

Sharon Isbin

Guitarist

Acclaimed for her extraordinary lyricism, technique and versatility, multiple GRAMMY Award winner Sharon Isbin has been hailed as “the pre-eminent guitarist of our time”. She is also the winner of Guitar Player magazine’s “Best Classical Guitarist” award, the Madrid Queen Sofia and Toronto Competitions, and was the first guitarist ever to win the Munich Competition. She has given sold-out performances throughout the world in the greatest halls including New York’s Carnegie and Avery Fisher Halls, Boston’s Symphony Hall, Washington D.C.’s Kennedy Center, London’s Barbican and Wigmore Halls, Amsterdam’s Concertgebouw, Paris’ Châtelet, Vienna’s Musikverein, Munich’s Herkulesaal, Madrid’s Teatro Real, and many others. She has served as Artistic Director/Soloist of festivals she created for Carnegie Hall and the Ordway Music Theatre (St. Paul), her own series at New York’s 92nd Street Y, and the acclaimed national radio series Guitarjam. She is a frequent guest on national radio programs including All Things Considered and Garrison Keillor’s A Prairie Home Companion. She has been profiled on television throughout the world, including CBS Sunday Morning and the A&E Network, and was a featured guest on Showtime Television’s international hit series The L Word. On September 11, 2002, Ms. Isbin performed at Ground Zero for the internationally televised memorial. In November 2009, she performed a concert at the White House by invitation of the President and First Lady. She performed as featured soloist in the soundtrack for Martin Scorsese’s Academy Award winning film, The Departed. She has been profiled in periodicals from People to Elle, The Wall Street Journal and the New York Times, as well as on the cover of more than 40 magazines.

Ms. Isbin’s catalogue of over 25 recordings—from Baroque, Spanish/Latin and 20th Century to crossover and jazz-fusion—reflects remarkable versatility. Recently signed to SONY Masterworks as an exclusive recording artist, her 2010 GRAMMY Award winning CD, Journey to the New World includes guests Joan Baez in songs, and Mark O’Connor in the world premiere of his folk-inspired suite for violin and guitar. Ranked as the #1 bestselling classical CD on Amazon.com and iTunes, it is a fixture on the top Billboard charts. Her Dreams of a World soared onto top classical Billboard charts, edging out The 3 Tenors, and earned her a 2001 GRAMMY Award for “Best Instrumental Soloist Performance”, making her the first classical guitarist to receive a GRAMMY in 28 years. Her world premiere recording of concerti written for her by Christopher Rouse and Tan Dun

debuted as #6 on the Billboard charts and received a 2002 GRAMMY Award, as well as Germany's prestigious Echo Klassik Award. She received a 2005 Latin GRAMMY nomination for "Best Classical Album" and a 2006 GLAAD Media Award nomination for "Outstanding Music Artist" (alongside Melissa Etheridge) for her Billboard Top 10 Classical disc with the New York Philharmonic of Joaquin Rodrigo's *Concierto de Aranjuez*, and concerti by Mexican composer Manuel Ponce and Brazilian Heitor Villa-Lobos. This marked the Philharmonic's first-ever recording with guitar, and followed their Avery Fisher Hall performances with Ms. Isbin as their first guitar soloist in 26 years. *Baroque Favorites for Guitar* with the Zurich Chamber Orchestra remained on the Billboard Top 10 Classical Chart for over 16 weeks, and her *Journey to the Amazon* with Brazilian percussionist Thiago de Mello and saxophonist Paul Winter, a Billboard best-seller in the U.S. and the U.K., received a 1999 GRAMMY nomination for "Best Classical Crossover Album". She is also featured on Howard Shore's 2008 GRAMMY nominated soundtrack CD for *The Departed*.

Other CDs include *Artist Profile*, *Wayfaring Stranger* with mezzo-soprano Susanne Mentzer, *Greatest Hits* (EMI/Virgin Classics), and Aaron Jay Kernis' *Double Concerto* (Argo/Decca) with violinist Cho-Liang Lin and the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra (SPCO) which received a 2000 GRAMMY nomination. Her eight best-selling titles for EMI/Virgin Classics include J.S. Bach Complete Lute Suites, and concerti by Joaquin Rodrigo which the composer praised as "magnificent". She is also featured on the GRAMMY Foundation's *Smart Symphonies™* CD distributed to over five million families. Her recordings have received many other awards, including "Critic's Choice Recording of the Year" in both Gramophone and CD Review, "Recording of the Month" in Stereo Review, and "Album of the Year" in *Guitar Player*.

Sharon Isbin has been acclaimed for expanding the guitar repertoire with some of the finest new works of the century. She has commissioned and premiered more concerti than any other guitarist, as well as numerous solo and chamber works. Her *American Landscapes* (EMI/Virgin Classics) with the SPCO conducted by Hugh Wolff is the first-ever recording of American guitar concerti and features works written for her by John Corigliano, Joseph Schwantner, and Lukas Foss. (In November 1995, it was launched in the space shuttle Atlantis and presented to Russian cosmonauts during a rendezvous with Mir.) She has also recorded the Schwantner with Leonard Slatkin and the St. Louis Symphony. In January 2000, she premiered the ninth concerto written for her: *Concert de Gaudí* by Christopher Rouse with Christoph Eschenbach and the NDR Symphony, followed by performances with Andrew Litton and the Dallas Symphony, and David Zinman at the Aspen Music Festival. Among the many other composers who have written for her are Joan Tower, David Diamond, Aaron Jay Kernis, Leo Brouwer, Howard Shore, Steve Vai, and Ned Rorem in whose documentary she is featured. In 2003 she premiered John Duarte's *Joan Baez Suite*, and in 2005 she premiered a duo by rock guitarist Steve Vai in their joint concert in Paris' Théâtre du Châtelet.

Ms. Isbin performs 60-100 concerts a season, and recent highlights have included tours with the Zurich Chamber Orchestra, the Tonkünstler Orchestra throughout Austria including Vienna's Musikverein, recitals in New York's 92nd St Y and Washington D.C.'s Kennedy Center, a week of concerto and recital performances presented by the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris, and as soloist with the Minnesota Orchestra, Filarmonica Toscanini in Milan, and the 2009 MIDEM Classical Awards in Cannes. 2009-10 highlights include performances with Detroit, Nashville, and Pacific (Los Angeles) and Ravenna Festival Symphonies, and concerts in the White House, New York's Carnegie Hall, Washington DC, Chicago, Atlanta, California, South Carolina, Alaska and Aspen.

Ms. Isbin has appeared as soloist with over 160 orchestras, including in the United States the New York Philharmonic, National Symphony, Baltimore, Detroit, Nashville, Houston, Dallas, Pittsburgh, Minnesota, St. Louis, New Jersey, Indianapolis, Milwaukee, Phoenix, Utah, Memphis and Honolulu Symphonies, the Rochester, Brooklyn and Buffalo Philharmonics, as well as the St. Paul, New York and Los Angeles Chamber Orchestras.

Ms. Isbin has toured Europe annually since she was seventeen, and has also toured Canada, Japan and the Far East, New Zealand, South America, Mexico and Israel appearing in recital and as soloist with such orchestras as the Zurich, Scottish and Lausanne Chamber Orchestras, the London Symphony, Orchestre National de France, BBC Scottish, Lisbon Gulbenkian, Prague, Milan Verdi, Mexico City, Jerusalem and Tokyo Symphonies. Festival appearances include Mostly Mozart, Aspen, Ravinia, Grant Park, Interlochen, Santa Fe, Mexico City, Bermuda, Hong Kong, Montreux, Strasbourg, Paris, Athens, Istanbul, Prague, Ravenna and Budapest International Festivals.

As a chamber musician, Ms. Isbin has performed with Mark O'Connor, Steve Vai, Nigel Kennedy, Denyce Graves, Susanne Mentzer, the Emerson String Quartet and the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, among others. She performed a "Guitar Summit" tour with jazz greats Herb Ellis, Stanley Jordan and Michael Hedges; she made trio recordings with Larry Coryell and Laurindo Almeida, and duo recordings with Carlos Barbosa-Lima. She collaborated with Antonio Carlos Jobim, and has shared the stage with luminaries from Aretha Franklin to Muhammad Ali.

Born in Minneapolis, Sharon Isbin began her guitar studies at age nine in Italy, and later studied with Andrès Segovia and Oscar Ghiglia. A former student of Rosalyn Tureck, Ms. Isbin collaborated with the noted keyboardist in preparing the first performance editions of the Bach lute suites for guitar (published by G. Schirmer). 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 (which she created in 1989 becoming the first and only guitar instructor in the institution's 100-year history).

In her spare time, Ms. Isbin enjoys trekking in the jungles of Latin America, motorcycling through Greek islands, cross-country skiing, snorkeling and backpacking.

(September 2011)

To access hi-res photos of Ms. Isbin FOR PRESS PURPOSES ONLY, please visit www.sharonisbin.com/press