

The Lonely Coyote – guitar tales  
Marc van Vugt

‘On ‘The Lonely Coyote’ every guitar tells a story. The whispers of a gentle poem in your ear, the scream of a heartfelt drama, and in each of them Marc van Vugt’s guitar speaks with its own voice. Acoustic guitar music in the tradition of Bill Connors, Ralph Towner, Pat Metheny and Egberto Gismonti.

These are the tales of my guitars:

In these little descriptions I will tell the story behind every song but also for some songs a concise view on how I look at the music of these songs from a composer’s point of view. Certainly not a complete analysis but a little inside in my musical world.

01 Bengggg!  
Prepared harp Zither  
Guild F512 1978 twelve-string guitar

When I was around 17 years old, for several years the only guitar I had was a 12-string build by the great luthier Yaroslav Mach. He sold me that guitar for almost nothing, to replace a Suzuki guitar that had a wrapped neck that was unrepairable. I only later realized how special it was, that he helped me in this way. The guitar got damaged when it was hung up for sale in a store and as a replacement I got another guitar. I still kept the love for a 12-string, being a great Leo Kottke and Ralph Towner fan. In 2017 I got the chance to buy this ’70’ Guild F512. This is the ultimate 12-string guitar. I was given the chance to buy this guitar by a very kind colleague who’s girlfriend told him to sell it to me as I would be playing it so much better than he would and anyone else that would have paid way more for it. And so he did. Wow! I am very grateful that he did. This piece is in honor to all my 12-string idols and for the guy that sold me that guitar.

I love stringed instrument sounds and have been using zither-like instruments for a long time to create an extra atmosphere in my music. Mr. Cogito on our album ‘President for life’ has an intro like that.

In Bengggg the prepared Zither gives an almost random modal sphere that changes into being the instrument that plays the melody, but due to its character it still sounds like an accompaniment to the guitar when that comes in. The twelve-string guitar lends itself easily for strumming and that is how most people know this type of guitar. I wanted to create a road-music kind of atmosphere. Using a lot of open strings and a moving chord shape that uses those open strings, gives a huge sound. Then there is a twist where the F# in the D chord comes in and goes to the C7#11. The riff in between has something of an Indian flavor to it to mark the transition to the B part. Bengggg refers to the explosion of sound that comes with that huge 12-string sound. For just a moment it grasps all of your attention and draws you into the music.

There is a huge Pat Metheny reference in the sound of that prepared zither and the strumming guitar, I will not deny that. He has been an incredible influence on guitar music. So maybe this is my homage to him.

## 02 The Lonely Coyote

Lowden 2011 baritone steel string guitar

In 2007 we were staying at a friends' house in the desert outside of San Diego. We were there for several weeks to work on what was to become my first opera 'Alice in Space'. I had a workspace in an old sea container and in my in-between-breaks I would walk into the fields and hear the coyotes in the distance. One day I walked out and there he was, in the field, looking at me, a lonely coyote. It reflected the feeling I often have while composing music, when it is just me and my music.

I wanted an eerie atmosphere, reflecting the feel of that one lonely coyote in the fields. To create this feel I wrote a melody that moves inside and outside of the tonality but blends in whenever the chord finally comes. A bit inspired by how Bartok plays with melodic material that moves around and outside the harmonic context in his Miraculous Mandarin. The first chord sounds like a Cminmaj7 but then you hear the major third as well, turning it into an Eminmaj7 over a C root. It sets a very open harmonic context that lends itself well for the continuation of a melody that winds around the harmony instead of within the harmony. The next chord is an Eminmaj7 but preceded by the Bb in the melody. And so it continues. The rhythmical figures on the Amaj7#5 chord form a counterpoint to the long notes in the melody. The melodic inside outside weaving from the first bars repeat in a variation on the F#minmaj7b6. From there more rhythm develops in a variation of the rhythmical counterpoint at the GMaj#5 chord.

This piece I wrote in honor of one of my great inspirations, the Brazilian composer Egberto Gismonti who is a true magician with melody, rhythm and harmony.

## 03 Chorineke

Mariano Conde 2011 nylon string guitar

I have a great love for Brazilian music and wanted to write a song for Ineke to play on the piano. So I wrote a choro for Ineke which I called Chorineke.

As in the tradition of choro music the harmonies are very jazzy, moving through some tonalities although the melody stays close to the starting harmony. The rhythm is a bit tricky as there are all these syncopes that might throw you off beat. I decided to record it with two guitars so it would give me the freedom to improvise over these kind of chord changes which I love to do.

## 04 In my arms (I hold you)

Martin 000-21 1946 steel string guitar

This composition is part of the Ubuntu suite that I wrote between 2005 and 2014 while battling with the side effects of sleep apnea. I learned to love that little boy inside me that kept me up for hours when I woke up from another sleep apnea. I learned to hold him in my arms and ease his mind as I would be watching over him.

## 05 Bali Rain

Levin 325 1960 acoustic archtop guitar

In 2011 Ineke and I did a residency for 4 weeks on Bali. When we were planning to go there they told us not to come too early as the raining season would be still going on. We made sure that we came a bit later. Nevertheless the first two weeks it rained and it poured. In my Lumbung (a converted rice storage hut) with the shutters closed to keep out the rain, it was dark and after two weeks of continuing rain I started to feel very depressed. That's when I wrote Bali Rain.

The Levin 325, that I used for this song, is a guitar from the beginning of the '60's. I found this guitar around 1997. It was sold by someone who had it lying around at his house. It was in a very bad shape but when I played it I knew this was going to be a great guitar for me. I bought it and Chris Teerlink, the luthier that does all of my guitar repairs, brought it back to life. It is an archtop and thus a jazz guitar, but it is an acoustic jazz guitar and has a very complete sound acoustically. It sounds so good as an acoustic that I am always struggling to find a way to amplify it so I can use it on stage. It just will not sound as the average jazz guitar but always has a voice of its own. I have come to peace with that and it is the first guitar I grab when I am at home. This guitar always is in a dialogue with me. It speaks to me and we talk.

06 Onnozele kinderen  
Lowden O32 1990 steel string

December 28 is the day of the innocent children. My mother used to tell the story that at December 28 it was a custom in her family to try to lock up an adult and ask for a ransom: candy or cookies. She would tell how she would try to entrap her father and how he, in the end, would always let her catch him. I was always touched by the love she shared in those stories of her childhood. The composition is a duet for two guitars. I played it twice on the same guitar two different parts with almost the same sound. Two members of one family telling a tale about family history.

07 Prelude to Guitarlab  
08 Guitarlab  
Martin 000-21 1946 steel string guitar

Guitarlab I wrote in 1990 and adapted it for 3 voices for the incredible vocal group Voicelab and it was then named Voicelab. The composition has always been in my mind and I love playing it on guitar. It is a bit of an acrobatic guitar piece as you dance across the fretboard while playing the notes. The prelude I wrote recently as I felt the piece would stand out more with a poetic introduction.

09 Simiane  
Mariano Conde 2011 nylon string guitar

I started out playing nylon-string guitar and I have always had a love for the sound of the nylon strings. This guitar I bought in 2019. I was looking for a nylon string guitar, but with a different sound than that of a classical guitar, which is the usual choice for jazz players. I also wanted to

be able to use a plectrum on that guitar and a lot of nylon string guitars do not lend themselves for that. When I played this guitar in the store where I found it, Ineke turned around and said: 'this one sounds nice, this guitar fits you'. So I bought it.

Simiane la Rotonde is a beautiful village in the French Provence. In 2016 we stayed there for a month to write new music and enjoy the environment. From our house we had a beautiful view on the French Alps that were 100 km away. Inspired by that sight I wrote Simiane.

The music of Simiane: I wanted to write something that would reflect the distant view on the mountains as well as the perspective on the nearby environment and I wanted to play with these perspectives in the music. Multiple layers. The piece starts out with what sounds like a Fmaj7/A chord but the bassline moves around putting the chord in an everchanging perspective. When the melody starts there is an A-pedal but this time the chords change: Fmaj7/A-E13b9/A-Gm6/A resolving to the beginning of the second part on Bbmaj7(#11)/D. The second part moves through a few tonalities and finally lands on G/A to continue in a sort of refrain on a G-pedal this time, with just the chords A and G on top of it. Then there is an interlude on an E-pedal with first a repeated C#m/E going to C#mb5/E. The pedal stays but the chords change to a repeated CMaj7#5/E to Cmaj7/E.

#### 10 Tea

Guild F512 1978 twelve-string guitar

Tea was originally recorded with our trio, our duo and also with me and Ineke and Het Nederlands Kamerkoor (the Dutch Chamber Choir a 17-piece classical choir). I have always played it on my baritone guitar and wanted to record it on a twelve-string guitar. The melody leaves so much space for notes to ring out and I thought that would fit the twelve-string perfectly. The solo section has some added effects and electronics. I love to stretch the sound of an acoustic instrument and here it fits the song well.

#### 11 Sunny Side Up

Martin 000-21 1946 steel string guitar

Lowden O32 1990 steel string

Tacoma P1 Papoose 1998 six-string alto guitar

Guild F512 1978 twelve-string guitar

Guild B4CE 1993 acoustic bass guitar

Music has taken me around the world. It is so special how almost everywhere, you are welcomed and received with such a generosity. Even more special is to get to know all these people and their customs. I always loved the expression Sunny side up for the way eggs can be prepared as to me it not only reflects how I had my breakfast but also how I am starting my day on the Sunny Side.

#### 12 For those I love

Martin 000-21 1946 steel string guitar

There once was a woman who had already four children and when her fifth child came she noticed that one of the other children was very quiet and not so cheerful anymore. She sat down with her child and said: my heart is made of rubber band and it can stretch so much that it can hold you all. So do not worry as I love you all and there is room enough in my heart. My mother had a heart like a rubber band and genetically I should have that too. For those I love I wrote for you and all those I love. I dedicated it to my mother. It is part of the Ubuntu suite.

I was looking for an old Martin guitar for years. It is the guitar my acoustic guitar heroes would play. I bought it at Mandolin Brothers on Long Island during one of our tours in North America in 2000. At that time it had already become almost impossible to find an old Martin guitar and those Martins that were available were of lesser quality. When I played this guitar at the store, Ineke turned around and said, 'that is the one'. It is a beautiful guitar with a very specific sound. It won't sound like you want it but it will sound as that guitar wants to.

### 13 No Worries

Tacoma P1 Papoose 1998 six-string alto guitar

Another piece I wrote as part of the Ubuntu suite:

In the end, the sweetness of life is, that it will take care of you.

Do not worry, everything will be fine...