



by Scott "Dr. Music" Itter

The guitar is an instrument that can be played in many different ways. We usually hear it played as a driving force, or lead instrument, in the most popular rock and pop songs of the day. We rarely get to experience the guitar as an accompaniment. Hearing a guitar play in time with a full orchestra can be an emotional experience. Hearing an artist's instrument lift their voice and carry it through a melody is something very special. This feature article is dedicated to two women that use their instruments as tools – tools to speak the precious language of music in the most unique ways.



Maya Le Roux, a Swiss guitarist and composer of Serbian origin has lived in Geneva since the age of 5. A graduate of the Conservatoire supérieur de Genève, she continued her studies at the Ecole Normale de Musique in Paris under Albert Ponce and obtained a higher diploma in performance. Her studies in musical interpretation were perfected under Dagoberto Linhares, Professor at the Conservatoire de Lausanne.

Her education was rounded off by a science diploma as well as by courses in Philosophy and Musicology at the University of Geneva. As soon as her studies ended, she began work at Radio Suisse Romande. She went on to direct the station's classical music program "Matin Pluriel" (Espace 2) which provided her with the ideal base from which to explore the contemporary music scene.

CD Review: Maya Le Roux – "Symphonic and Guitar"

There are classical guitar players, and there are symphony orchestras. There are guitarists and there are opera singers. Some methods of making music just never cross paths. On this CD from guitarist Maya Le Roux, we find a guitar player that is willing to yield to musical traffic. Le Roux interacts with a full string orchestra here, as well as a stunning soprano by the name of Ljiljana Milovanovic, and does it all with beauty and grace.

Patience is something that the great musicians of the world must have. Knowing when to play and allowing the other sounds in an ensemble to shine through is something that is vital to keeping the melodies effective. We find suites on this disc in which the guitar is featured ("Petite suite pour un Prince"), and other pieces of music where Le Roux is gently strolling arm-in-arm with a string section ("Ballade de la Vallée Magique"). Each of these requires a different approach, and each is done with exquisite perfection here. Perhaps the most impressive piece of music on the disc comes when the guitar is played as an accompaniment to the soprano voice of Milovanovic. The subtlety and patient passion is felt with every pluck and stroke of the guitar, and the instrument acts strictly as an enhancement to the power of the voice.

For the fan of classical guitar music, or for the student that is trying to wrap his or her head around what it means to play guitar with all of the necessary elements, this disc is a must.



Sharon Isbin was born in Minneapolis and began her guitar studies at age nine. She was a student of Aldo Minella, Andrés Segovia, Oscar Ghiglia, Alirio



Díaz and Rosalyn Tureck. She received a B.A. cum laude from Yale University and a Master of Music from the Yale School of Music. She is the author of the Classical Guitar Answer Book, and is Director of guitar departments at the Aspen Music Festival and The Juilliard School.

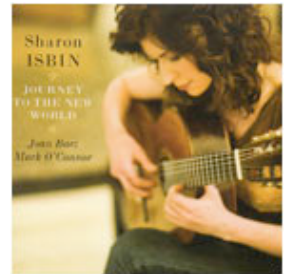
Grammy winner Sharon Isbin has been hailed as “the pre-eminent guitarist of our time” (Boston Magazine.) She also the winner of Guitar Player magazine’s “Best Classical Guitarist” award, First Prize winner of the Toronto Guitar ’75 competition, a winner of the Madrid Queen Sofia, and the first guitarist ever to win the Munich Competition.

CD Review: Sharon Isbin – “Journey to the New World”

This CD highlights the folk genre, with Isbin demonstrating tremendous talent as both a soloist and accompanist. The disc starts with four renaissance lute works in which Isbin is the sole player. She strums and picks through each tune effortlessly, one of them being the ever popular “Greensleeves.” The pace picks up when the disc moves on to a couple of English folk songs that are familiar to even the most inexperienced folk listener. “The Drunken Sailor” and “Wild Mountain Thyme” are two songs that define the genre, and they are nicely placed here.

There are two very special guests making appearances on this disc, legendary folk singer Joan Baez and violinist Mark O’Connor. Joan Baez, arguably the greatest American folk singer of our time, performs three brilliant pieces with her signature resonant tone. She does a haunting version of “Wayfaring Stranger” that can just chill the air. With Isbin adding a heartfelt guitar part, this tune just might be the highlight of the CD. Baez is also honored here with the world premiere recording of “Joan Baez Suite, Op. 144.” By Isbin’s request, composer John Duarte put together this suite for solo guitar in honor of Baez. When Baez heard Isbin play the piece, she decided to be a part of the album recording. Besides “Wayfaring Stranger,” we hear her gorgeous, lilting tone once again on the tender ballad “Go ‘Way From My Window.”

Violinist Mark O’Connor is really the best there is at what he does, and that is play Irish folk music. O’Connor takes center stage on the last 13 tracks of the disc, with Isbin giving his fiddle the necessary accents that make his “Strings & Threads Suite” complete. Another world premiere recording, this is another piece that was composed exclusively for Sharon Isbin. O’Connor’s fiddle playing and Isbin’s guitar complement each other better than anyone could even imagine. They skip through each of these adventurous songs hand-in-hand. It really is a fun ending to a delightful CD.



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