

on more than one evening. Then there are the less well-known players hanging around as well who are entirely worth your time.

In conclusion, I would strongly advise anyone to pay a visit to this festival at least once. If you are a professional player who is perhaps learning of this event for the first time, then you are deeply encouraged to make contact with the organisation. The networking possibilities alone make this a worthwhile venture. Anyone looking for a fresh perspective on the instrument would also do well to come to spend some time in the Serbian capital around February as there is a whole Serbian guitar scene to explore, and a number of fantastic players and personalities who you are never likely to come across outside the Balkan peninsula.

## Winterthur Guitar Festival

### Key Facts

**Festival Name:** Winterthur Guitar Festival

**Organisers:** Eos Guitar Quartet (Marcel Ege, Martin Pirktl, David Sautter and Michael Winkler)

**Location:** Winterthur, Switzerland

**Month:** March – Annual

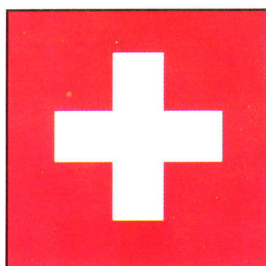
**Nearest Airport:** Zurich

**Competition:** No

**Size:** Small Scale Event

**Best feature:** More interesting festival format with multiple performance venues

**Website:** [www.inguitar.ch](http://www.inguitar.ch)



**International Guest Artists and Faculty:** Cecilia Siqueira (Uruguay), Fernando de Lima (Brasil), André Siqueira (Brazil), Norbert Schneider (Germany), João Carlos Victor (Brasil) Carlos Dorado (Argentina), Mariam Boccali (France)

Switzerland does not often feature in GG. The majority of festival reports from around the world tend to centre on elsewhere in Europe and America. This situation isn't for the lack of Swiss-guitar; indeed Switzerland has a great deal to offer in this regard, not least its



*Eos Guitar Quartet perform in the Casino Theatre, Winterthur 2013.*

higher education institutions (notably Basel) where many international students study. Certainly the organisers behind this event (Eos Guitar Quartet) each have teaching posts at various academies and colleges, and the presence of a great many other fine Swiss players at this festival further supports my impression of a strong Swiss-guitar infrastructure.

What perhaps isolates the Swiss guitar scene, at least from the experience gained at the Winterthur Guitar Festival, are cultural and economic factors. It's common knowledge that visiting Switzerland is expensive owing to the strength of the Swiss Franc, and I expect this has a part to play keeping this festival an exclusively Swiss affair. Consequently, the vast majority of communication at the festival will be in the Swiss-German language. This is only a problem, however, if there are lots of classes and lectures to deal with, which in Winterthur there isn't, at present. The focus of this festival is on performance, and that is a good thing for the auditor.

In many ways, there's an enormous positive to this situation. If you're a student looking to study in Switzerland, you will get a very accurate feel of what it would be like to study here from this event. And if you are a serial festival visitor looking for hidden guitar personalities and more of a sense of travel and adventure, then you will gain a lot from coming here.

Although I have alluded so far to a sort of underground Swiss guitar scene, it is in Winterthur that we find how guitar is supported and promoted in this country. Now in its third year, the event remains small. The rate of growth



*Jazz Cafe morning recital.*



*Solo performance in one of Winterthur's historic homes.*



**Norbert Schneider and Band in Winterthur's famous Albani Music Club.**

is true to most start-up events of this kind, and the festival shows many signs of development. Concerts rule here as previously mentioned, and lectures, masterclasses, guitar exhibitions etc. have yet to make a significant mark. So if you are considering attending this festival, it is recommend that you consider the invited guests carefully since these people will be the focus of your time spent here.

Winterthur is Switzerland's 6th biggest city. It is situated 20 kilometres north of Zurich and has excellent transport links. Since Zurich airport is the European hub for air travel, it is a surprisingly excellent location for a guitar festival. At first it seems Zurich would have been the obvious choice for hosting the festival, but the event was started in Winterthur by a local guitar shop, and when the members of the Eos Guitar Quartet took it over they kept the festival located at its spiritual home. Although principally an industrial city, for the short-term visitor Winterthur offers a lot, particularly with respect to the arts and the beautiful city surrounds, and with Zurich so close you would be able to experience Swiss cultural life with ease.

The format of this event is in fact it's biggest selling point. And that is a very noteworthy quality as the standard format is the most difficult thing for the guitar festival to escape. The festival collaborates with the city's artistic centre known as the Casino Theatre, and the product of that relationship is a slick and interesting set of concerts. It means there is a real arts centre infrastructure for the



**Duo Siqueira-Lima .**



**Singer Jenny Chi and the Brazilian guitarist André Siqueira.**



festival to work with, providing the benefit of trained staff, office space, tech support and the like. Instead of having concerts in one or perhaps two nominated venues, the Winterthur team instead put on concerts in different venues to complement the artists that are performing. This variety even extends to the time of day concerts are heard. So if you come here, you may experience concerts with a morning coffee in a historic Swiss house, in a visual arts centre, a traditional theatre, a jazz café, a bar, a former industrial space and so on. And this really does keep the interest levels up, pulling off variety better than any other event of its kind that I know of.

I wish to highlight what this country offers the world of classical guitar. It seems this area is known to students and professional guitar players, but is perhaps neglected somewhat by amateur players. Change seems to be on the horizon, and during my visit I overheard very exciting plans for the next few foreseeable events. Of course, if you are interested to know the EOS Quartet for any reason, then clearly this is the place for you. The quartet will normally perform in the large theatre, and are generally on hand for classes and social time throughout the days of the festival. This is very much the insiders' pick of the small festival bunch.