

# GUITAREN

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Stort, eksklusivt **interview** med **Sharon Isbin**

PHOTO: J. HENRY FAIR

- OG MEGET ANDET

# Interview med Sharon Isbin

*Interview og oversættelse:  
Ole Thestrup Pedersen (DGS), 2020.*

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I mere end 40 år har den amerikanske klassiske guitarist Sharon Isbin arbejdet utrætteligt i den klassiske guitars tjene-ste for at fremme og styrke dens position. Hun har undervist et utal af studerende, spillet koncerter og afholdt master classes overalt i verden, givet dusinvis af interviews, deltaget i TV programmer og skrevet artikler og bøger for at gøre folk opmærksomme på guitarens vidunder-lige verden. Desuden har hun indspillet et stort antal LP og CDer med et vidt-spændende repertoire, som alle er blevet modtaget med beundring og akklamation. I indeværende år har hun på mindre end 12 måneder udgivet ikke færre end 3 nye albums. Blandt dem finder man hendes samarbejde med Chris Brubeck med titlen "Affinity", som er blevet modtaget med stor forventning af hendes mange ven-ner og beundrere over hele verden. Ved indgangen til 2021 er hendes plads som den klassiske guitars ukronede dronning cementeret og indiskutabel.

Dansk Guitar Selskabs redaktion er stolte over, at det er lykkedes os via Sharon Isbins store velvilje at kunne bringe dette fyldige og eksklusive interview med hende - det første på dansk nogensinde.

*1. Sharon Isbin, kan du fortælle os, hvor gammel du var og lidt om, hvad det specielt var, der fangede din opmærksomhed og rettede den mod den klassiske guitar?*

Da jeg var 9 år gammel, flyttede min familie til Italien i et år grundet min fars videnskabelige arbejde. Kort tid efter vores ankomst spurgte min storebror, om han kunne få lov til at få timer i guitarspil. Mine forældre fandt en strålende lærer i form af Aldo Minella, som havde studeret under Segovia, og som koncerterede rundt omkring i Europa. Men i virkeligheden var det min brors drøm at blive den næste Elvis, så han sagde nej tak tilbudet! Mine forældre mente så, at muligheden for undervisning af Aldo Minella var alt for godt et tilbud til at blive afslået, så jeg tilbød at overtage min brors plads. Jeg kendte ikke noget til klassisk guitarspil, men mente alligevel, at det kunne blive mere spændende end at fortsætte med klaver-lektioner.

Da vi kom tilbage til Minneapolis, opstod en lidenskabelig interesse hos mig for at bygge modelraketter. Min far plejede at bestikke mig til at øve ved at sige, at jeg ikke kunne affyre raketterne, før jeg havde øvet mig en time på guitaren. Da jeg var 14 år gammel, vandt jeg en konkurrence om at kunne optræde som solist med Minnesota Orchestra for 10.000 tilhørere. It var langt mere spændende end at sende mine orme og græshopper ud i rummet, så fra den ene dag til den anden besluttede jeg mig for at blive guitarist.

*2. Vi har kunnet læse, at du rejste til Italien som ganske ung for at modtage guitarundervisning. Var det nødvendigt at rejse hele vejen til Europa for at kunne få den rigtige undervisning?*

Nej, men det var ikke sket, hvis vi var blevet hjemme i Minneapolis, hvor jeg voksede op. Min bror ville sandsynligvis være gået vejen

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som rockguitarist, og jeg ville have kastet mig over videnskabeligt arbejde.

*3. I noterne til CDen "Dreams of a World" ser man et vidunderligt billede af dig i selskab med den store venezuelanske guitarist Alirio Diaz. Hvordan var det at blive undervist af ham?*

Jeg modtog undervisning af Alirio Diaz en sommer, hvor jeg var 15 år gammel og besøgte en festival i de canadiske Rocky Mountains. Han introducerede mig for latinamerikansk musik, som jeg kom til at holde meget af, og som blev en vigtig del af mit repertoire. Han elskede at spille for alle sine studerende, og jeg kan stadig huske hans muntre og fornøjelige fortolkninger af Lauro, Sainz de la Maza, Albeniz og andre.

*4. En kort overgang studerede du guitar under den store Don Andrés Segovia. Forskellige mennesker har udtalt meget divergerende meninger om denne ærverdige spænier. Hvad var din opfattelse af ham som lærer og som menneske?*

Jeg var heldig at kunne deltage i adskillige privattimer hos Segovia, fra jeg var 14 år gammel.

Det, der gjorde størst indtryk på mig, var at høre ham demonstrere sin pragtfulde toneklang på ganske nær afstand. Det var en klang, jeg ønskede at efterligne. Han var storsindet med sin tid og var meget respektfuld. Ved vores sidste undervisningsmøde havde jeg som sædvanlig forberedt musik skrevet for og arrangeret af ham, men jeg forventede ikke, at han mod slutningen ville sige: "Det stykke er fortræffeligt, spil noget mere!" Efter en times tid havde jeg ikke yderligere kompositioner på programmet, og hverken Bach eller noget samtidig musik var lige, hvad jeg havde forestillet mig var vejen frem. Så spillede jeg "Julia Florida", selv om jeg godt vidste, at han efter sigende ikke havde høje tanker om Barrios. Men jeg mente, at det ville være okay, hvis jeg ikke nævnte komponistens navn. Da jeg var færdig, udbrød han: "Nej, hvor smukt! Hvad var det?" Efter jeg afslørede komponistens identitet, replicede han: "Åh, ja, Barrios, han var ude af stand



Sharon Isbin. Photo: J. Henry Fair.

til at komponere; det, han kom med, var lidt af det ene og lidt af det andet!". Og dermed sluttede den undervisningstid.

*5. I 1960erne og tidligt i 1970erne, da du stadig var studerende, var der ikke mange professionelle kvindelige guitarister på koncertscenerne. Forekom det dig underligt eller måske endda svært at studere og optræde i en verden præget af mandlige kunstnere på den tid?*

Jeg var universitetsstuderende indtil slutningen af 70erne, og de fleste af mine kampe indtil da og som teenager var gået på at overbevise arrangører af konkurrencer for studerende om det rimelige i at tillade mig at deltage som guitarist. Over fem somre var jeg studerende hos Oscar Ghiglia ved Aspen Music Festival, og desuden var jeg Ghiglias undervisningsasistent et år, hvor 50 studerende mødte frem, og hvor kun to af dem var piger! Jeg lærte tid-

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ligt, at det var essentielt at arbejde hårdt for at blive så god, som man overhovedet kunne, så at kritikeres fokus rettede sig mod musikken og ikke mod elevens instrument eller køn. Da jeg begyndte at spille som barn i Italien, var det lige så normalt for piger som for drenge at blive undervist i klassisk guitar.

Efter endt uddannelse og som professionel bestræbte jeg mig på at overbevise komponister, orkestre og koncertarrangører om værdien, dybden og skønheden i guitarspillet, og jeg føler, det lykkedes mig at nedbryde mange barrierer med det formål at tiltrække nye tilhørerskarer og skabe nye muligheder for et nyt repertoire og fornyet respekt omkring instrumentet. Som solist har jeg nu spillet sammen med flere end 200 orkestre, og mange af dem havde aldrig haft guitaren som førsteinstrument eller blot haft det en enkelt eller måske to gange.

*6. I vores samtid giver et stort antal fremragende kvindelige kunstnere koncerter over hele verden. Hvordan forklarer du denne pludselige fremvækst af superdygtige kvindelige talenter igennem de seneste år?*

Den er ikke sket pludseligt. Det har været en gradvis udvikling over tid! Som flere kvindelige kunstnere og lærere har taget udfordringen op og er blevet rollemodeller, er flere unge piger blevet inspireret og opmuntret til at studere, og denne udvikling er blevet eksponentiel.

*7. To af dine indspilninger fra 1980erne – "Brazil with Love" og "Rhapsody in Blue/West Side Story" var duetplader med den strålende sydamerikanske guitarist Carlos Barbosa-Lima. Hvor inspirerede dig til at alliere dig med ham på disse udgivelser?*

Sophocles Papas introducerede mig for ham, da jeg var 14 år gammel; Papas var nemlig ven med Segovia og en slags mentor for os begge to. Vi blev rigtigt gode venner, da jeg flyttede til New York, efter jeg havde færdiggjort mine universitetsstudier. Carlos er en strålende arrangør, og det var en stor fornøjelse at samarbejde med ham, da han foreslog, at vi skulle indspille mu-

sik, som han ville arrangere. Vi arbejdede sammen med Brasiliens legendariske Tom Jobim (red: Antonio Carlos Jobim), da vi forberedte indspilningen af hans musik, og vi spillede endda "opvarmning", da Jobim besøgte New Yorks Lincoln Center.

*8. Skønt mange guitarkompositioner nu er blevet tilegnet dig personligt, er jeg sikker på, at du må have været særlig stolt, da Leo Brouwer skrev sin "El Decameron Negro" specielt med dig i tankerne. Har du en kommentar til denne betydningsfulde begivenhed?*

Det var en gave, der kom ganske uventet med posten! Jeg mødte Leo ved den første udgave af Toronto Guitar Festival, efter at jeg havde vundet konkurrencen. Det var noget af en øjenåbner at høre ham optræde med sin helt originale musik, og jeg begyndte at indstudere og indspille det materiale af ham, der var tilgængeligt. Til min store overraskelse og glæde skrev han "El Decameron Negro" til mig nogle få år senere. Det var en komposition inspireret af historier om kærlighed indsamlet i Afrika i 1800-tallet af en tysk etnolog. At samarbejde med Leo omkring dette værk var en åbenbaring, og selv om jeg var den første, der indspillede værket, var det umådeligt givende at få muligheden for at optræde med og indspille det igen på mit nye album "Affinity" (red: i sommeren 2020).

*9. Du har udtrykt en særlig interesse for folkemusikbølgen i slutningen af 1950erne og begyndelsen af 1960erne som en inspirationskilde for din egen musik. Jeg tænker på kunstnere som f.eks. Elizabeth Cotten, Joan Baez, The Weavers og andre. Hvor var der ved den musik og lyd, der førte dig videre frem mod den folkemusik, du hørte i Israel, Grækenland, Cuba, Sydamerika, Irland og Spanien?*

Af folkemusikere blev jeg især glad for Joan Baez og hendes smukke sangversioner, da jeg gik på universitetet. Men jeg havde aldrig forestillet mig, at vi skulle mødes og optræde sammen. Men den drøm blev til virkelighed på "Journey to the New World" (Sony), som indeholder det andet værk John Duarte skrev til mig med titlen

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"Joan Baez Suite" for sologuitar. Suiten er baseret på sange, som hun gjorde berømt tidligt i hendes karriere, og da Joan hørte suiten, tilbød hun at synge på "Journey to the New World". Min udgave af den samlede udsættelse vil omsider blive tilgængelig via Mel Bay Publications i januar 2021.

*10. Min personlige Isbin CD favorit er "Dreams of a World" fra 1999, som du jo også meget fortjent hostede en Grammy for. Kan man tale om, at denne "hit"-plade åbnede en masse nye døre for dig i din karriere?*

Tak, tak! Denne første oplevelse med en Grammy var bestemt et overvældende, ja nærmest surrealistisk øjeblik. Det var jo også første gang i 28 år, at en Grammy var blevet givet til en klassisk guitarist. Og ja, den åbnede mange døre, både for mig og for gitaren. Endnu en Grammy, sammen med en pris udstedt af Tysklands Echo Klassik, fulgte efter det følgende år for "Concert de Gaudi", som Christopher Rouse skrev til mig, en smuk koncert inspireret af Barcelonas berømte arkitekt. I 2010 fik jeg en tredje for "Journey to the New World".

*11. På "Dreams of a World" finder man din udgave af Naomi Shemers "Yerushala'im shel zahav". For mange år siden dirigerede min søster et kor i København, der sang for et jødisk publikum, og det slog mig, at mange blev meget bevægede og endda fældede en tåre. Kan du forklare den stærke emotionnelle virkning, denne melodi tydeligvis har?*

Shemers sang blev hyldet i Israel i 1967 og sidestillet med den allerede eksisterende nationalhymne. Den udtrykker en længsel efter Jerusalem og glæde over byens genforening. Men selv publikum, der ikke kender noget til den sammenhæng, sangen blev skabt i, bliver bevæget, når de hører den smukke, nærmest fortryllende melodi. Da jeg besluttede mig for at arrangere et medley af fire sange skrevet af Shemer, fremsendte jeg noderne og indspilningen til hende for at høre, om hun kunne godtage min version eller ønskede ændringer foretaget. Vi talte om det, og til min store

glæde viste det sig, at hun var overmåde glad for min version.

Sangen var et af de indslag, som jeg spillede ved den første årlige mindehøjtidelighed i 2002 ved Ground Zero i New York City for 40,000 familiemedlemmer og overlevende, som var samlet for at oplæse navnene på de næsten 3,000 som omkom. Begivenheden blev vist på TV i hele verden. Mange stod med plakater med billeder af de kære, de havde mistet, og det var alt i alt en meget stærk, bevægende og transformativ oplevelse, som jeg aldrig vil glemme. At være en del af denne globalt samlende og helende proces var for mig, hvad der ligger i betydningen af musikkens sprog. I 2003, efter hver koncert, besluttede jeg at spille Shemers sang som ekstranummer i respekt for mindehøjtideligheden i New York. Efter hver eneste koncert kom folk hen til mig og fortalte om, at de havde mistet en bror, en søster, en forælder, en fetter, kusine eller nærværende som følge af angrebet. Samtidig gav de udtryk for deres taknemmelighed over, hvor meget musikken og dens indhold betød for dem.

*12. "Dreams of a World" og "Journey to the Amazon" viser, at du er aktiv og ivrig både som fysisk og musikalsk rejsende. Er du stadig den dag i dag ligé så ivrig efter at udforske nye steder i en verden, der er påvirket af farer som sygdomme, terror og naturkatastrofer?*

Nuvel, desværre er vi lige nu midt i disse plagers jerngreb. Jeg føler stor glæde og taknemmelighed over at have kunnet optræde i over 40 lande med tilhørende fantastiske oplevelser. Det har været vidunderligt at opleve de vilde dyr på Galapagos øerne, i regnskovene i Brasiliens Amazon-område, i Ecuador og i Costa Rica. Men det er ikke realistisk at forestille sig, at man bare kan gå ombord i et fly og drage ud i verden, før Corona pandemien er slut og virusen bragt under kontrol. Det gælder især her i De forenede Stater, hvor hospitalsindlæggelse er en hverdagsbegivenhed, og hvor antallet af døde blot stiger og stiger. Det burde aldrig være sket. Dersom alle bar N95 beskyttende masker i det offentlige rum, ville sygdommen

kunne bringes til ophør. Men alt for mange mennesker tænker ikke på deres egen sikkerhed og endnu mindre på andres. Jeg har båret en N95 maske på hver eneste fly- og togrejse, jeg har foretaget de seneste 18 år siden det første udbrud af SARS, fordi det gav god mening. Siden dengang har jeg aldrig været syg i forbindelse med en flyrejse – ikke en eneste gang på trods af, at jeg nu har over 1.000 flyrejser bag mig! Heller ikke selv om passagerer lige ved siden af mig var ved at hoste deres lunger i stykker. Gode masker, der er påført korrekt, virker godt!

*13. Efter de to udgivelser jeg har nævnt i spørgsmål 12 besluttede du at satse på værker afforholdsvis unge og i det mindste i Europa ret ukendte komponister. Jeg tænker her på Lukas Foss, Christopher Rouse og Tan Dun. Hvad gjorde, at du vendte dig mod dem?*

Jeg var endnu teenager, da jeg første gang henvendte mig til en komponist, nemlig Ami Maayani, der indvilligede i at skrive en koncert til mig. Efter premieren på dette værk med Minnesota Orchestra fik jeg idéen til at arbejde med den udfordring at forsøge at skabe et nyt og spændende repertoire skrevet af en række fine komponister med hver deres stiltræk, genrepræg og globale perspektiv. Der manglede værker for guitar og orkester, så behovet var ægte nok. Nu har jeg så førsteført mere end 80 værker komponeret til mig, og af dem er de 13 for guitar og orkester. Mine indspilninger af koncerter af Brubeck, Corigliano, Foss, Schwantner, Kernis, Rouse, Tan Dun og flere andre foreligger nu digitalt på CD.

*14. Du har ligeledes indspillet barokmusik (Bach, Vivaldi) på flere plader. Er der stadigvæk plads til nye fortolkninger af værker af de gamle mestre fra 1600- og 1700 tallet?*

Helt frem til slutningen af 1970erne var der ikke den store opmærksomhed over for barokrepertoiret spillet på guitar. Så jeg tog fat på et 10 år langt studium hos den førende Bachforsker og klaviatur-fortolker Rosalyn Tureck.

Sammen skabte vi de første koncertudgaver for guitar af Bachs fire lutsuiter, idet vi benyttede historiske kilder. Jeg indspillede alle fire, og to af dem blev gjort nodemæssigt tilgængelige af forlaget G. Schirmer (BWV996 og BWV997). De udgaver benytter kontrapunktisk fingersætning, udsmykning, artikulation, frasering og dynamik, som passer til musikkens struktur og den måde, den er blevet spillet på gennem tiderne. Det var ret banebrydende for den tid og stadigvæk en form, mange guitarister kæmper med.

*15. I september 1989 indspillede du Rodrigos fantastiske "Concierto de Aranjuez" sammen med Orchestra de Chambre de Lausanne. I juni 2004 vendte du så tilbage til værket og genindspillede det med New York Philharmonic. Hvordan var tiderne skiftet på de 15 år, så den nye indspilning igen kunne blive en attraktiv udfordring for dig?*

Selve livet og de erfaringer, det medfører, skaber muligheder for vækst og forandring. Arbejdet med New York Philharmonic gav mig mulighed for for første gang at indspille koncerterne af Ponce og Villa-Lobos. Sideløbende gav det mig og indspilningslederen mulighed for at foretage visse ændringer i lydbilledet. Endelig var det en stor ære at blive udsæt til at være den på det tidspunkt eneste sologuitarist i dette berømte orkesters historie med mere end 2.000 pladeindspilninger.

*16. Din bog "The Classical Guitar Answer Book" har været en bestseller i mange år. Har du nogensinde overvejet at udsende en udvidet og revideret udgave?*

Der foreligger faktisk en 2. og revideret udgave, men det ligger allerede nogle år tilbage. Jeg tror dog bestemt, det kunne give mening at bringe bogens appendiks afsnit up-to-date. Man kan se den nyeste indholdsfortegnelse under "Publikationer" på min hjemmeside [www.sharonisbin.com](http://www.sharonisbin.com)

*Pladen "Artist Portrait" udsendt af Warner Classics viser dig som en usædvanligt alsidig kunstner.*



Sharon Isbin og Stanley Jordan.

Photo: David Lai.

*Her har du fundet plads så forskellige komponister som fra Albinoni og Bach til Laurindo Almeida, Thiago de Mello og John Jacob Niles. Selv romantiske værker får plads her; jeg tænker specielt på Martinis "Plaisir d'Amour" og Schuberts "Ständchen". Siger du med andre ord at guitaren passer til al slags musik?*

*Artist Portrait* er en opsamlingsudgivelse med udpluk fra adskillige tidligere udsendte plader: Det er det, der skaber de forskellige stemninger. Guitaren passer aldeles strålende sammen med stemmen, uanset om det gælder Schubert, folk, rock, country, pop, latinamerikansk eller nutidig musik. Min udgivelse "Alma Espanola" (2017) sammen med den argentinsk-amerikanske stjerne Isabel Leonard indeholder spansk musik, herunder 12 verdenspremiere arrangementer, jeg selv har skrevet over værker af García Lorca, Montsalvatge og Lara. Hun indgår også i den stemningsfulde Richard Danielpour sangcyklus med digte af Rumi. Værkerne blev skabt på baggrund af en opfordring fra Carnegie Hall og indgår nu på pladen "Affinity" (2020).

17. *Til overraskelse for mange indvilligede du for nogle år siden i at optræde sammen med jazz- og rock-kunstnere som Herb Ellis, Larry Coryell og Steve Vai. Hvis man ikke tænker nærmere over det, forekommer I at være usædvanlige rejsekammerater. Hvorfor sagde du ja til at deltage, og hvad*



Sharon Isbin og Mark O'Connor.

Photo: Rob Fortunato.

*ønskede du at opnå ved at engagere dig i disse projekter?*

Da jeg fik invitationen fra dem, stolede jeg på, at vores fælles kunstnerinstinkt, det vil sige musikalsk fleksibilitet og stor gensidig respekt, kunne frembringe frugtbare resultater. På basis af improvisation skrev Steve Vai musik, som han og jeg kunne spille sammen. Det samme gjorde Larry Coryell og Laurindo Almeida, med hvem jeg indgik i en trio. For nylig optrådte jeg med Sting i Carnegie Hall – det var faktisk min idé! – og jeg arbejder ofte og gerne sammen med store jazznavne som Romero Lubambo og Stanley Jordan. Hvis vi øjner et indre organisk mål foran os, som ikke allerede er fortærsket, men opstår som resultat af gensidig respekt for hinanden og andre, og samtidig indeholder kærlighed og skønhed, så er jeg sikker på, at arbejdet vil bære frugt. Det er muligt at høre resultaterne af noget af mit samarbejde med andre på pladen "Sharon Isbin & Friends: Guitar Passions" (Sony).

18. *På nogle af dine nyeste plader akkompagnerer du sangere som f.eks. mezzo-sopranen Susanne Mentzer, hvor du også har inviteret andre gæster ombord, in casu violinisten Mark O'Connor og sangeren Joan Baez. Her høres såvel Dowlands luttværker som gamle, traditionelle britiske sange. Betyder det, at du nu for evigt har lagt værker af Sor, Giuliani, Carulli og Tárrega bag dig?*

Jeg holder stadigvæk meget af at spille Tárrega, men jeg har ikke spillet Sor, Giuliani og Carrulli i lang tid. Det er værker, der var relevante for mig i mine unge år. Dowland, de britiske sange og de kunstnere, du nævner fra "Journey to the New World", er et forsøg på at udforse folkemusik fra De britiske Øer under en tidsrejse fra Renæssancen videre over irsk og skotsk musik fra 1600- og 1700 tallene. Immigranter krydsede havene med deres musik og bragte drømme videre ud i Den Ny Verden. Vi afsluttede med den vidunderlige suite for guitar og violin, som country violin mesteren Mark O'Connor skrev til os og dermed sammenbragte de oprindelige folkemusikalske kilder fra jigs til blues, ragtime, swing og frem til begyndelsen af bluegrass genren.

*19. Fortæl os gerne noget om dine nyeste tiltag, "De indiske ragas" og dit samarbejde med Chris Brubeck på pladen "Affinity". Hvordan faldt de brikker på plads?*

Jeg er meget glad for de førsteindspilninger af musik komponeret til mig, som blev udsendt i sommeren 2020 på plademærket ZOHO. Det drejer sig om dels "Affinity" og dels "Strings for Peace". "Affinity" omfatter verdensmusik af komponister fra 3 kontinenter, hvor en forrygende guitarkoncert af Chris Brubeck er det centrale værk. "Affinity" indeholder dels temaer fulde af virtuose jazz træk og strofer af musik fra Mellemøsten. Desuden er der en smuk ballade af Chris' far Dave Brubeck, hvis 100 års fødselsdag vi fejrede i december 2020. Derudover indeholder pladen musik af Brouwer og Danielpour samt Tan Duns pragtstykke "Seven Desires for Guitar", i hvilket guitaren "tilnærmer" sig pipaen, så at værket i sin helhed kombinerer elementer af kinesisk folkemusik og tonerne af den spanske guitar. I Antonio Lauros "Natalia" spiller jeg en duetversion arrangeret af min tidligere studerende Colin Davin. For mange år siden i Venezuelas hovedstad Caracas kom en lejlighed til at spille denne vals sammen med den rigtige Natalia, Lauros datter, som har lagt navn til melodien. Helt spontant improviserede hun sammen med mig

på det venezuelanske instrument cuatroen. Jeg kunne ikke glemme denne magiske oplevelse og foreslog Colin, som jeg havde spillet koncertduetter sammen med, at han udfærdigede en andenstemme. Hvad han fandt på var så kreativt og passende som fod i hose, at jeg inviterede ham til at spille med på det ny album.

"Strings for Peace" forsøger at præsentere en mere indadvendt musikform med klassiske ragas from det nordlige Indien, hvor også den legendariske sarod mester Amjad Ali Khan deltager. Hans sønner Amaan og Ayaan er virtuoser og Amit Kavthekar på tabla tog del i indspilningerne, som fandt sted i forbindelse med en tournée i Indien i foråret 2019. Vi kunne aldrig have forestillet os, at musikken skulle udsendes midt i en verdensomspændende pandemi, hvor der mere end nogensinde var behov for budskaber, der kaldte på fred og forsoning.

Selve idéen opstod for 11 år siden, da Amjad skrev til mig og foreslog et samarbejde. Hvad der kom ud af det, var et meget givende ven-skab i hans søgen efter en passende samarbejds-partner til at nedskrive og arrangere musikken. Så pludseligt en dag i november 2018 begyndte alle disse ragas at dukke op i min mailbox. De var virkelig smukke. Ayaan indvilligede, fordi man havde arrangeret en Indiensturné til mig og ham, der strakte sig over 2 måneder – til såvel Delhi som Mumbai og Kolkata! Det virkede helt "skørt", men musikken rørte mig i den grad ud over, at vi var nære venner, så jeg kastede alt, hvad jeg havde i hænderne fra mig. Det var mit første besøg i Indien og en vidunderlig oplevelse fra først til sidst.

*20. Det kan nu om dage forekomme, som om folk i klassiske guitarkredse lever i en slags boble omgivet af en verden, der kæmper med umådelige problemer og farer. Jeg tænker på den globale opvarmning, racemæssige konflikter og ulykkelige mennesker, der flygter fra interne stridigheder og borgerkrige. Burde guitarverdenen, som du ser det, tage stilling til sådanne problemer, eller er vi bedst tjent med at koncentrere os om musikken og kolportere dens kvaliteter videre til nye publikumsskarer?*

Kunstnere er også borgere, og som sådanne er

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det enhvers pligt at protestere mod uretfærdighed, fordomme, korruption, miljøsvineri og fascism. Det er af den grund, at hvis man kigger på hjemmesiden [www.twitter.com/sharonisbin](http://www.twitter.com/sharonisbin), vil man kunne se mange indlæg, der kæmper imod det 4 år lange mareridt under Præsident Trump og hans republikanske støtters administration. Gudskelov vil det få en ende den 20. januar 2021. På siderne [www.facebook.com/sharonisbin](http://www.facebook.com/sharonisbin) og [www.instagram.com/realsharonisbin](http://www.instagram.com/realsharonisbin) er mit fokus på musikken, men har dog et billede med af mig fra oktober måned iført en hazmat, hvor jeg stod i kø med hundredevis af andre på Broadway i New York i 4 timer for i god tid at stemme på Biden/Harris, som er vores store håb for fremtiden.

*21. Igennem årenes løb har du opnået, hvad forekommer umuligt. Du har ledet afdelingen for klassisk guitar på Juillard School of Music i mange år. Sideløbende har du aftagt besøg i mere end 50 lande, spillet for præsidenter i Det hvide Hus og i alle de mest prestigefyldte koncertsale. Er der overhovedet noget tilbage for dig at opsoge eller stræbe efter?*

Jeg har bedt nogle komponister om fortsat at skrive musik til mig, og forskellige former for samarbejde er ligeledes på bedingen. Jeg skulle have spillet en række koncerter i det forgangne år sammen med medlemmer af familien Khan under overskriftten "Strenge for Fred". De er nu blevet udskudt til foreløbig 2021. Jeg ser frem til at gå i gang med det alt sammen, når det bliver muligt igen.

*22. Hvilken slags "arv" kunne du tænke dig at overdrage til en yngre generation, engang når du planlægger at gå på pension efter et langt liv i guitars tjeneste?*

Jeg har ingen planer om at gå på pension. At undervise er desuden sin løn værd i sig selv. Mit råd til unge og kommende guitarister er at opsoge de bedst mulige lærere. Forfølg din lidenskab for instrumentet, arbejd med det med størst mulig glæde, dedikation, omhu, med sjæl og med et klart mål. Sæt de standarder, du måler dig med, højt og udvis respekt for guitar-

spillet som en stor kunstart. Grav dybt, udvikl din evne til at lytte, bidrag gerne med noget, som ingen har gjort før, og vær aldrig tilfred med blot at kradse i overfladen.

Jeg kunne i den forbindelse tænke mig at nævne min dokumentar, der har fået titlen "Sharon Isbin: Troubadour". Den varer en time og findes på såvel DVD, Blu-ray, streaming og som download. Den er blevet vist rigtigt mange steder og indeholder bag-scenerne optagelser af mit samarbejde med andre, koncertklip og undervisningssituationer. Formålet er ud over at underholde også at give den kommende guitarist meningsfulde idéer og hints til, hvilke veje, man kan gå.

*23. Er der en chance for, at vi kan komme til at se og høre dig spille i Skandinavien engang i den ikke alt for fjerne fremtid?*

Jeg har aldrig besøgt Danmark. I betragtning af landets skønhed og fornemme eksempel som foregangsland for humanitet og medmenneskelighed i forrige århundrede, ville det bestemt være af interesse for mig. ■

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Her sætter redaktionen på GUITAREN punktum for et særdeles omfattende og uhyre læseværdigt interview med en af den klassiske guitars helt store skikkeler. Vi er Sharon Isbin overmåde taknemmelige, fordi hun har afsat så megen tid og mange kræfter til glæde for Dansk Guitar Selskabs læsere. Vi kan kun opfordre vore medlemmer til at følge i hendes fodspor og gøre hendes eksempel til deres eget.

For more than 40 years American classical guitarist Sharon Isbin has worked tirelessly to promote the classical guitar and strengthen the instrument's role in music.

She has taught students extensively, given concerts and held master classes all over the world, given dozens of interviews, made TV appearances, and written articles and books to direct people's attention on the wonderful world of the guitar.

In addition, she has recorded a large number of albums and CDs featuring a wide variety of guitar music that have been met with admiration and praise.

Now she has released no less than 3 albums in less than a year, among them her collaboration with Chris Brubeck entitled "Affinity", which is awaited with excitement by her many friends and admirers all over the world.

By now her place as the uncrowned queen of the classical guitar is assured and undisputed.

*1. Miss Isbin, can you tell us how old you were and a little about what it was in particular that drew your attention to the classical guitar as your instrument of choice?*

When I was nine years old, our family moved to Italy for a year for my father's scientific work. Shortly after arriving, my older brother asked to take guitar lessons. My parents found a wonderful teacher in Aldo Minella, who had studied with Segovia and was concertizing in Europe. But my brother's fantasy was to be the next Elvis, so he turned down the offer! My parents thought this was an opportunity not to be missed, so I volunteered to take his place, knowing nothing about classical guitar but believing it would be more fun than continuing with piano lessons.

When we returned to Minneapolis, I became passionate about building model rockets. My father used to bribe me to practice by saying I couldn't launch them until putting in an hour on the guitar. At fourteen, I won a competition to perform as soloist with the Minnesota Orchestra for 10,000 people. It was even more exciting than sending my worms and grasshoppers into space, so overnight, I switched gears and decided to become a guitarist.

*2. We know that you travelled to Italy as a very young person to receive guitar instruction. Was it necessary to travel all the way to Europe to obtain proper teaching?*

No, but it never would have happened had we stayed in Minneapolis where I was growing up. My brother would have learned rock guitar, and I would have become a scientist.

*3. A lovely picture shows you playing with the great Venezuelan guitarist Alirio Diaz. What was it like to be taught by him?*

I studied with Alirio Diaz one summer when I

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was fifteen at a festival in the Canadian Rockies. He introduced me to Latin American music which I fell in love with and which became an important part of my repertoire. He loved to play for all the students, I can still remember his joyous interpretations of Lauro, Sainz de la Maza, Albeniz...

*4. You were once briefly studying guitar with the great Don Andrés Segovia. Different people have given very different opinions of this venerable Spaniard. What was your impression of him as a teacher and as a person?*

I was fortunate to have several private lessons with Segovia starting at age fourteen. What made the biggest impression was hearing his gorgeous tone inches away as he would demonstrate on the guitar, a sound I wanted to emulate. He was generous with his time and respectful. At our final lesson, I had as usual prepared music written for and arranged by him, but didn't expect he would say after each: "That's lovely, play something else!" After an hour, I'd run out of music, and neither Bach nor contemporary music was the way to go. So I played *Julia Florida*, even though he reputedly had an animosity towards Barrios, but thinking it could be safe if I didn't mention the name. When finished, he exclaimed, "That's so beautiful! What was it?" After telling him, he retorted: "Ah Barrios, he could never compose, always a little bit of this and a little bit of that!" and the lesson ended right there!

*5. In the 1960s and early 70s, when you were an undergraduate student, there were not many professional female guitarists around. Did you find it strange – or even difficult – to study and perform in a man's guitar world at the time?*

I was in college in the late 70's, and most of my battles up until then as a teenager had been to successfully convince student music competitions to allow me to enter as a guitarist. I studied for five summers with Oscar Ghiglia at the Aspen Music Festival, and served as his teaching assistant one year when 50 students

showed up and only two of us were girls! I learned early on that it was important to work hard to become the best player I could be so that the focus of others would be on music, not gender or instrument. When I began as a child in Italy, it was normal for girls as well as boys to study classical guitar.

As a professional, I was focused on convincing composers, orchestras and concert series of the value, depth and beauty of the guitar, and I broke down many barriers to create new opportunities, audiences, repertoire, and respect for the instrument. Of the over 200 orchestras with which I've been a soloist, many had either never performed with guitar before or had only done so once or twice in their history.

*6. Today, a great number of wonderful female performers entertain audiences throughout all our continents. How do you explain this sudden growth of great, female talent in recent years?*

It's not sudden, it's been gradually evolving over time! As more female performers and teachers have emerged as role models, more young girls are inspired and encouraged to study, and growth becomes exponential.

*7. Two of your recordings from the 1980s – "Brazil with Love" and "Rhapsody in Blue/West Side Story" – were duet LPs with the great South American guitarist Carlos Barbosa-Lima. What was it that made you interested in joining forces with him?*

I was introduced to Carlos at age fourteen by Sophocles Papas, a friend of Segovia and mentor to us both. We became great friends when I moved to New York City after college. He's a brilliant arranger, and it was a joy to collaborate when he suggested the idea of playing and recording music he would arrange for us. We worked together with Brazil's legendary Tom Jobim in preparing our recording of his music, and even opened shows for Jobim at New York's Lincoln Center.

*8. Although by now many guitar pieces have been dedicated to you personally, I'm sure you must have*

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*been very proud when Leo Brouwer wrote his "El Decameron Negro" especially with you in mind. A comment on that great event?*

It was a gift that arrived unexpectedly one day in the mail! We had met at the first Toronto guitar festival after I won the competition, and where it was a revelation to hear him perform his extraordinary music. I began to learn and record whatever of his was available. A few years later, to my surprise and delight, he wrote *El Decameron Negro* for me, a work inspired by love stories collected in Africa by a 19th century German ethnologist. Studying it with Leo was revelatory, and though I had made the first recording, it was wonderful to have the opportunity to record it again, after years of performing and living with the music, on my album *Affinity* released last summer.

*9. You have expressed a particular interest in the folk music wave of the late 1950s and early 60s as an inspiration for your own music. I'm thinking of artists such as Elizabeth Cotten, Joan Baez, the Weavers, and others. What was it about that sound that led you to listen to the folk music of overseas nations like Israel, Greece, Cuba, South America, Ireland, and Spain?*

Joan Baez became my favorite folk musician in college after hearing her beautiful recordings. I never imagined we'd meet or perform together, but that dream came true in the album *Journey to the New World* (Sony), which included the second work John Duarte wrote for me, his *Joan Baez Suite* for solo guitar, based on songs she made famous in the early part of her career. When Baez heard the Suite, she offered to sing on the album. My edition of the score will finally be published in January 2021 by Mel Bay Publications!

I've always been drawn to the immediacy, heartfelt emotion and storytelling of folk music. *Dreams of a World* reflects folk-inspired traditions from the countries you mentioned, and includes several world premiere recordings, the centerpiece of which is Duarte's first work for me, *Appalachian Dreams* based on songs from

rural mountain communities in the eastern US. The album is available on a collection of CDs called *Sharon Isbin: 5 Classic Albums* (Warner Classics), distributed on Amazon and other retailers.

*10. My personal favorite Isbin CD is "Dreams of a World" from 1999, for which you very deservedly earned a Grammy. Would you say that this "hit" record opened many more new doors in your career?*

Thanks! That first Grammy experience was an exciting, surreal moment, and the first time in 28 years that a Grammy was awarded to a classical guitarist. It broke open many doors, both for me and the guitar. A second, along with Germany's Echo Klassik, followed the year after for *Concert de Gaudi*, which Christopher Rouse wrote for me, a beautiful concerto inspired by Barcelona's renowned architect. A third came in 2010 for *Journey to the New World*.

*11. On "Dreams of a World" you have included your version of Naomi Shemer's "Yerushala'im shel zahav". Many years ago my sister conducted a choir in Copenhagen singing for a Jewish audience, and it struck me that many people were extremely moved and some even shed a tear or two. Can you explain the strong emotional impact of this tune?*

Shemer's song was celebrated in Israel in 1967 like a second national anthem. It reflects a yearning for Jerusalem and joy in its reunification. But even listeners who know nothing about the context are moved to hear it because the melody has such beauty and magic. When I decided to arrange a medley of four songs by Shemer, I sent the score and a recording to her to see if she approved or would want any changes. To my delight when we spoke, she said she loved it.

It was one of the pieces I performed at the first 9/11 memorial in 2002 at Ground Zero in New York City for 40,000 family members and survivors, who had gathered for the reading of the names of the nearly 3,000 who perished, broadcast on television networks throughout the world. Many held up posters of their lost

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loved ones, it was a powerful, transformative experience, one I will never forget. Being part of that global healing process came to define for me what it meant to be a musician. For the next year, after every concert, I played the Shemer song as an encore referencing the memorial. Each night, people would come up to me saying they'd lost a brother, sister, parent, cousin, or best friend in the attack, and shared their appreciation for how much the music and acknowledgement meant to them.

*12. "Dreams..." and "Journey to the Amazon" reveal you as a very keen physical and musical traveller. Are you still as eager today as you used to be to go explore places in a world affected by dangers like diseases, terrorism, and natural disasters?*

Well, sadly we're in the middle of that horror right now. I feel tremendous gratitude to have performed in over 40 countries, with many amazing experiences. To have seen magnificent wild animals in the Galapagos Islands, rain forests of the Brazilian Amazon, Ecuador and Costa Rica. But it's unrealistic to imagine getting on airplane now to go anywhere until the pandemic is over and the virus is under control, especially in the United States where hospitalization and death rates are skyrocketing. It never had to happen. If all people wore N95 masks in public, it would be over. But too many people rarely consider their own health, let alone that of others. I've been wearing an N95 mask on every airplane and train for eighteen years since the SARS 1 outbreak, because it made sense. Since then, I never again got sick from a flight. Not once, after over a thousand flights! Not even while seat mates were coughing up their lungs. Good masks worn properly work!

*13. Later on you decided to make an extra effort to promote the works of fairly young and unknown composers. I'm thinking of Lukas Foss, Christopher Rouse and Tan Dun. What brought you to that decision?*

I was a teenager when the first composer I ap-

proached, Ami Maayani, agreed to write a concerto for me. After premiering it with the Minnesota Orchestra, I was inspired to take up the exhilarating challenge of creating exciting new repertoire from an array of great composers of different styles, genres and global perspectives. There was a paucity of works for guitar and orchestra, so the need was genuine. I've now premiered over 80 works composed for me, of which thirteen are for guitar and orchestra. My recordings of concerti by Brubeck, Corigliano, Foss, Schwantner, Kernis, Rouse, Tan Dun are all available on CD and digitally.

*14. You have recorded baroque music (Bach, Vivaldi) on several records. Would you say there is still room for new interpretations of the works of these 300-year-old masters?*

Up through the late 70's, little attention was paid to baroque performance practice on the guitar. So I embarked on a ten-year period of study with the great Bach scholar and keyboard artist, Rosalyn Tureck. Together we created the first performance editions for guitar of Bach's four lute suites using historical sources, all of which I recorded, and two of which we published for G. Schirmer (BWV996 and BWV997). The editions employ contrapuntal fingering, embellishment, articulation, phrasing and dynamics as they relate to musical structure and historical practices. It was revolutionary at the time, and still elusive for many players.

*15. In September of 1989 you recorded Rodrigo's great "Concierto de Aranjuez" with the Orchestra de chambre de Lausanne. Then in June 2004 you re-recorded the concert with the New York Philharmonic. How had conditions changed in the 15 year interval so that the new recording would be a challenge again for you?*

Life and experience offer an opportunity to grow and change. With the New York Philharmonic project, I had the opportunity to make my first recording of the Ponce and Villa-Lobos concerti, and to adjust balances in the mix. It was also a great honor to become the only

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guitar soloist in their storied history of over two thousand albums.

16. Your book "*The Classical Guitar Answer Book*" has been a bestseller for many years. Have you ever considered publishing a new and revised edition?

It actually is a second and revised edition, but that was a while ago. It would definitely make sense to update the appendices. You can view the table of contents in the Publications tab on my website, [www.sharonisbin.com](http://www.sharonisbin.com)

16. *The Warner Classics release "Artist Portrait" portrays you as an extremely versatile performer. Here you have found room for everybody from Albinoni and Bach to Laurindo Almeida, Thiago de Mello, and John Jacob Niles. Even romantics get their fair share of space here; I'm thinking of Martini's "Plaisir d'Amour" and Schubert's "Ständchen". Are you saying that the guitar is a suitable instrument for all kinds of music?*

*Artist Portrait* is a compilation of excerpts from several different albums, thus the varied flavors. Guitar goes brilliantly with voice, whether Schubert, folk, rock, country, pop, Latin American or contemporary music. My *Alma Espanola* (2017) with Argentinian/American opera star Isabel Leonard features Spanish music, including twelve world premiere arrangements of mine by García Lorca, Montsalvatge and Lara. She also joins me in the evocative Richard Danielpour song cycle with poetry by Rumi, commissioned for us by Carnegie Hall, and included on my album *Affinity* (2020).

*The Journey to the Amazon* collaboration with Thiago de Mello (also on 5 *Classic Albums*) is my most unusual in that he is an organic percussionist/composer from the Amazon rain forest whose music reflects his colorful background. The handheld instruments he created are exotic and diverse, including toenails of a tapir, dried cocoon shells and a tortoise shell! We performed together for many years -- you can see some examples on my YouTube channel: [www.youtube.com/sharonisbin](http://www.youtube.com/sharonisbin)

17. *To the surprise of many you have agreed to perform with jazz and rock artists from Herb Ellis and Larry Coryell to rock stars (Steve Vai). Without too much reflection you seem like strange bedfellows. What was it that made you want to co-operate, and what were you hoping to achieve when you engaged in these projects?*

When invited to join them, I trusted in our artistic instincts, flexibility and deep appreciation for one another. Steve Vai improvised and wrote music for us to play together, as did Larry Coryell and Laurindo Almeida with whom I shared a trio. More recently, I performed with Sting at Carnegie Hall (that one was my ideal!), and often collaborate with jazz greats Romero Lubambo and Stanley Jordan. If there is an inner, organic goal that's not contrived and comes from a place of love, beauty, and respect for others, one can find a way to make it work. You can hear some of these collaborations and more on the album *Sharon Isbin & Friends: Guitar Passions* (Sony).

18. *On some of your most recent recordings you support singers, e.g. mezzo-soprano Susanne Mentzer, and you have invited guests on board, I'm thinking of violinist Mark O'Connor and singer Joan Baez as guests. And you all perform back to back with Dowland's lute works and old traditional British songs. Does that mean that by now you have completely left behind the works of Sor, Giuliani, Carulli, and Tárrega?*

I still love to play Tárrega, but long ago stopped playing Sor, Giuliani and Carulli, which were relevant in my early years. The Dowland, British songs, Baez and O'Connor you mention from *Journey to the New World* is an exploration of folk music from the British Isles, traveling from the Renaissance, through 17th and 18th century Ireland and Scotland, crossing the ocean with immigrants and their dreams to what then evolved into folk music of the New World. It ends with the wonderful suite for guitar and violin which country fiddle master Mark O'Connor wrote for us, bringing together folk



Guitar Passions with Steve Vai. Photo: Afshin Javadi.



With Tan Dun. Photo: Rob Fortunato.

origins and genres from jigs to blues, ragtime, swing up to the start of bluegrass.

Tradition, however, was at the forefront of the album I made and released in 2019 with the brilliant Pacifica Quartet, *Souvenirs of Spain & Italy*. It features music we'd been performing together for the last several years: the Castelnuovo-Tedesco Quintet, Boccherini "Fandango" Quintet in D Major, and Vivaldi Concerto in D Major RV9. Three months before recording, I was fortunate to discover that Castelnuovo-Tedesco's granddaughter lived in New York and was a neighbor of mine! When we met, she shared fascinating stories about Mario and gave me a copy of his handwritten manuscript to the Quintet, a treasure for us all to consult since nearly every measure has dynamic markings. This connection made me feel very inspired and close to the music, as if Mario, with his radiant smile, were there guiding the process.

19. Finally, tell us a bit about your latest offerings *The Indian Ragas* and your collaboration with Chris Brubeck on "Affinity". How did that come about?

I'm excited about two world premiere recordings of music composed for me that were released in the summer of 2020 on ZOHO, *Affinity* and *Strings for Peace*. *Affinity* is a world embrace by composers from three continents, with the

centerpiece a dazzling guitar concerto by Chris Brubeck by the same title, replete with virtuosic jazz and Middle Eastern influences, and a beautiful ballad by his father Dave Brubeck whose centennial was celebrated in December 2020. In addition to the Brouwer and Danielpour, the album includes Tan Dun's stunning *Seven Desires for Guitar* in which the guitar "desires" to be a pipa, combining elements of Chinese folk music and ritual with the tradition of Spanish guitar. In Lauro's *Natalia*, I play a two-guitar version arranged by my former student Colin Davin. Years ago in Caracas, I had the opportunity to play the waltz joined by Natalia, Lauro's daughter after whom the piece is named, as she spontaneously improvised in a Venezuelan folk style on a cuatro. I'd never forgotten that magical experience and suggested to Colin, with whom I'd been playing duet concerts, that he arrange a 2nd guitar part. What he came up with was so creative and brilliant that I invited him to play it with me on the album.

*Strings for Peace* is a soulful collaboration of North Indian classical ragas with the legendary sarod master Amjad Ali Khan, his virtuoso sons Amaan and Ayaan, and Amit Kaythekar on tabla, which we recorded and titled in the spring of 2019 following a tour in India. We could never have imagined that it would be released in the midst of a global pandemic, when

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its heartfelt message of peace and unity would be needed more than ever.

The idea began eleven years ago when Amjad wrote to me suggesting a collaboration. What evolved instead was a beautiful friendship as he sought the right partner to notate and arrange the music. Suddenly one day in November 2018, all these ragas began appearing in my Inbox! They were so beautiful. Ayaan said good because they had booked a tour of India to do with me – Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata – in two months! It was nuts, but I was so moved by the music and our friendship that I moved mountains to make this possible. It was my first visit to India, and a wonderful experience throughout.

*20. Sometimes it seems as if the classical guitar community is living in a sort of bubble in a surrounding world plagued by tremendous problems and dangers: global warming, racial conflict, refugees from strife and civil war. Should the guitar world, as you see it, address these issues, or are we better off concentrating on our music and bringing its qualities to new audiences?*

Artists are citizens, and as such, it is everyone's duty to speak up against injustice, prejudice, corruption, environment destruction and fascism. That's why if you look at my [www.twitter.com/sharonisbin](http://www.twitter.com/sharonisbin) you'll see many posts raging against the horrid four-year nightmare of Trump and his GOP enablers which thankfully will finally end on January 20, 2021. On [www.facebook.com/sharonisbin](http://www.facebook.com/sharonisbin) and [www.instagram.com/realsharonisbin](http://www.instagram.com/realsharonisbin) my focus is music, but does include a photo of me in October bedecked in hazmat after standing in line with hundreds on Broadway for four hours to vote early for Biden/Harris, our great hope for the future.

*21. Over the years you have achieved almost the impossible. You have been in charge of the guitar department at the Juilliard School of Music for many years. You have visited more than 50 countries, performed at the White House and all the*

*most prestigious concert halls. Is there anything left for you to explore or achieve?*

There are some composer commissions and collaborations in the pipeline. Among the projects I was to perform this season, were two Strings for Peace tours with the Khans, now postponed until next season. I look forward to doing all whenever it becomes possible again.

*22. What kind of heritage would you like to pass on to a younger generation when once you decide to retire from active guitar life?*

I don't see retiring, as teaching can always be active. My advice is to seek out the best teachers, follow your passion, work with joy, dedication, diligence, soul, purpose, and the highest standards and respect for the art. Dig deep, listen acutely, contribute something no one has done before, and never be satisfied with surface. I recommend watching *Sharon Isbin: Troubadour*, an inspirational one-hour documentary that has aired on television throughout the world, and which is available on DVD, Blu-ray, streaming and download. It presents behind-the-scenes views of collaborations, performances, teaching and interactions that resonate with meaning, and which are entertaining as well.

*23. Is there a chance that we might see and hear you play in Scandinavia in the not too distant future?*

I've never been to Denmark. Given the country's beauty, and stellar example of humanity in the last century, it would certainly be of interest. ■