

## ROBERT BEKKERS

Based in Utrecht, widely considered the centre of the Netherlands, Robert Bekkers is active as a soloist and ensemble musician, performing regularly throughout the country. Robert started his musical education at an early age and acquired training on various instruments before choosing the guitar at age 12. After obtaining his diploma in electronics, he spent the next seven years at the Conservatory of Maastricht where he earned his teaching and performance degrees in classical guitar. During this time, he also studied contemporary music with Angelo Gilardino in Italy on a full scholarship.

Robert's musical curriculum has spanned a wide range of genres, with classical guitar as the centrepiece. Parallel to his performing career, he has been a songwriter, arranger, composer, producer, and sound engineer, most recently at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cortona Contemporary Music Festival in Italy. To satisfy his curiosity in flamenco music, he accompanied flamenco dance classes and then formed the group "IMPETU" consisting of 9 musicians who played his arrangements mixing classical music with flamenco rhythm and styles. He has performed throughout Europe with the mariachi band Serenata Mexicana and Amstel Guitar Quartet. For more than years, Robert was the guitarist and bass player of the Berdien Stenberg Orchestra which toured the Netherlands, Belgium, Indonesia, Curacao, and Oman.

As Robert has always looked for the unusual in musical combinations, he formed a piano guitar duo with Anne Ku in 2001. The acoustic challenge of such a combination was not overcome by using amplification but by the construction of a special guitar, custom-built by the Amsterdam-based luthier Jeroen Hilhorst in 2005. Their duo has given concerts, lecture-recitals, and masterclasses in London, North Cyprus, Cape Town, Cortona, and throughout the Netherlands. The Hilhorst concert guitar enables the two instruments to be equal partners in sound and volume.

In Spring 2007 Robert launched a new solo programme featuring some of the most challenging guitar pieces such as Bach's Chaconne and Tedesco's Cappricho Diabolico. Around the same time, the Dutch ensemble Aria Balsamica invited him as artist-in-residence. In Autumn 2007, Vera Laporeva, the principal violinist of the Metropole Orchestra asked him to form a new violin guitar duo. They mainly perform Robert's original arrangements of famous classical works.

In 2008 Robert formed a duos with mezzo soprano, guitar, flute, and oboe to expand the guitar's portability, compatibility, and versatility to new venues and audiences. He also transcribed the Eine Kleine Nachtmusik and Vivaldi's Four Seasons for piano guitar duo.

Visit Robert's website at <http://www.dutchguitar.com> and piano guitar duo at <http://www.pianoguitar.com> for concert listings and sound clips.