

Daniel Willem

Biography

Daniel Willem was born on March 6, 1957 in Auderghem, Brussels, Belgium.

At 7 years old, he began playing violin, piano and mandolin, and by 14 years, he was awarded Government Medals from the Music Academy for violin (Jeanne Corbusier, Jean Donnay), piano (Amélie Dengis), chamber music (Guy Zuinen) and sol-fa.

Soon thereafter, Willem became a student at the Music Royal Academy of Liège, taking violin from the Romanian virtuosos Lola Bobesco and Richard Pieta.

At 17, Willem wins first prize, and continues to expand his passion for violin with musicians, Thadé Geisler-Wyganowski (PL) and Jean Donnay (B) where Willem founded the Ancient Music Quartet, "Les Cordes Mosanes" with Jean Donnay (violin), Alejandro Moreiras (harpsichord, organ), Camille Dhoor (double bass).

Simultaneously, he became a member of the Brussels "Beaux Arts Orchestra" and Chamber Orchestra of Lausanne.

In the early 1970's, Willem created the Folk Group "Triskan" with Thierry Maquet, Jean-François Dumont, Albert Frère, Jean-Paul Lebens and brother Patrick Willem, which became exceptionally popular.

Additionally, Willem created other musical groups playing Gypsy Jazz, Gypsy Music, Blues, Country, Rock and Electronic music (Henry Pousseur, Jean-Marie Billy, Philippe Boesmans) with Patrick Willem, some of whom were playing with Jacques Pelzer and Chet Baker.

In 1978, Willem travelled to Los Angeles, CA, USA, where he met Jean-Luc Ponty and were introduced to the many creative opportunities offered by the acoustic-electric violin. Ponty took Daniel to buy his first acoustic-electric violin at the Barcus-Berry headquarters in Los Angeles. Since this day, Willem has declared that he will remain loyal to this company and continue to believe in the brand.

"Amongst all the acoustic-electric violins I have tried and all the microphones for violins that I have tested, the Barcus-Berry crystal piezo transducer system is the only one that allows a true, quick response to the stroke of the bow as well as a precise and immediate clarity in sound. As far as I am concerned, this is the best system that I ever used !"

During his time in California, Willem is invited by Swing musician, Stéphane Grappelli, to play at the UCLA Royce Music Hall.

In 1980, Willem performed with the American jazz drummer, Art Blakey, at the famous Village Vanguard in New York.

Upon his return to Europe, Willem formed new groups (Baba Trio, Baba Cool...) with his brother as bassist, Jean-Pierre Froidebise, Stéphane Martini, Marc-Henri Cykiert on guitar, Jean-Marie Billy, Denis Pousseur on piano, Yves Baibay, Philippe Demany, Pierre Adam on drums, Milou Struvay on trumpet, Jacques Pelzer and Steve Houben on saxophone.

Daniel Willem was the first Belgian "electric" violinist in his country, paving the way for young violinists.

Daniel moved on to work in the USA, Canada, Brussels, Paris and London as an composer, arranger, studio musician and sound engineer, working with Marvin Gaye, Paul Youg, Allison Moyet and more.

In 1985, Willem began working on plays and coproduced Viktor Lazlo's album "She" that became an international success with the single "Pleurer des Rivières" remaining in the Top 50 hits for 13 weeks.

In 1988 in Dublin, Willem conducted the Eurovision Orchestra for the Belgian singer, Joseph Reynaerts, where he composed and arranged the song "Laisser briller le soleil" that obtained a platinum record in Scandinavia and later sung by Johnny Logan.

Willem returns to the USA and Canada to perform in a series of concerts and recordings in Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York, Montreal and Quebec. In 1990, Willem signed an artist contract with CBS as well as an editorial contract with EMI, for his song "Seul à trainer" (Song text was from Marc Dixon, the clip was coproduced by Sony and M6 and created by J.J.Goldman and team). The song became France 's Top 50 most requested songs.

Since the beginnin, Willem has performed concerts and recorded music around the world, as a violinist, mandolinist, keyboarist, organist, guitarist, composer, arranger, sound engineer, creator and producer. He has obtained a variety of platinum and gold records working with :

Gypsy Jazz & Jazz

Stéphane Grappelli (FR)
Le Rosenberg Trio (NL)
Patrick Willem (B)
Popso Weiss (B)
Tchavo Berger (B)
Silvestre Berger (B)
Stéphane Poisseroux (B)
Louis Bolly (B)
Guy Reboul (FR)
Yves Teicher (B)
Jean-Paul Charlap (FR)
Art Blakey (USA)
Chet Baker (USA)
Al et Stella Levitt (USA)
Kermit Driscoll (USA)

Toots Thielemans (B)
John Thomas (USA)
Bill Frisell (USA)
Quentin Liégeois (B)
Pascal Mohy (B)
Eric Legnini (B)
Erik Neels (B)
Karel De Sutter (B)
Bruno Castelluci (B)
Pierre Van Dormael (B)
Phil Abraham (B)
Mimi Verderame (B)
Steve Houben (B)
Robert Lafont (FR)
Jacques Pelzer (B)
Ivan Paduart (B)
Stéphane Gallant (B)
Sam Gerstmans (B)
Milou Struvay (B)
Toon Van Dionant (B)
André Klenes (B)
André Charlier (B)
Guy Cabay (B)
Jean-Marie Billy (B)
Stéphane Martini (B)
Yves Baibay (B)
Benoît Vanderstraeten (B)
Léon Humblet (B)
Michel Hatzigeorgiou (B)
Fabrizio Cassol (B)
Daniel Falke (FR)
Smoky Mokes (B)
Silvio Pecci (B)
Alain Deval (B)

Blues & Country

Don "Sugarcane" Harris (USA)
Stevie Ray Vaughan (USA)
Elmore D (B)
Eric Mingelbier (B)
Renaud Lesire (B)
Jean-Michel Thonon (B)
Tony Trischka (USA)
Jean-Pierre Froidebise (B)
Big Dave (B)
Gilles Droihxe (B)
John Joris (B)
Lucky Hatson (B)
Hein Koop (D)
Suzy Gerarts (B)

Frank Coumans (B)
Raf "Lazy Horse" Timmermans (B)
Such a Noise (B)
Bill Deraime (FR)
Jan Debruyne (NL)

Pop, Folk, Rock, Classical, Studio

Marvin Gaye (USA)
David "Hawk" Wolinski (USA)
Tucker Zimmerman (USA)
Rod Gammons (UK)
Jennifer McRae (CA)
Kevin Mulligan (USA)
Ralph Benatar (USA)
Charles Shilling (B)
Soulsister (B)
Patrick Samoy (B)
Will Tura (B)
Phil Corthouts (B)
Mario Guccio (B)
Evert Verhees (B)
René Stock (B)
Christian Morin (FR)
Marc Descamps (B)
Hubert Schoonbroodt (B)
Serge Ghazarian (B)
Nicolas Fizman (B)
Francis Winandy (B)
Jacques Stotzem (B)
Anne Froidebise (B)
Luc Rigaux (B)
Init (B)
Clouseau (B)
Antoine Paterka (B)

French Song

Francis Cabrel (FR)
Ginette Reno (CA)
Juliette Greco (FR)
Viktor Lazlo (B)
Marcel Azzola (FR)
Frédéric François (B)
Leitmotiv-05 (B)
David Koven (FR)
Maurane (B)
François Rauber (FR)
Gérard Jouannest (FR)
Jean-Claude Piérot (B)
Jeff Bodart (B)

Plastic Bertrand (B)
Marc Lavoine (FR)
Alan Stivell (FR)
Jacques-Yvan Duchesne (B)
Alec & Benoît Mansion (B)
Allan Weyn (B)
Joseph Reynaerts (B)
Lou Deprijck (B)
Pierre Martin (B)
Santo Barracato (B)
Philippe Lafontaine (B)
Pierre Rapsat (B)
Christiane Stefanski (B)
Belgazou (CA)
Marc Morgan (B)
Philippe Laumont (B)
Nathalie Lavigne (B)
Sandra Kim (B)
Claude Barzotti (B)
Pierre Theunis (B)
Odieu (B)

and more...

With Jean-Pierre Froidebise, he created a "Tribute Band", the "Tambourine Men" group that recalls the career of Bob Dylan.

Currently, Willem offers lessons, trainings and concerts within the scope of the education program proposed by the "Jeunesses Musicales".

Daniel Willem is also an endorser for U.S. companies such as Barcus-Berry (violins, microphones, preamplifiers) since 1978, Musicorp (instruments, accessories, musical and sound equipments) and Eastman (mandolins, guitars, violins, accessories) as well as for a German company Pirastro (strings).

Willem has owned a recording studio since 1970, which explain the unique tone of his creations. A special recording to Willem is one that he created with his son, Thomas Willem and Luc Rigaux.

His musical universe is a journey through Gypsy Jazz and Gypsy Music, and a colourful and personal musical world, made of lights, shades and harmonic atmospheres.

Daniel Willem is presently one of the most creative Gypsy Jazz violinists in the tradition of the Sinti violinists like Martin Weiss, Schnuckenack Reinhardt and Titi Winterstein. His unique sound is recognizable by many and expresses sensitivity.