**Eric Vloeimans and Will Holshouser: a choir of angels**

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<https://jazznu.com/concertrecensies/eric-vloeimans-en-will-holshouser-puur-engelengezang/>

**An accordion and a trumpet. They brought a sold-out house at the Tilburg jazz club Paradox to ecstasy. Their mixture of melodic jazz and musical cultures from a variety of countries and ages once again proved Eric Vloeimans’s absolute mastery.**

Accordionist Will Holshouser’s mastery is definitely on a par to it. Together they reached a result that can be considered consummate. Hence, the concert was bursting at the seams with unexpected turns, competition, timing, imagination and a truly natural manner of addressing the audience. The listeners breathlessly attended the two sets, in which the emotions raised by the performance were stirred to the max.

Eric Vloeimans’s artistry is undisputed. In the Netherlands he is one of the few musicians whose name alone will draw hordes of people from all layers of society to theaters and concert halls. His artistry develops like the four seasons: every step feels like an organic process that never seems to stop. After all, how did the trumpeter end up collaborating with an American accordionist this time?

Will Holshouser and Eric Vloeimans met in New York, where they ‘just did’ a gig together. There was an instant click, which is why the duo is now on a 28-concert tour of the Netherlands. After the Paradox gig there’s still eight to go, so the trumpeter and the accordionist have become a tried and tested team by now. To the max, one might even say.

Besides being a gifted trumpeter, Eric Vloeimans is also a born storyteller. He does so in such a casual and natural manner that he already manages to take in the audience with his very first words. What he tells them, is a valuable addition to the musical offering. He looked back on last year’s lockdowns, when he went for a deep introspection. This led to the concept of **Inner Mission,** a self-imposed artistic mission, which now lays down the base for his tour with Holshouser. During the concert they performed various parts of the **Inner Mission** cycle: **9, 12, 1, 2**. These were alternated with pieces that Will Holshouser had brought along.

Whatever the two played, all material was based on events in the daily life of both musicians. Take the second piece of the evening, for instance: **Soddy Daisy.** It took its name from a town in Tennessee, and composer Will Holshouser went to great lengths talking about it. The same went for **Deep Gap**, another place in the US, which is associated with Doc Watson, a notable performer of blues, bluegrass and country music. He invented the flatpicking technique, in which the guitar strings are played with a pick, held between the thumb and one or two fingers. It’s great for Will Holshouser that he was able to pick up on to this technique, and it’s even greater for us that he showed the percussive effect of flatpicking on his accordion in **Deep Gap**.  
  
In the aforementioned **Soddy Daisy** one could all of a sudden hear a schmaltzy waltz, like a happy bird fluttering by on a summer’s day. It seemed strange to the listeners who noticed it. But in the second set Eric Vloeimans gave an explanation for it. As a child he used to watch a popular TV show with Dutch vocal music. And the show’s host, Chiel Montagne, loved to throw in some corny accordion tunes now and again. It made the trumpeter hate the sound of accordion for a long time. But now, in his collaboration with Holshouser, this obviously was no longer the case. Hence the waltz quote, in homage to the accompanists and promotors of Dutch sentimental songs he heard on TV.

Accordion and trumpet, as played by Vloeimans and Holshouser, can be a choir of angels. It was music that was eminently easy on the ear, so even those not well versed in jazz didn’t even notice the virtuoso breaks into improvisations. But still, they were there, gloriously resounding from the trumpet, dark and efficient from the low register of the accordion. In **IM-1,** Will Holshouser gave us a great example of this: once more he showed us the wonderful basses his accordion is equipped with. He then proceeded with a brief, endlessly repeating motif, on which trumpet kept preluding with mini shifts. And all this in 5/8 meter.  
  
The blues, happy songs that sounded on the radio long before the Top 40 came into being, Mexican folk music, music from the Balkans (with an homage to Fanfare Ciocarlia), popular music, country, music from the Muppet Show, rattle music from animal bones, anything that Eric Vloeimans and Will Holshouser had once sucked up was musically ‘spewed out’ in Paradox. And all of this with a casualness and an intimate intertwining of the musicians that provoked only humility on the part of the audience at the offering of all of this beauty.

### MUSIC EDUCATION

In the Netherlands, and far abroad, Eric Vloeimans is an artist who deeply honors the art of music. Even more so, he is a wizard in the true sense of the word. The 58-year-old Brabant born trumpeter was once the successor to successful Dutch musicians like Ado Broodboom, Ack and Jerry van Rooyen, Boy Edgar and Nedley Elstak. The success of those who came after these maestros was largely due to the training they could take. Now, with a Dutch government that treats the cultural sector as if they were pariahs, the moving up of young, aspiring musicians is in imminent danger. Many music schools have had to close because of the cutbacks in government spending.

Eric Vloeimans was an important spokesperson in **Muziekschool in Mineur**, a TV documentary broadcast by BNN/Vara on October 21. In this, he made an ardent plea to reinstall music education in schools in a prominent position. He repeated this plea in Paradox. Where he spiced the rest of his story with many whimsical asides, his words were deadly serious here. He made a moving plea to allow the present-day youth all the amenities that have made him such an outstanding artist. His performance with Will Holshouser was a convincing showcase for what music education may lead to. The caliber of the concert was already gold; Eric Vloeimans’s plea made it into a 24 carat one.