

Willem Wander van Nieuwkerk

Dutch composer and teacher at the Conservatory of Amsterdam

Willem Wander van Nieuwkerk, born in 1955 in Amsterdam of mixed Dutch-Indonesian parentage. At the University of Utrecht he specialized in 20th-century music and music psychology but quickly devoted himself solely to the writing of music. His first major large composition, 'Debris, Soli' (1982-83), blended punk, reggae, new music and experimental pop music in a groundbreaking collaboration of pop musicians and classical musicians that was well received by the press.

In the years that followed he composed music for such self-styled ensembles (like the dance-opera First Things First, for electric guitars, percussion, singers and dancers) as well as for existing Dutch music groups like Ensemble De Volharding and the Dutch Choral Society.

Beside that he issued a series of remarkable compositions for the recorder. Pieces like *So Tear, Quartet, The Party* and *Kadanza*, written in close collaboration with La Fontegara Amsterdam and Brisk Recorder Quartet, gained international attention by combining the sound quality of Early Music with Classical forms, African rhythms, and a contemporary, highly melodious idiom. They are being played and recorded worldwide.

Since then he received many commissions, private as well as institutional, amateur and professional. He composed music for the Dutch House of Parliament's celebration of the Munster Treaty, the Swiss Television's National Celebrations Broadcast in 2001, Amsterdam University and Margess International of Switzerland as well as for film, theatre and dance.

In recent years Van Nieuwkerk concentrates on writing chamber music in search of a 'new classical music' that combines contemporary rhythm and expression with the ensemble ethos and lyricism of Classical-romantic forms. In it, he often uses historical melodies (as from the Antwerp Song Book and the Valerius Memorial). This resulted in pieces like the *Piano Quintet, Kalenda Maya* for string quartet and the *Three Dance Capriccios* for violin and piano that were performed by young musicians in the Netherlands, Denmark, Germany, Switzerland and Italy.

His quintet *Over the Water* for guitar and string quartet, commissioned by the International Guitar Foundation and Festivals, was premiered in London in 2008 at the opening festival of Kings Place. At present he is writing music in collaboration with young musicians like Lisa Jacobs (The Amsterdam Soloists), Celeste Zewald (Trio Amare) and Bas Verheijden (The Atlantic Trio).

Willem Wander van Nieuwkerk is also a teacher of 20th Century Music and New Music at the Conservatory of Amsterdam. As a member of ARTI, a research group of the Amsterdam School of Arts, he investigated the relationship between absolute music and music as a theatrical art. The relation between pure music, theatre and visual arts informs many of his teaching activities, from the bachelor courses in 20th century music history to the master course 'Professional Artistic Practice', a collaboration of the conservatory with several national music institutions and the Amsterdam Van Gogh Museum.