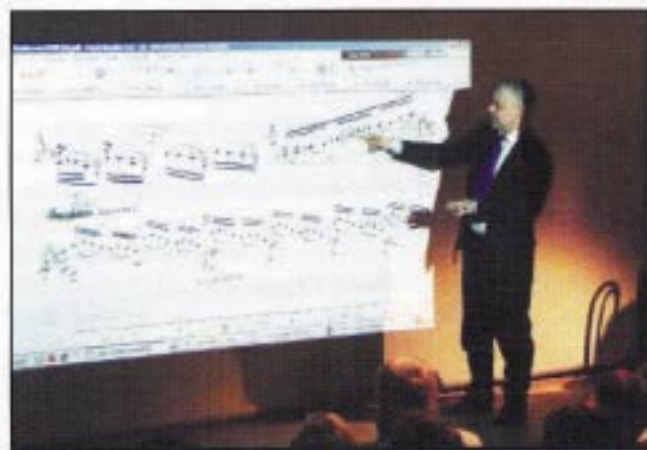
*Emmanuel Rossfelder.*



*Accords Guitar Trio.*



*Salon de Lutherie.*



*Frédéric Zigante.*



*Hugues Navez & Ravenstein Quartet.*