



Guitar Lily Afshar



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Complete artist information including video, audio and interviews are available at www.pricerubin.com

Lily Afshar – Biography

An extraordinary artist, Lily Afshar has grounded her career on a strong foundation of excellent formal education, upon which she has built an exceptional record of innovative achievements. With a bachelor's degree from The Boston Conservatory, she earned her Master of Music at The New England Conservatory and went on to study at Florida State University, where she became the first woman in the world to be awarded the degree of Doctor of Music in guitar performance. She pursued greater proficiency with summer studies at the Banff Centre for Fine Arts and the Aspen Music Festival, advanced training at Gargnano, Italy, the Accademia Musicale Chigiana in Siena, and master classes with Andrés Segovia at the University of Southern California.

Since becoming a tenured professor and head of the guitar program at the University of Memphis Rudi E. Scheidt School of Music, Afshar has received the 2000 Eminent Faculty Award, and in 2011 she was honored with the Distinguished Alumni Award from The Boston Conservatory. She conducts master classes worldwide and has released six instructional DVD's "Classical Guitar Secrets", Vols. I & II for beginner to Intermediate guitarists, and six instructional DVD's "Classical Guitar Collection", Vols. I & II for Intermediate to Advanced guitarists. Both are released with Guitarcontrol.com. She also produced a DVD entitled "Virtuoso Guitar" featuring live performances and an interview with Mel Bay. As a performing guitarist, she has won a top prize in the Guitar Foundation of America Competition, Grand Prize in the Aspen Music Festival Guitar Competition, the Orville H. Gibson Award for Best Female Classical Guitarist, and a National Endowment for the Arts Recording Award, among others, and she was chosen as an "Artistic Ambassador" to Africa for the United States Information Agency.

With her passion for going beyond the traditional guitar repertoire, contemporary classical composers have sought after her for creative collaborations resulting in notable world premieres, including works by Carlo Domeniconi, John Baur, Reza Vali, Garry Eister, Gerard Drozd, Loris Chobanian, Arne Mellnas, Kamran Ince, Barbara Kolb, Marilyn

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Lily Afshar – Biography

Ziffrin, David Kechley, and Salvador Brotons. Most of these can be heard on her seven CDs. Her first recording, “24 Caprichos de Goya, Op. 195” (1994) composed by Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco led her to develop a unique multimedia concert combining performance and commentary along with a visual presentation of Francisco Goya’s satirical black and white etchings which inspired the guitar pieces. She still receives special requests to present this unique program today.

Her second recording, “A Jug of Wine and Thou,” (1999) was inspired by the famous Poem of Omar Khayyam and features arrangements of Persian melodies. Afshar was now attracting the interest of international composers and her third and fourth recordings, “Possession” (2002) and “Hemispheres” (2006) feature a combined total of eight world premieres. “Hemispheres” reached No. 7 on Billboard Magazine’s Chart of Top Classical Albums in 2006 and attracted the attention of National Public Radio’s Robert Siegel, who featured Afshar on “All Things Considered.” Next came “One Thousand and One Nights,” (2012) which was recorded and released in Iran. Her sixth album and chamber recording, “Musica da Camera” (2013), featured a world premiere by Russian composer Vladislav Uspensky in addition to compositions by Niccolò Paganini and Astor Piazzolla. Her latest album, “Bach on Fire” (2014), highlights a completely unique and intricate approach to J.S. Bach’s guitar compositions. The arrangements on the album were taken from her book with Mel Bay’s Essential Bach: Arranged for the Guitar by Lily Afshar.

Afshar's Persian heritage has given rise to some of her greatest musical innovations. Born in Iran to a musical family, she has drawn from Persian and Azerbaijani folk music traditions to create arrangements of works for the classical guitar which are as rich and beautiful as a Persian miniature. She arranged for guitar and published Five Popular Persian Ballads with Mel Bay, and is presently creating a new collection of guitar arrangements of traditional Persian and Azerbaijani songs. She has also fascinated concert goers with occasional live performance on the sehtar, a traditional Persian instrument which evolved over many centuries into the guitar.

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A true citizen of the world, Afshar’s concert touring has taken her to solo, chamber music, and orchestral performance venues in North and South America, Europe, Asia, and Africa. From Wigmore Hall in London to the Kennedy Center for Performing Arts in Washington, she has played before a wide range of audiences and learned to bridge gaps of culture and distance through her music.

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Lily Afshar – Reviews

AMERICAN RECORD GUIDE
SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2007
HEMISPHERES

From the opening quarter-tonal string bends of "Kara Toprak" by Turkish composer Asik Veysel, classical guitarist Lily Afshar strikes the best balance yet between heritage and innovation on this new album. An Iranian artist with one ear on Near and Middle Eastern culture and one on strong, distinctive new works for the classical guitar, Afshar has built a career out of interesting sideways and detours for her instrument's literature that now feel like important corridors.

Her 1994 recorded debut was an impressive performance of Castelnuovo-Tedesco's "24 Caprichos de Goya," not the most recorded guitar work by the cheery Italian neo-classicist but in her hands probably one of the best. Her second album (1999-also on the Summit label), "A Jug of Wine and Thou," is worth seeking for her rousing rendition of Domeniconi's Turkish-inspired guitar suite "Koyunbaba."

Archer Records is based in Memphis, where she heads the University of Memphis guitar department. Her debut for Archer, "Possession" (2002), mixed a number of commissions and arrangements into a heady contemporary package that remains her most adventurous outing. This follow-up continues to explore modern guitar repertoire but in a much more lyrical frame. Among the premiers (and high points) are Persian composer Reza Vali's "Gozaar" (Calligraphy No. 5), a sonorous, contemplative work based on an ancient Persian modal system and written for Afshar, who had special "fretlets" installed on her guitar to accommodate the piece's microtonal nuances. The heart of the record is the double serving of "Fantasia on a Traditional Persian Song," written by Garry Eister for Afshar, followed by the song it was based on, "Morgh-eh-Sahar" (Bird of Dawn) which she strums convincingly on the traditional Persian setar, a breath of fresh folk-like air that joyfully breaks the contemporary spell for a few minutes yet lends itself wonderfully to the rest of the program's exotic flavor. Afshar's technical facility gets better all the time and matches her passion note for note; on "Hemispheres," she is at her most confident, nuanced, and powerful. In fact, she has become as important to the development and

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Lily Afshar – Reviews

execution of modern guitar literature as John Schneider, who dedicates two works to her here, a tender prelude and motive fugato, each built from expressive yet experimental lyricism, which is quickly becoming Afshar's defining trait as well.

-Ellis, American Record Guide

ONE WAY Recommends [Issue #22]

Lily Afshar By Lynne Bronstein

Hemispheres (CD Archer)

Lily Afshar is a Guitar Goddess, but instead of wielding an electric axe, she spins a fine web of music on acoustic guitar. In fact, she's one of the best classical guitarists in the world. On Hemispheres, she displays her talent as she plays compositions mostly based on Persian music traditions (she was born in Iran). As the liner notes explain, Persian music, like its Indian cousin, raga, uses a unique modal system, the Dastgah, involving quarter tones, set between the sharp and flat notes on the chromatic scale. "Gozaar," by Persian composer Reza Vali, uses this system and Afshar renders it, musical tightrope that it is. She also plays a powerful version of guitar maven John Schneider's "Prelude" and "Fugue." On "Morgheh-Sahar" ("Bird of Dawn") she plays the Persian seh-tar, which looks like a small sitar and sounds like a dulcimer. The album concludes with "Missionera," a bristling Argentine folk tune. Lily Afshar's playing will amaze and dazzle listeners. But one doesn't have to be a guitar geek to enjoy this tour of her musical world.

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Lily Afshar
UTNE Reader 2006
Hemispheres

Tehran-born Lily Afshar is a whoosh of fresh air in the sometimes fusty classical guitar world, playing her cedar-topped instrument in unconventional tunings and with palpable passion. On *Hemispheres*, she nods to her Middle Eastern heritage with a fresh, buoyant arrangement of a Turkish folk song and a hypnotic piece based on traditional Persian modal music. But she also plays new works by European, North American, and Latin American composers and arrangers, and the result is a panglobal, consistently gorgeous recording whose appeal will extend beyond the conservatory crowd to many fans of ethnic and acoustic music. By the time she picks up a traditional Persian instrument, the *Sehtar*, to deliver the entrancing “*Morgh-eh-Sahar*” (“*Bird of Dawn*”), listeners may have a new guitar heroine.

Keith Goetzman

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PERFORMING ARTS

Lily Afshar

Guitarist Lily Afshar has the requisite array of prize-winning credits young musicians incorporate into their résumés in hopes of establishing long, prosperous careers. On the strength of her recital Sunday afternoon at the Phillips Collection, she not only lived up to the past, but gave convincing evidence that a bright future is there for the taking. The program she chose for her Washington debut was a balanced mix of well-trodden and unfamiliar pieces spanning the

guitar literature from Bach to Brotons. Afshar addressed them all with equal care. Her playing showed remarkable consistency in terms of musicality, technical finesse and thoughtfulness, a combination that escapes many performers except on the best nights.

Afshar was in top form from the start, for she needed little time to warm to the demands of Sor's Introduction and Variations on a Theme from "The Magic Flute." Impeccable execution marked her reading of Bach's Prelude, Fugue and Allegro, BWV 998, as well as contemporary Spanish composer Salvador Brotons's "Two Suggestions," whose dissonant chordal settings offered substantial challenges roundly met.

She exposed the guitar's more colorful side after intermission. The second movement of Castelnuovo-Tedesco's "Caprichos de Goya" may be translated as "The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters." After deftly ushering the chaconne through a dark, winding maze, Afshar resolved matters quickly. Slumber of a more tranquil nature reappeared later in her encore "Persian Lullaby," a fitting close to an auspicious debut.

—Charles McCardell

The Washington Post

Style / Arts

MONDAY, JANUARY 13, 1997 D7

CLASSICAL MUSIC

Lily Afshar

The classical guitar has a devoted following that responds with rapt stillness to the intimacy inherent in fine guitar performance, but rarely is the music itself of particular interest. Iranian guitarist Lily Afshar's program at the Chevy Chase Women's Club on Friday was an exception. She is a specialist in music that Castelnuovo-Tedesco wrote on fantastical etchings by Goya, and the five works she brought to this program (along with slides of Goya's pictures) were wonderfully inventive, witty and sophisticated.

Afshar has the delicate touch and the keen concentration that characterizes the best guitarists, and she also has the musical sense and restraint that characterizes only a few. She didn't distort rhythms, a common bad habit of guitarists, and she didn't mess around with portamentos, another bad habit that guitarists seem to find almost irresistible. What she did display was a splendid command of a broad palette of tone colors, a lovely sense of line, a good ear for balance and, in her remarks, a scholarly

bent that informed the entire program.

The concert opened with the requisite selections by Granados and Albeniz and some very nice unfamiliar short works by Bogdanovic and Domeniconi. —Joan Reinthaler

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THE ARTS

OVERFLOWING: *Guitarist's power pours through*

By Robert Workmon
JOURNAL ARTS REPORTER

■ **A Jug of Wine and Thou.** *Guitarist Lily Afshar performs her arrangement of Five Popular Persian Ballads, and works by Carlo Domeniconi, Barrios, Albeniz, Ponce, Granados and more.* Summit Records DCD 236. ★ ★ ★ ½ (out of four).



Guitarist Lily Afshar's playing is as inviting as the title of this recording of solo guitar repertoire. The title, *A Jug of Wine and Thou*, comes from the most famous poem by Omar Khayyam, a Persian astronomer and philosopher.

About half of the program Afshar played in a recital in Winston-Salem in February is available on this Summit Records compact disc.

Afshar plays transcriptions of piano music by Isaac Albeniz and Enrique Granados; rarely heard works by Reggino Sainz de la Maza, Benito Canonic and Jorge Morel; and idiomatic guitar works by Francisco Tarrega, Augustin Barrios Mangore, Carlo Domeniconi, and Afshar's arrangement of *Five Popular Persian Ballads*.

Afshar said, in an interview before her Winston-Salem performance, that the love songs and lullabies used in the *Persian Ballads* are well-known throughout her native Iran.

In this performance, she taps into the music's delicately layered emotions. She gently



Classical Discs

ly exploring Domeniconi's evocative catalog of tonal color, harmonic texture and modal melody.

Afshar's technical brilliance is also on display in such playful works as Barrios' Chopinesque Waltz, Op. 8, No. 4, Canonico's "Arie de Joropo" and Morel's "Jugeuteando."

Her performance of Albeniz's "Asturias-Leyenda" is intensity itself. And the sensuousness of Granados' "Andaluza," Albeniz's Tango, Op. 165, No. 2, and de la Maza's "Petenera," is palpable in exquisitely shaped phrases.

Ultimately, Afshar communicates as effectively in the recording studio as she does on a concert platform, and that's remarkable.

rocks the lullaby ballad "Lala-ee," which is one of the suite's highlights.

Domeniconi's *Koyun-baba*, or *Shepherd*, also draws inspiration from the Middle East. He taught music in Istanbul, Turkey, for about three years. Afshar's affinity for this suite stands out. She makes the most of its wide range of effects and nuance, expertly

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Classical Guitar Magazine Reviews Musica da Camera

MUSICA DA CAMERA BY LILY AFSHAR

ARCHER RECORDS

Memphis-based Lily Afshar could never be accused of flooding the CD market. If I've done my sums correctly, this is only her sixth release over a period of two decades. But in terms of quality control, Afshar maintains the highest standards, always generating upmarket fare and often with a sizeable dose of original thought. So it is with what's billed as her first chamber music offering, in which a world premiere is fielded alongside high octane revivals of familiar Paganini and what was once too familiar Piazzolla.

Composed in 1990 but reportedly unrecorded until now, Vladislav Uspensky's eight movements for guitar and chamber ensemble could work well as the incidental music for a stage adaptation of Pushkin's tale of lost love. Using an octet comprising guitar, clarinet, stings and percussion, the combined factors of the instrumentation and thematic material that apparently recalls the popular theatre of the day give the proceedings something of a *Threepenny Opera* quality. This presumably wasn't part of the plan, but no harm done. All's well on the performance front, although it has to be noted that the sound capture of Afshar's guitar has a distinctly 'amplified' feel. This is most noticeable in Uspensky's third movement, which is an unaccompanied solo. In the work as a whole, it has the benefit of bringing the guitar further forward in the mix but also diminishes the warmth of tone I know Afshar to be capable of achieving on stage.

According to Afshar's notes, *Op.61* is a one-off among Paganini's works for guitar and violin in that 'both parts are equally balanced technically and musically'. That's certainly how it comes across in the elegant account presented here, in which Afshar is joined by violinist Tim Shiu, who is also part of the team for the Uspensky.

And so to Astor Piazzolla, whose legacy I've often given short shrift in the past. With hindsight, the problem wasn't so much the music as the absurdly elevated status it enjoyed among guitarists, especially during the 1990s. Now that sanity has been restored. It's easier to recognize the positive qualities that, despite the composer's often narrow formula, were always present. So it is with the

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Lily Afshar – Reviews

dynamic interpretation Afshar delivers in the company of Joy Wiener, a live recording that fits in well with all that goes before.

A first-class addition to the Afshar catalogue that was, as always, well worth the wait.

by Paul Fowles, Classical Guitar Magazine

– March 2014

Lily Afshar at the Wigmore

Lily Afshar's Guitar recital at the Wigmore Hall on 18 March provided an extremely well thought-out and fresh sense of programming, illustrating many different sides of her impressive talents on this instrument. Her relaxed, attractive stage manner, her searching and sensitive musicianship and her ability to draw the listeners onto the edge of their seats, were all backed up by a thorough knowledge of the tonal capabilities of her instrument and a frankly awesome digital technique.

Three interlinking musical threads ran throughout the recital, marking her connections with her native Tehran and her adopted America, and her instrument's strong links with Spain. Two World Premieres were aired, one by Iranian-born Reza Vali, a piece entitled Gozaar, requiring retuning of the Guitar to include quartertones of the Persian modal system, the other by American Gary Eister, his Fantasia on a Traditional Persian Song, a version of which was first played by Lily on the traditional seh-tar. Eister's piece sought to recreate the spirit of the seh-tar on the modern guitar through its use of ornaments, drones and unusual tuning methods.

Other works included transcriptions of Isaac Albeniz's Sevilla, originally for piano, and the London Premiere of Kamran Ince's MKG Variations, originally for cello. Carlo Domeniconi's Koyunbaba Opus 19, Dusan Bogdanovic's Omar's Fantasy, Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco's 24 Caprichos de Goya Opus 195 and Joaquin Rodrigo's Invocation et Danse were all performed with a naturalness and acute awareness of minute timbral variations.

Lily Afshar's non-static style of performing, always on the search for new sounds and musical shadings, make her an outstanding guitarist.

– Manus Carey

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Lily Afshar

Friday, March 18, 2005 Wigmore Hall, London

Reviewed by William Yeoman

Although born in Tehran, Lily Afshar studied in the US, where she is now Head of the Memphis University Guitar Course. This recital nevertheless had a distinct Middle-Eastern flavour, with many of the pieces not only influenced by Turkish and Persian music but written by Iranian composers. And because of the Moorish influence on Spanish culture (and by extension Latin America), pieces by Leo Brouwer, Rodrigo and Albéniz were seamlessly integrated into the programme.

Afshar's fluent technique boasts a seamless legato, strong projection, rhythmic precision and a broad tonal palette, all tempered by a free, improvisatory style which suited much of the featured material. Cuban composer Leo Brouwer's *Un día de Noviembre* (A Day in November), written for a film by Humberto Solaz, is simple, tuneful and descriptive, and Afshar performed it in a clear and direct manner; the following *Gozaar* by Vali provided a perfect contrast, utilizing flowing Persian modal material punctuated by rich strummed chords (and here Afshar made use of the extra frets inserted into the fretboard of her guitar in order to play the quarter-tones required by the modes). Domeniconi's *Koyunbaba* (meaning shepherd; also a bay in the Aegean), is different again: influenced by Turkish folk-music and using a C sharp minor tuning, this popular four-movement piece features lavishly ornamented melodies contrasted with virtuoso toccata-like passages. Here the playing was most impressive and necessitating a gear-change in the form of Afshar taking up a traditional Persian instrument, the *seh-tar* (a small gourd-like instrument with a long neck and four strings), to perform Neudavood's *Morgh-eh-Sahar* (Bird of Dawn). This was a beautiful performance, the *seh-tar* resonating to strums and tremolo as a sinuous melody sang out over a drone. American Garry Eister's *Fantasia on a Traditional Persian Song for guitar* takes up the thread of Neudavood's exotic (to our ears!) soundworld and gives it a traveller's gloss; Afshar performed it with the same ear for modal textures and flexible rhythms.

Following the interval came Kamran Ince's dramatic *MKG Variations* (the initials refer to the original dedicatee) for solo cello, performed in Afshar's own arrangement, and Dusan Bogdanovic's *Omar's Fancy*. Looking both to the music

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Lily Afshar – Reviews

of Turkey and JS Bach, both pieces explore a range of moods which Ashfar used to summarise the guitar's expressive capabilities and make way for the richer, more romantic world of Castelnuovo-Tedesco's *El Sueno de la Razon Produce Monstruos* (The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters) and *Quien Mas Rendido* (Who is the more Devoted?) from *24 Caprichos de Goya*. Based on Goya's etchings, the music has much in common with Granados's *Goyescas* (for solo piano), both in style and sentiment, and therefore provided a link to the last programmed work of this recital, Albéniz's *Sevilla*; but between these came Rodrigo's homage to Falla, *Invocation et Danse*, a piece which features fiery flamenco-like scales, artificial harmonics and fast chord passages and which were despatched with abandon by Afshar. Alberto Gismonti's *Water and Wine* provided a mellow encore.

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Family

Concert review: Guitarist displays virtuosity

By Edward Reichel

Published: Feb. 23, 2008 12:00 a.m.

LILY AFSHAR, Libby Gardner Concert Hall, University of Utah, Thursday

In putting together a program, a guitarist in large part can choose either to play music by Spanish composers or transcriptions of keyboard works.

Lily Afshar chose the former for her recital Thursday night in Libby Gardner Concert Hall. Although there were a couple of transcriptions on her program, as well as a piece by an Italian, Afshar stayed true to the general theme of her concert — presenting an evening of wide-ranging pieces by Spanish and Latin American composers.

The Iranian-born guitarist put her remarkable talent on display Thursday. While she does perform a good deal of contemporary works (and also commissions composers to write for her), Afshar's program consisted of 19th and 20th century lyrical pieces that showcased her amazing musicality and wonderfully nuanced expressive playing.

And in several of the works on the program, the sizable audience in attendance also got an impressive glimpse of her stunning virtuosity. Without any doubt, Afshar ranks in the top among today's classically trained guitarists.

The one non-Spanish composer on the program, Carlo Domeniconi, was represented with a Middle Eastern inspired piece, "Koyunbaba" ("The Shepherd" in Turkish). Domeniconi spends part of his time in Turkey, and the four-movement piece is a delightful blend of Western and Eastern sonorities and harmonies.

The last two movements in particular were wonderfully played, with Afshar bringing out the eloquent lyricism of the third and the restless energy of the fourth. The finale certainly tests the mettle of the guitarist. And Afshar gave a forcefully dynamic performance. Her playing was spectacular in the manner in which she conveyed the movement's hushed intensity and ceaseless drive.

The concert opened and closed with the only transcriptions on the program, both from piano pieces by Isaac Albeniz — the wistful "Mallorca" and the impassioned "Sevilla," one of the composer's most famous works, both of which Afshar played with profound expression.

Perhaps the most evocative piece on Thursday's concert was the "Invocation and Dance" by Joaquin Rodrigo. An homage to Manuel de Falla, who was a close friend of Rodrigo's, the piece incorporates quotes from de Falla's ballet "El Amor Brujo," which lends an air of mystery to the work. And Afshar gave a wonderfully compelling reading that captured the piece's mystique.

Also on the program were sets of South American ballads and dances. Among the composers represented in these pieces, the Cuban-born Leo Brouwer and the Brazilian Egberto Gismonti are probably the best known. Their pieces were played with sensual lyricism by Afshar.

Rounding out the concert was music by Agustin Barrios Mangore and Francisco Tarrega, whose tender "Recuerdos de la Alhambra" was given a gorgeous reading.

Afshar also played a couple of encores — two captivating Persian folk ballads in her own transcription.

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Edward Reichel

ereichel@desnews.com

**Comment
on this
story**



Lily Afshar – Press Excerpts

“A delicious blend of Eastern and Western flavors.”

– Katherine Reese Newton, Salt Lake Tribune

“A first class addition to the Afshar catalogue...in terms of quality control, Afshar maintains the highest standards, always generating upmarket fare and often with a sizeable dose of original thought.”

– Paul Fowles, Classical Guitar Magazine

“Afshar’s fluent technique boasts a seamless legato, strong projection, rhythmic precision and a broad tonal palette, all tempered by a free, improvisatory style”

– William Yeoman, Classical Source

“Draws together the seemingly disparate spheres of classical guitar and world music... An endlessly rewarding release from one of the 21st century guitar's most individual and creative figures...”

– Paul Fowles, Classical Guitar Magazine

“Lily Afshar is a Guitar Goddess...”

– Lynne Bronstein, One Way Magazine

“Remarkable...impeccable”

– Charles McCardell, The Washington Post

“Striking... further proof that there's more to the world of classical guitar writing than the usual Spanish suspects...”

– Sarah Bryan Miller, St. Louis Post Dispatch

“Stunning virtuosity. Without any doubt, Afshar ranks in the top among today's classically trained guitarists...”

By Edward Reichel, Deseret Morning News

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Lily Afshar – Press Excerpts

“Tehran-born Lily Afshar is a whoosh of fresh air in the sometimes fusty classical guitar world...”

– Keith Goetzman, Utne Reader

“The session ended with a superb lecture-recital by Lily Afshar, whose research on Tedesco's Caprichos de Goya has made her a world authority on this neglected work. Dr. Afshar is a prime example of the performing academic- and elite breed of guitarist whose playing is every bit as impressive as her qualifications.”

– Paul Fowles, Classical Guitar Magazine

“This is playing of the highest order and her genuine respect for the music shines through every piece.”

– Steve Marsh, Classical Guitar Magazine

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October 30, 2006

Lily Afshar Interview

by [Tom Watson](#).



Lily Afshar. "She will be a beautiful celebrity" - Andrés Segovia

The career of classical guitarist and educator Lily Afshar can be summed up by the phrase "the world is her oyster". Born (1960) in Tehran, Iran, she emigrated to the United States in 1977 and now lives in Memphis, Tennessee, where she serves as the head of the guitar department of the University of Memphis. In July, 2006, her fourth album, *Hemispheres* (Archer Records), was released and the following month found her giving master classes at the Tehran Conservatory of Music and solo recitals at one of Tehran's premier concert venues, Vahdat Hall.

Four years after her arrival in the United States, Afshar received a Bachelor of Music in Guitar Performance (*cum laude*) from Boston Conservatory. Subsequently, she earned a Master of Music in Guitar Performance (Dean's list) from the New England Conservatory of Music (1984) and a Doctor of Music in Guitar Performance from Florida State University in 1989.

She received Diplomas of Merit (1987, 1988, 1991) from the *Accademia Musicale Chigiana* in Siena, Italy, and studied at both the Banff Centre in Alberta, Canada, and the Aspen Music Festival and School in Aspen, Colorado. In 1986, she was one of 12 international guitarists selected to participate in the Andrés Segovia master class at the University of Southern California (Los Angeles). Segovia predicted, "She will be a beautiful celebrity."

Her concert itinerary is even more global, having performed in North America, South America, Europe, the Middle East, Australia and New Zealand, at venues such as Wigmore Hall (London), CRR Concert Hall (Istanbul, Turkey), the Grand Teton Music Festival (Jackson Hole, Wyoming), the Aspen Music Festival (Aspen, Colorado), the Banff School of Fine Arts (Banff, Alberta, Canada), the Menton Music Festival (Menton, France) the American Academy in Rome (Rome, Italy), and Vahdat Hall (Tehran, Iran).

In 1989, Afshar was appointed the Head of the Guitar Program at the University of Memphis (Memphis, Tennessee) and in 2000 received the University's Eminent Faculty Award. Her tenure with the University of Memphis continues through today.

Awards and recognition include (partial list): the Orville H. Gibson Award for Best Female Classical Guitarist (2000); the Tennessee Arts Commission Individual Artist Fellowship Award in music (1998); receiving the Tenth (1995), Eleventh (1996), and Twelfth (1997) Annual "Premier Guitarist" award from the Memphis Chapter of the National Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences, Inc.; having been chosen as Artistic



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Ambassador to Africa by the United States Information Agency (1995); the National Endowment for the Arts Recording Grant Award (1993); Top Prize in the Guitar Foundation of America International Competition (1988); Grand Prize in the Aspen Music Festival Guitar Competition (1986); and, First Prizes in both the Music Teachers' National Association (1984) and the American String Teachers' Association Guitar Competition (1983).

1994 saw the release of her first CD, *24 Caprichos de Goya, Op. 195* (Summit Records), featuring music written by Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco, and the publication of a related three-part article in *Guitar Review* magazine (GR 79-81). Five years later, Afshar recorded *A Jug of Wine and Thou* (Summit Records, 1999), a mixed program ranging from the contemporary classic "Koyunbaba, Op. 19" by Carlo Domeniconi to five traditional Persian ballads transcribed for the guitar by Afshar (available in standard notation from Mel Bay Publications, Inc.). Her next recording, *Possession* (Archer Records, 2002), includes three world premieres and three pieces written for her. Afshar's latest CD, *Hemispheres* (Archer Records, 2006), also includes three world premieres (plus one U.S. premiere) and three pieces written for her (plus two dedicated to her), and continues her interest in introducing Persian music to Western audiences.

But, presenting Lily Afshar through a summary of her *curriculum vitae*, and the above is a very brief summary of the 13-page document, is like describing a 1964 Ferrari 250GT Lusso by saying it's a car with four wheels and an engine. Lists alone, even of accomplishments, do not tell the tale.

The Lily Afshar story is a case study of an artist's pursuit of excellence.

The interview below, which was conducted by telephone on September 22 and 27, 2006, will, hopefully, provide a flesh and blood glimpse into the challenges and triumphs that earmark Lily Afshar's career to-date.

For those unfamiliar with *Hemispheres*, Archer Records and Lily Afshar have provided two tracks from the CD that will stream to your computer by clicking the links below. Please note, however, that both pieces have been down-sampled during the conversion from CD to MP3 format and the resulting stream is something less than CD quality. *Hemispheres* deserves a listen to the original CD. While familiarity with "Gozaar" will help the interview discussion of the piece and Afshar's use of "fretlets" to achieve its quarter tones, the original CD recording is superb and represents a true collaboration among Lily Afshar, Ward Archer (recording engineer) Reza Vali (composer) and Thomas Humphrey (builder of Afshar's 1992 Millennium guitar).

Listen to two tracks from *Hemispheres*

"Gozaar (Calligraphy No. 5)" 

"Misionera" 

You're introduced to the classical guitar at the age of 10. Love at first sight?

 Lily Afshar

Lily Afshar

Lily Afshar: Yes, it sure was. I had been exposed to steel string guitar before that because one of my sisters played it, but the steel string didn't make me fall in love with it. It was the classical guitar that I fell in love with, which I first heard at my cousin's house. My father got a classical guitar for me the next day. I took private lessons for awhile, then decided to attend evening classes at the Tehran Conservatory of Music where Western as well as Persian instruments were taught.

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After graduating from high school in 1977 you emigrate from Iran to the United States. What led you to Boston?

Lily Afshar: I had a sister who was attending Harvard and she knew Boston. But the part of the story that you may not have is this: I didn't know that you could pursue guitar studies at college. I didn't know that such a thing existed. I thought one had to study other things, such as art, and maybe take guitar lessons on the side.

So, I enrolled in a basic studies program at Boston University. But I didn't stay there even two weeks. I knew that what I really wanted to do was study guitar and Boston University didn't offer lessons. By accident, I went into the Boston Conservatory one day, looked at their catalog, and saw that they offered guitar. I auditioned and was accepted. Before then I really didn't know that guitar was something you could study in college. That was something you couldn't do in Iran. Later, I became the first guitarist to receive a scholarship to the Boston Conservatory.

After Boston Conservatory, you attend the New England Conservatory of Music where you receive a master's degree in guitar performance. You then pursue master classes and competitions. Are these important components in the training of a classical guitarist?

Lily Afshar: Yes, it's very important to play in the master classes of different artists and play at competitions. That way, people hear you - it's the best way to get exposure. Many times, master classes and competitions go hand-in-hand. For example, the 1986 Aspen Music Festival combined master classes and competitions. Each of the artists, such as Oscar Ghiglia, Eliot Fisk, and Robert Guthrie, conducting master classes had a competition among his students and each of those winners then competed against each other. I won the Grand Prize.

Around that time, master classes were my summer. I would go to Banff, in Canada, then I would go to Aspen, and then to the *Accademia Musicale Chigiana* in Siena, Italy. See, I couldn't go back to Iran so I spent my time studying and performing at master classes and festivals. Oscar Ghiglia was a great teacher and I'd follow him around - Banff, Aspen, Siena.

Your guitar of choice is the Thomas Humphrey Millennium and I understand your first Millennium had a name.

Lily Afshar: Yes, I was introduced to Thomas Humphrey guitars by Bruce Holzman, whom I studied under in the Florida State doctoral program. My first Millennium was a 1986 spruce-top from one of the first batches of Millenniums.

In 1984, I gave a concert in New Orleans and a guitarist asked me, "What do you call your guitar? Does it have a name?" I said, "Well, it's like my baby." Later, somebody gave me a plaque inscribed with *Bambina*, which is Spanish for baby girl, and I put it on the back of the 1986 Millennium's headstock. One of my students has *Bambina* now. The plaque is still there.

I now play a 1992 cedar-top Humphrey Millennium. I've had two other Millenniums but people have bought them from me at concerts after falling in love with those guitars. But the '92 is my favorite and this one I'm not selling. My '86 was a spruce-top and I wanted a darker, more Spanish sound, so since then I've used the cedar-tops.

There's a photograph from the 1986 Segovia master class that shows Segovia holding Bambina. Did he see the plaque or comment on any of the guitar's unique design features?



Lily Afshar (left) watches Segovia with

her Millennium at the 1986 master class.

Photo by Mark Westling, courtesy of
[Michael Chapdelaine](#).

Lily Afshar: No. At that time he was 94-years-old and had lost some of his peripheral vision. You could see from his concerts in those years that when he had to shift up the neck he would pause, then shift. He used my guitar to play an F chord up the neck but didn't notice the plaque or the guitar's design features.

Was the 1986 master class the first time you met Segovia?

Lily Afshar: I had met him backstage after a concert in Boston years before, just to shake his hand and get his autograph, but the master class was the first time I sat next to him and played for him.

A few memories from the Segovia master class...

Lily Afshar: The 1986 Segovia master class at the University of Southern California was July 16-26. Hundreds of guitarists that wanted to participate had submitted tapes as part of the selection process. 12 were chosen. Each night, all 12 of us would be on stage and one-by-one, eight or so would sit in front of Segovia and perform. We had to play pieces from the Segovia repertoire, that was one thing that was understood, with his fingering and interpretation. Basically, we had to play everything the way he played it.

One of the pieces I played was "Sevilla". In the middle section, the slow section, he stopped me and said, "Where are you from?" Quickly I started thinking, should I say Iran or Persia? Iran had been through the revolution and had the hostage thing, and maybe didn't have such a good name at the moment. So, I was thinking Persia sounds better and he's older and maybe he was more used to the name Persia than Iran. Such a simple question and so many thoughts were going through my mind. *[Laughs]*

And then I said Persia. He paused and said, "Yes, I can see you have the flamenco spirit and the Persian blood in you." That was a compliment and everybody clapped. I was relieved because I didn't know what he was thinking.

When I was about to play the "Suite in A Minor" by Ponce, as soon as he saw the music, the edition that I brought that credited Miguel Abloniz, Segovia said, "This guy's a thief." According to Segovia, what Ablones had done was listen to Segovia's recording, transcribe it, then publish it as Abalones' edition. That was all news to me. But luckily, he then winked at me and let me play.

As to playing for Segovia, for me, I wasn't scared or anything. A lot of people were. I wasn't for two reasons. One, I was brought up listening to Segovia. My goal was always to play as well as he did. It felt like I was seeing my old friend when I sat next to him, or like he was my grandfather. It felt like family, like I had grown up with this man. As a little child in Iran I had all of his records. Those two weeks between Boston University and Boston Conservatory, when I didn't know what was going to happen, what did I do? I would listen to his recordings and that's what kept me going.

The second reason was that I had studied with Ghiglia who had studied with Segovia and I knew what kind of things Segovia liked and what kind of musicianship he looked for, so I knew what was important, like the singing of the music, which Ghiglia had taught me to do. I felt well equipped to study with Segovia because I knew what he liked and I was prepared. So, a lot of the things he said to me weren't shocking. And then he would switch among three languages in the lessons. All of a sudden, from English he'd start speaking Spanish, but since I was tri-lingual I could switch too and that didn't bother me either. Many other people were like, "What did he say?"

You have to remember, too, that we were in front of cameras and an audience of 500 people, maybe more. We were performing. And you didn't know what he was going to say

next and sometimes he would mumble his words so it wasn't always easy to understand what he had said. But still, I felt better equipped than some of the other people because of the reasons I mentioned.

In 1989, you become the first woman in the world to receive a doctorate in classical guitar performance. What was the subject of your doctoral dissertation?

Lily Afshar: Oh, this is a great topic. I love talking about this.

I have always been in love with art. Before I got into guitar I took art classes in Iran; I would go to painting classes. So, fast forward from when I was like 9-years-old in Iran to when I went to Boston in 1977. One day I was in Briggs & Briggs, this music shop in Cambridge, and I was looking through their guitar music and found a volume of Castelnuovo-Tedesco's *24 Caprichos de Goya*. The name Goya really caught my attention because I knew about Goya. So I bought one volume of this guitar music and wondered what Goya had to do with the guitar. I looked at the music and it seemed really hard - I was just a freshman. So I put it aside. I was buying music and records all the time, I was so thirsty for everything. I had just come from Iran and they had everything I wanted here in the States. It was like a feast. I spent all my money on it.

Then fast forward again, to 1988, when I started thinking about the topic for my doctoral treatise. I thought about the *24 Caprichos de Goya* and wondered what they were about. Here I am, getting my doctorate, and I'd never heard anyone play these pieces and I didn't know anything about them. Getting a doctorate, I thought I should know about everything related to guitar. So, I went and opened the volume again after all those years. After some research, I found that each of the guitar pieces corresponded to a picture by Goya from his *Los Caprichos* series. I dug into it more and more and found that only one article had been written about the *24 Caprichos de Goya*, in a German guitar magazine many years ago.

I decided this was my dissertation topic. I could combine my two loves, art and music, and explore the relationship between Goya's pictures and Castelnuovo-Tedesco's music.

I became like a detective because no one had really written about this work. I contacted Castelnuovo-Tedesco's son, Lorenzo, who used to live in California, and asked him if he could tell me anything about these pieces or his father when he was writing them, because they were dedicated to Lorenzo. He sent me a copy of the manuscript in Castelnuovo-Tedesco's handwriting, beautiful handwriting, and he answered some other questions.

Then I also went to Italy and played the *Caprichos* for Ghiglia, and another year I returned to Italy and played them all for Angelo Gilardino who was the editor of these works. Castelnuovo-Tedesco had given him the music and said, "Here, publish these." So, I had first hand information from Gilardino.

See, Segovia was going to record them. In fact, he had encouraged Castelnuovo-Tedesco to write them, telling him they'll be the most monumental pieces in guitar history. But Segovia never got around to recording them because they needed editing since Castelnuovo-Tedesco basically wrote for the piano and some things possible on the piano are impossible to play on the guitar. In fact, Segovia never even performed them.

Over the years, some people have played one or two of them here and there, like José Tomas in Spain who played two of them, but nobody played all 24.

So, I spent years researching, writing, and learning the pieces. They were the most difficult pieces I had ever played.

What did receiving a doctorate in classical guitar performance entail?



Lily Afshar

Lily Afshar: At Florida State University you had to present a written dissertation and meet the performance requirements. The dissertation for someone in performance wasn't exactly the same as say for someone seeking a PhD in musicology. In the performance program the dissertation, actually, it was called a treatise, was usually 125-150 pages long, so shorter than it might be for other doctoral programs, but the mechanics were the same - it was reviewed by a faculty committee before whom you have to appear and defend what you'd written. And there were five required performances: two solo recitals, one with an orchestra, one of chamber music, and a lecture-performance recital, which I did based on my treatise. I showed slides of Goya's *Caprichos*, discussed them, and then played the corresponding piece by Castelnuovo-Tedesco.

Writing a doctoral dissertation or treatise in the United States is like an exercise in English to the nth degree. Was that a hurdle?

Lily Afshar: As a child I went to an international school in Tehran where my teachers were American or British. We read Dostoevsky, Shakespeare, Coleridge, everything in English. So, I had been speaking and reading English since my childhood. I came to the U.S. already speaking fluent English. My school in Tehran was very advanced. We had classes in philosophy and psychology, in fact, I was advanced a year in college thanks to my education in Tehran.

The day after the successful defense of your treatise you receive a job offer from the University of Memphis?

Lily Afshar: The guitar position at the University of Memphis came up during my last semester at Florida State, while I was writing my doctoral treatise and preparing its defense. I applied for the position, along with 50 or 60 other applicants. The selection process came in four steps: the submission of a *curriculum vitae*; the submission of performances on cassettes; a telephone interview, and then a final selection process that took place in Memphis the day after the defense of my treatise. For the final selection process I flew to Memphis, performed a concert, taught students, and had more interviews. At the end of the day I was told, informally, that the job offer would be made and received the formal offer a few days later.

What did you think of Memphis?

Lily Afshar: First of all, I thought it was much more exciting than Tallahassee. [Laughs] I was really happy to be there. Basically, my life in Tallahassee was practicing the guitar. I practiced 10 hours a day. I didn't do anything else. You can ask anybody there, you can ask Bruce Holzman, he'll tell you.

[Note: I did. According to Bruce Holzman, "Lily Afshar was one of the, if not the, hardest working students I've ever known. 10 hours a day is not exaggeration."]



Lily Afshar

In Memphis, I had real museums, which I really liked. And the music... The first time I went to Beale Street I thought I had entered another country. I still feel that way when I go there. It's so different - blues, jazz, the people - how people are just in the streets playing music. It's a different atmosphere than anything else I have ever seen.

Memphis has a lot of soul. A kind of soul that Boston didn't have and Tallahassee didn't have.

There's a [video clip](#) of you playing part of "Lily's Blues" by jazz and R&B guitarist "Flying Calvin" Newborn. Did you meet him on Beale Street?

Lily Afshar: Yes. I told him I'd love to have some pieces by him to play and he wrote a whole suite (five pieces) for me. He loved classical guitar and my playing and he just wanted to write for me. I inspired him. *[Laughs]* Things like this happen here in Memphis.

I love all kinds of music but I didn't know much about blues until I came to Memphis. That was a whole new ballgame for me. New doors opened up. I met a lot of blues musicians and I like the music. I play some myself. I have a slide, and Gibson Guitar gave me a steel-string acoustic made in their Montana factory. When I want some fun, relaxing time, I'll play the blues. I even played with a band once, a Memphis band called Cooley's House, and wrote my own solo that I played with the slide. It was great. I wore a mini-skirt, which I can never do with the classical guitar. *[Laughs]*

You also met Sam Samudio, better known as Sam the Sham, in Memphis. In fact you appear on his 2000 album, Ballads and Troubadours.

Lily Afshar: He lives in Memphis and has been a big fan and friend. He was recording a new CD with ballads that called for classical-style guitar so he called and asked me to play on his CD. I think I played on two of them.

In September you performed on stage at the Gibson Lounge in Memphis with a ballet troupe. How did that come about?

Lily Afshar: At first, the choreographer, Joseph Jeffries, wanted to present a ballet piece to music by Bach, but then he got hold of my CD, *A Jug of Wine and Thou*, and he fell in love with the four movement "Koyunbaba". He said the music kept drawing him to it. While I was in Iran last August, he choreographed the piece to the music on my CD, which I recorded in 1999, so when I came back to Memphis I had to play "Koyunbaba" exactly the way I had recorded it in '99, which was a little difficult since I had changed the way I played it since then.

 Lily Afshar performs Koyunbaba during ballet

Lily Afshar performs "Koyunbaba" for a ballet choreographed by Joseph Jeffries titled "A Jug of Wine and Thou".


The performance was a wonderful experience. They put me on a platform next to the stage, the same height as the stage, and the 12 or 13 members of the ballet troupe danced as I played the four movements. Jeffries named the choreography "A Jug of Wine and Thou" after the title of my CD.

See, that's one of the good things about being in Memphis, there are so many things going on. Anything can happen here. Remember, we did this performance on Beale Street at the Gibson Lounge.

You teach guitar at the University of Memphis from the undergraduate through doctoral level. What's the current state of academic interest in the classical guitar?

Lily Afshar: It's growing. Every semester I teach between 10 and 15 guitar majors and I have an assistant who teaches the non-majors. Our classes are full, always - we have to tell people "our classes are full, wait one more year". So the interest is high. Next year I have a student coming from Poland for the doctoral program. I've got a lot of action going on here.

You've also conducted a large number of master classes since 1989 throughout the United States and several other countries, including master classes in Tehran starting in 2001. Was that the first time you'd been back to Iran since 1977?

 Lily Afshar performing at Vahdat Hall, Tehran

Lily Afshar performing at Tehran's Vahdat Hall, August, 2006

Lily Afshar: Yes. I was invited by the Ministry of Culture to go there to perform and teach. Guitar is very popular in Iran. The level of playing varies widely among both teachers and students. There's a lot of interest and a lot of talent there, but having taught and performed in Iran since 2001, I have to say that there's a lack of good editions of music, editions with good fingerings. I ended up re-fingering everybody's music in the lessons so I've decided just to take my own editions with me. People also rely on recordings a lot to get interpretation ideas instead of developing their own because they're not being taught how to think about that aspect of performance. They just say, "Oh, so-and-so plays it this fast, so I'm going to play it this fast," and their interpretation of the piece becomes imitative.

Is the number of women interested in guitar studies growing?

Lily Afshar: They are interested, I have a lot of women in my classes in Iran, a lot, but the thing is, they have to seriously pursue it in college if they want to perform at a professional level, and that means a lot of sacrifices have to be made. I've seen, with my own eyes, a lot of women I've studied with give up because of that.

It seems to me that women have to be even stronger when they play guitar because, to me, it's a male dominated society. There are more men playing the guitar than women. Maybe women just need more and stronger guts to play this instrument. If you're a woman guitarist you stand out in the crowd. There aren't that many women guitarists at the high, international level - only a handful.

The only reason for this I can think of is what I went through. All during my years of study, I felt a resistant general attitude. I think you just have to be strong and fight it or push it aside.

What do you tell your students when they ask about career opportunities as a professional classical guitarist?

Lily Afshar: I tell them straight up, you have to win competitions. You have to perform a lot. I tell them what I did when I was a student in Boston before I got my master degree. I paid \$50 to rent a hall in Cambridge and gave my first concert outside of school. You have to use your own initiative. I didn't wait for someone to tell me, hey, you have to go play concerts, hey, you have to enter competitions. I did things on my own initiative. That's what I tell my students - you have to go out and do things on your own. We're basically a solo instrument so we've got to make our own path.

You served as an artistic ambassador to Africa?



Lily Afshar

Lily Afshar: Yes. In 1995, I won a competition held in Chicago for the Artistic Ambassador Program. You had to play American music for the competition since if you were selected you were supposed to play American music in places that hadn't been exposed to it, which was the whole point of the Program. So, I played some new music by American composers. Right after the competition performance, I was interviewed by a woman from the organization who asked me if I had any preferences as to where I'd like to be sent. I said, "Listen, I speak five languages and I've been to many parts of the world, but I'm very adventurous, so send me somewhere nobody else wants to go."

They sent me to West Africa for a month.

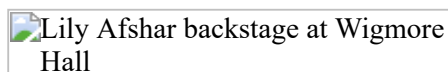
I went to countries such as Chad, Cameroon, Ghana, Ivory Coast, and Burkina Faso, some of the poorest countries in Africa, and performed three kinds of concerts. Those for the general public, for Africans, were in large auditoriums. People would show up late and you could hear the shuffle of their shoes as they found a seat. During a show in Chad, that was being videoed by a television station, I felt something on stage to my right. You know, we look mostly to the left, toward the fretboard, but I felt something moving on stage to my right. I looked over and there was someone on stage dancing. It was an Iranian living in Chad who was so excited to see me. I was playing a Persian ballad at the moment and he was so inspired that he jumped on stage and started dancing. I really wanted to watch him dance but I had to pay attention to what I was doing since it was being filmed.

There's audience participation at African concerts. They start clapping in the middle of a piece if they like it. When I played Latin American pieces that were quite rhythmic they'd start clapping along with the music. It was something new for me, a new cultural difference, and fun.

Then there were the formal concerts at the residences of U.S. ambassadors. I would see the guest list before the performance and they included ambassadors from different countries, like Japan, China, Russia and others. At those concerts I would change my program so it would be very international. For example, if I saw that the Russian ambassador was coming I'd add a Russian piece.

The third type of concerts were in American cultural centers for music teachers or others involved in the arts and I would play a different kind of program for those performances as well.

Favorite concert venues?



Lily Afshar backstage at Wigmore Hall

Lily Afshar: Wigmore Hall in London, and not just because it's beautiful. When I played there, I felt the spirits of everybody else who had ever performed in Wigmore Hall. And the wooden stage - I felt like all the sounds and the spirits of its past were coming out. I gave a concert there last year. It's my favorite venue in the world.

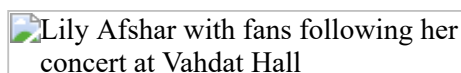
And Vahdat Hall in Tehran, where I performed last summer. It's a beautiful venue that can seat over 1,300. I was the first solo guitarist allowed to perform there and it was an amazing experience.

Then there's the Carnegie Recital Hall where I played many years ago. That would have been 1986.

Your performance at the Carnegie Recital Hall was a challenge, wasn't it?

Lily Afshar: Absolutely. Ten days before the concert, just before a performance at Florida State University, the callous on the index finger of my left hand split open and I had to get four stitches, which meant I had to cancel the FSU concert. The problem was, I had been practicing a great deal and had put together a crazy program that was just too much wear and tear on my finger. I learned a lesson about programming from that. I'm very careful about my programming now.

I've seen a photograph of you after a concert with a glove on your right hand.



Lily Afshar with fans following her concert at Vahdat Hall

Lily Afshar: The problem is that some people at a concert are very excited and shake hands too hard. The right hand of a guitarist is very delicate, especially after a concert. So, to protect my hand I wear a glove. I usually wear it after the performance when I meet people from the audience and shake hands and sign autographs and CDs. But sometimes I wear it before a performance. One time in England someone shook my hand so hard right before the recital that it hurt during the whole program. I decided I'm not going to shake hands before I have to play.

Your first CD, 24 Caprichos de Goya [Summit Records], is released in 1994, five years after receiving your doctorate and there's a space of three to five years between each of your four CDs. You take time assembling your recorded programs.

Lily Afshar: I do. I would love to release one CD a year, but there are a few reasons that doesn't happen. First, I have a full-time teaching job. Second, I have to find a good program. A lot of time I'm waiting for composers to write for me or to finish their pieces. Then, once you get the pieces, you have to live with them for awhile. I'll then record the music and send it to the composer for his or her opinion, and we'll go back and forth like that fine tuning things. Next thing you know, two or three years have passed. But, that's alright because once the CD is out I can't take it back, can't change anything. You have to live with it so it's worthwhile to prepare as well as possible. I'd rather take my time and do a good job.

I think my programming is very important. I could sit down and play what everyone else has played 100,000 times before and record a CD every year, but I'm looking for something different, something new, something that has meaning for me and that contributes to the guitar world.



24 Caprichos de Goya (Summit Records 1994)

24 Caprichos de Goya is an atypical first CD for a classical guitarist.

Lily Afshar: To me, you have to do something new on every CD, something that hasn't been done before, whether it's your first or most recent recording. I wanted to contribute something to the guitar world. These pieces were something most people had never heard before and, believe it or not, to this day not many people know about them.

I look at things that are rare, things that are ignored. Hidden gems. Those are what's important to me and what I like to record. I don't think of my recorded music as a marketing tool. I think of it in an artistic way. A first CD, to me, should be something no one's ever done before, like a doctoral dissertation. That's what brings attention to it. Of course, you also have to have good technique and musicianship, but the program is an essential element.

Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco is, of course, familiar with the Goya etchings that inspired his compositions, but do you know if he was aware of Goya's own commentaries on the artwork?

Lily Afshar: Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco had actually gone to the Museo del Prado in Madrid with his grandparents when he was a teenager and when he wrote the pieces many years later he had a book of Goya's *Los Caprichos* that included "Capricho 81", which Goya had removed from the collection. Goya's "Capricho 81" became Castelnuovo-Tedesco's "Capricho 24". The Goya book Castelnuovo-Tedesco had when he wrote his *24 Caprichos* also contained some of Goya's commentary on the artwork.

I think Castelnuovo-Tedesco felt there was a parallel between himself and Goya. Take, for example, Castelnuovo-Tedesco's "Capricho 20", *Obsequio a el maestro*, which means "a gift to the master", inspired by Goya's picture [etching number 47] of a few witches giving a dead baby to their master, giving a sacrifice to their master. Castelnuovo-Tedesco had a falling out of sorts with his own teacher in Italy, Ildebrando Pizzetti, and throughout this piece Castelnuovo-Tedesco quotes little snippets of Pizzetti's music that are increasingly sad and solemn, but at the end he writes a very fond little codetta that sort of pokes fun at Pizzetti. Goya, in the etching, is being sarcastic about masters and teachers and Castelnuovo-Tedesco is also being sarcastic with respect to his own master.

What's the story behind "Capricho 16, Brabisimo!"?



Francisco José de Goya (Spanish, 1746-1828), *Caprichos 38: Brabisimo!*, 1796-1797. Etching, burnished aquatint, and drypoint. Courtesy [Davison Art Center](#), Wesleyan University.

Lily Afshar: "*Brabisimo!*" is another good example. In Goya's picture we see a monkey playing on the back of a guitar with a donkey clapping and people in the background. The monkey represents Godoy, the Prime Minister of Spain, who actually took guitar lessons. The donkey is the King of Spain, Carlos IV, who was just a puppet on the throne, and the two people clapping in the background are the people who trained Godoy for the task of government. Castelnuovo-Tedesco's music mimics clapping through its rhythm. Then a very strange, dissonant melody comes in that is constantly interrupted by that clapping motif, essentially saying that people don't know when to clap, a barb at ignorance. It's a very funny piece.

Another interesting example is "Capricho 15", *Si sabrá mas el discipulo?* which means, "or does the pupil knowmore?" A bigger donkey is teaching a smaller donkey how to read, again poking fun at the "master" or "expert". When Castelnuovo-Tedesco arrived in Los Angeles, that was the same time that Schoenberg was there. Castelnuovo-Tedesco is a neo-classical composer and here's Schoenberg writing 12-tone music. Castelnuovo-Tedesco didn't believe in 12-tone music, he didn't think that was "real music". So, in "Capricho 15" he writes a 12-tone piece but makes fun of it: The teacher gives the 12 tones to the student, but the student then composes a Gavotte or Musette with the 12 tones and constantly takes the music somewhere else. When the student does this, the teacher keeps coming in with a motif that sounds like the braying of a donkey. There's so much humor and sarcasm in these pieces. It's strange that guitarists have stayed away from them. Nobody plays them in concerts and they're not taught at colleges or universities.

Why do you think this work has been basically ignored?

Lily Afshar: It's because, I think, guitarists should be more broad-minded. Look at my own programs and CDs. I do new things, things that haven't been done before. I'm not scared. I like challenges. I don't just do the same Bach pieces over and over again.

Seems there's also an interesting similarity between you and Castelnuovo-Tedesco. There he is in Los Angeles, a stranger in the strange land of Hollywood working for MGM Studios, a transplant from Italy, and there you are in Memphis on stage in the Gibson Lounge on Beale Street, a transplant from Iran, performing Domeniconi's "Koyunbaba".

Lily Afshar: There you go. Isn't that a parallel? We discovered each other.

The Brooks Museum in Memphis staged a special exhibition of Goya's Los Caprichos?

Lily Afshar: Yes. They brought in Goya's *Caprichos* and asked me to play at the opening. I showed slides of each Goya "Capricho" and discussed its background. They called it a "marriage made in Memphis" - me all the way from Iran, the works of Goya from Spain, and Castelnuovo-Tedesco from Italy, all in Memphis. [Laughs]

It was Segovia who inspired Castelnuovo-Tedesco to write for guitar, wasn't it?

Lily Afshar: Yes. That was another great marriage too, for him and Segovia to get together. Like Segovia, I think it's important that we try to encourage good composers to write for the guitar. Segovia did it and we should too.

A Jug of Wine and Thou

A Jug of Wine and Thou (Summit Records 1999)

Your second CD, A Jug of Wine and Thou [Summit Records], was released in 1999. What's the relationship between the title and the program?

Lily Afshar: The CD contains Persian folk pieces that I arranged and "Koyunbaba" by Carlo Domeniconi is very Eastern, so the beginning has a strong Eastern influence, which is why we chose a title that refers to the Persian poet Omar Khayyám.

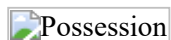
The five Persian ballads sound very Western though.

Lily Afshar: Well, these are folk ballads as opposed to traditional Persian music that uses quarter tones. They're basically folk melodies that use Western harmony as opposed to classical Persian modes. Since all I had to work with were the simple melody lines that would re-appear in every stanza of a folk ballad, I had to come up with a method of presenting every repetition in a new way. I couldn't repeat the same melody over and over. So, the pieces ended up with a lot of my own composition. For example, maybe I'd play the melody first in harmonics, then in tremolo - tremolo doesn't exist in Persian folk music.

When did you add "Koyunbaba" to your repertoire?

Lily Afshar: About two years before recording *A Jug of Wine and Thou* so, 1997 or '96. "Koyunbaba" has a very Eastern flavor. Being from Iran, I felt strongly about that piece. It brings me home. I've added a lot of my own ornaments to the performance and in the last movement I added a mini cadenza because I thought it needed a climax. I think this gives my recording a unique emotional element. To me, "Koyunbaba" has an improvisational quality and should not be played just the way it is written.

Generally speaking, music notation is limited, in my opinion. One has to go beyond just the notation to find out what the composer meant. That doesn't mean I'll add 50 measures of my own interpretation. What I'm trying to do is explore and enhance the piece within the framework of what I think the composer was trying to communicate. For example, if the same thing is repeated in exactly the same way, I might add a little ornament to it the second time.

Possession

Possession (Archer Records 2002)

For the recording of you next CD, Possession, released in 2002, you switched to Archer Records in Memphis. Why?

Lily Afshar: Ward Archer heard me play and said why don't you come by the studio and we'll record something. That's all there really was to it. I went to his studio, we did some recording, and it sounded really good. *Possession* ended up being the first release on his

label, Archer Records. We spent a lot of time getting the right sound, and that's what I really like about Archer Records. We moved the microphone around, we changed microphones, we experimented and experimented until we got the right sound. I brought in CDs from everybody and we listened and talked about what we liked and didn't like, what we thought was good and what wasn't. By "we" I mean just Ward Archer and I. Not only does he own the label, he was the recording engineer.

The title is Possession. Who or what's being possessed?

Lily Afshar: Archer Records really came up with the title. They wanted something different. They wanted people to wonder about the title, to ask why it's called *Possession*. Obviously, it worked. [*Laughs*]

You know, Ward Archer is not only an excellent sound engineer, he has a long background in marketing. Like me, Archer Records doesn't like cliches, they like things that are original. And as far as programming goes, they are very open minded so they left it basically up to me.

The first track on the CD, "Scherzo, Op. 47", was written by a colleague from Florida State University?

Lily Afshar: Yes. Salvador Brotons was from Spain and before we ever met I was playing a piece by him called "Two Suggestions". One day I was sitting on the floor of a hallway at FSU practicing, playing "Two Suggestions", when doors opened and people started coming out of class. A man stops in front of me and says, "That's my piece." That's how I met him. I didn't even know he went to school there. We went on to become friends. I played "Two Suggestions" at his doctoral recital and he then wrote "Scherzo, Op. 47" for me.

Years later, he was the conductor of the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra with which I performed Rodrigo's "Concierto de Aranjuez". He mentioned the "Scherzo" and I asked if anyone had recorded it yet and he said no. Well, I was looking for one more piece for the *Possession* CD, so when I returned home I got it out, learned it again, and added it as the CD's opening piece.

To what does the title of Barbara Kolb's "Broken Slurs" refer? She says her titles often imply a double meaning.

Lily Afshar: She's referring to conversations that get interrupted or misunderstandings that take place or to thoughts or statements that linger or fall off without completion but stand out among the chatter. It's like a meaningful conversation between friends, though the title really could have many meanings. In fact, the piece sprang from a conversation between Barbara Kolb and myself about life, and music, and life...

In another piece by Kolb on Possession, "Three Lullabies", we get to hear you sing. The vocal part was originally written for a male voice?

Lily Afshar: Well, yes, but aren't lullabies sung by women? Actually, it was optional - it says in the music that it can be sung an octave higher. As far as I know, I'm the only guitarist who's both played and sung it on a recording at the same time. It's a difficult passage to both sing and play - I have to play a D and sing a D#. It's chromatic, it's atonal, and it's difficult, but I've done it live on stage. It's funny, because when I perform it people look around like, "Where's this sound coming from?" No one expects me to start singing. [*Laughs*]

The last track on Possession, "MKG Variations", originally for cello, was written by a fellow University of Memphis faculty member.

Lily Afshar: Yes, Kamran Ince. I wanted Kamran to write something for me. One day he came and said, "Lily, I have the perfect piece for you," and gave me the recording of the

cello version of "MKG Variations". I fell in love with this piece. I said I wanted to arrange it for guitar and I sat down and arranged it. Every idea that I had seemed to work. For example, there's a pizzicato section for the cello that would not have worked for the guitar. I turned it into harmonics and he liked it. He liked it a lot. His office is right down the hall from mine, so I'd meet with him and show him what I was doing and we worked together on some of the changes from cello to guitar. With a bow, the cello can sustain notes in a way that's not possible on the guitar and we increased some tempos, but the goal was to make it sound as though it were a guitar piece.

"Omar's Fancy" by Dusan Bogdanovic', contains some interesting improvisational elements.

Lily Afshar: In the first section of the piece there are a lot of runs and scales where I can take as much or as little time as I want. They're very free. I can do rubato on them and make it sound like I'm just sitting around playing from scratch, just making it up, whereas, the second part is more rhythmic and has to be in time.

Sounds like there's some string bending going on in "Omar's Fancy".

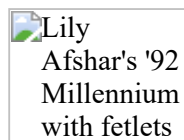
Lily Afshar: Yes, in the middle section there's bending and tapping and all that going on. But even in my earlier recording of "Koyunbaba" I added two bends for flavor - at the end of the first movement and the end of the third movement - they're not in the music, so I'm guilty as charged. [Laughs] You could say that my bending started with "Koyunbaba" and has lasted through *Hemispheres*. The bending in the Bogdanovic' piece is already written in though, I didn't add it.



Hemispheres (Archer Records 2006)

The topic of string bending brings us to Hemispheres, released in July of this year also on Archer Records. On this CD you take the idea of quarter tones even further through bending, tuning and the use of fretlets. Why?

Lily Afshar: I wanted to play Persian music. I had pieces for the CD from all over the world, but I didn't have anything from Iran. So, Reza Vali wrote a piece for me, "Gozaar", and I needed to have the fretlets installed on my guitar to get the perfect pitch of the quarter tones in the piece. I tried to achieve them by bending the strings, but in the faster passages I had no time to bend the the string and get back to the original pitch. Fretlets provided the solution.



Afshar's '92
Millennium
with fetlets

The '92 Millenium is the guitar I had the fretlets installed on. When I showed it to Tom Humphrey he thought it was a great idea. The installation was done by Joe Glaser (of Glaser Instruments) in Nashville. He knew the cents (a cent is 1/100 of a semitone) for every note the composer had in mind. He worked very carefully to make sure all the cents were right, with very careful calculation. He did the work in one day. I think that's all he worked on that day. The fretlets are glued on, they weren't inserted into cuts. I sent the recording of "Gozaar" to the composer and he said the notes produced by the fretlets were perfect.

Then I asked Gary Eister to write a piece for me based on this famous Persian melody that I remembered from my childhood, "Bird of Dawn", and to explain to listeners where the "Bird of Dawn" melody originated, I decided to play it on the Persian *seh-tar*, so the result was Eister's "Fantasia on a Traditional Persian Song" and the following track, "Morgh-eh-Sahar (Bird of Dawn)".

The use of quarter tones is common in Persian music, but still something of an oddity in mainstream Western music. Why do you think many Western composers have been slow or reluctant to incorporate them?

Lily Afshar: They're just not part of the Western musical language and the instruments aren't built to play quarter tones. It's just something that's not in the ears of people in the West. I was brought up listening to music where quarter tones are commonplace, and to Western classical music. There may not be many people currently using quarter tones in music for Western audiences, but the Eastern influence on Western music is growing. I know when I perform pieces that use quarter tones for Western audiences the reaction is one of interest and acceptance.

There's some string bending in the first track, "Kara Toprak"?

Lily Afshar: Yes. Some were in the music and some I added myself.

The bending that you add yourself, does that vary from performance to performance?

Lily Afshar: In one or two places, but most of it is decided beforehand.

In "Gozaar" you said you play the quarter tones using the fretlets. Does the piece also require a special tuning?

Lily Afshar: It's just D tuning. Drop D. What's a really different tuning is "Kara Toprak". That's sort of a custom tuning based on the tune's arrangement. You should see my concerts, I change tunings from one piece to another and sometimes in the same work. The Gary Eister piece, for example, is in C# Minor and requires re-tuning of several strings in two sections. I asked him to write it in C# Minor because I wanted a piece to follow "Koyunbaba" to have a whole Eastern half of a program.

When did you meet Reza Vali?

Lily Afshar: I haven't ever met him. We've only emailed. [Laughs] You know, once he came to Memphis but I was gone, I was in Iran. Kamran Ince and he have met, but I haven't. We haven't even spoken on the phone. It's all email. When I record his pieces I send him a CD, he emails me his opinion, and I go back to the studio. That's how it works. It tells you how music can bring people together. Well, music and the Internet.

Two of the pieces on Hemispheres, "Gozaar" and "Morgh-eh-Sahar", are based on, or draw inspiration from, the Persian modal system, the Dástgâh. Is this system common in Persian music?

Lily Afshar: Oh, yes. They're like the scales in Western music. You have to know the seven modes of the system and each mode has its own melodies and its own quarter tones. An American musicologist, Bruno Nettl, has written about the *Radif*, which are the modal melodies, a very technical book that goes into great depth about the system and is written in English.

Another piece on Hemispheres, "Prelude" by John Schneider, was written to be played in either equal temperament or Pythagorean or Ditone tuning. You recorded it in equal temperament, but do you perform it with the alternate tuning?

Lily Afshar: No. He uses the Pythagorean tuning but I haven't attempted to do that yet because you have to be really careful with your fifths and your thirds - and I have enough tunings to deal with right now.

"Adagio, Op. 44" by Gerard Drozd was written as an homage to J.S.Bach. You don't often record Baroque-style music, do you?

Lily Afshar: It's just because I want to record original things. I love Bach, I play Bach, but in the case of "Adagio, Op. 44", I just really wanted to introduce the American public to this composer and I loved his "Adagio". It was never recorded before.

"Danza del Altiplano", by Leo Brouwer: Are my ears jaded or are there moments that sound almost like rock 'n' roll?

Lily Afshar: Yes, there are, but that's Brouwer for you. Brouwer has that in him. See, he wrote the introduction to "Danza del Altiplano", but the basic melody is a Peruvian folk song. But then in the introduction and in the middle of the piece there are all these "licks", which, like you said, sound like rock music. Even in "Afro-Cuban Lullaby" that I recorded on *Possession*, he harmonized this Cuban lullaby then in the middle he puts this very fast jazz-like or rock-type scale.

The piece you recorded with the seh-tar, "Morgh-eh-Sahar" was inspired by a Persian poem, "Bird of Dawn". What's the essence of the poem?

Lily Afshar: It's about freedom, about a bird wanting to be free from its cage. It was written by a famous Persian poet, Bahar. The composer of "Morgh-eh-Sahar", Morteza Neydavood, used the poem for the lyrics of this song.

I'm confused about the seh-tar you used to record this piece. Your seh-tar appears to have four strings, not three.

Lily Afshar: It is a four-string instrument. See, the word *tar* means string and *seh* means three in Persian, but the fourth string was added as a drone string, so it's sort of not counted.

Do you play the seh-tar with a plectrum?

Lily Afshar: Oh, no. It's plucked with the index finger of my right hand. In fact, the nail of the index finger has to be shaped a certain way. That's all you use on the right hand.

What other versions of the tar are popular? I understand they come in several variations with respect to the number of strings.



Lily Afshar with her guitar and *seh-tar*

Lily Afshar: Yes, and they all have different names. The two-string version is a *doh-tar*. The *tar* itself has six strings.

Credit for the development of what we call the guitar usually goes to Spain and Portugal, but when you think about the Persian word tar and the word "guitar" and the more than 1,000-year-old Persian sculptures that show figures playing string instruments similar to the tar, does it seem that we aren't giving adequate credit to Persian culture when it comes to the history of the guitar?

Lily Afshar: I would like to prove that. There has to be some connection when you think about the words. I mean, the guitar didn't just spring into existence with the Spanish *vihuela*. The only scholar I know that's touched upon this is Michael Kasha, who's with the Department of Chemistry and Institute of Molecular Biophysics at Florida State University. He published an article in *Guitar Review* titled "A New Look at the History of the Classic Guitar" in which he presented images of artwork from the Persian Hittite period that showed people playing stringed instruments that look similar to things like the Persian *tar*. He's the only person I know of that's come close to this idea that the word

guitar goes all the way back to the *tar*. This question is something I think deserves more attention.

With Hemispheres having just been released, it's premature to talk about a next CD, but what's on the horizon for Lily Afshar? Anything on the list composition-wise?

Lily Afshar: I'd like to do more work with the *seh-tar* and incorporate it into my performances. I'd also like to continue exploring the integration of Persian music in works for the guitar. And improvisation, that's something I'm interested in.

Ideas seem to come to me easier when I'm in Iran and hanging out with Persian musicians - *tar* players, *seh-tar* players. I met an amazing *tar* player in Iran. He said just sing four notes, so I picked four notes and he improvised on those notes with his *seh-tar* beautifully. I was so moved. They just play by ear from their hearts. While I study the music and the composer and all that, they just pick four notes and go for it. It's going to take me awhile to digest all this, but I think I can do it. There's a whole civilization that can be transferred to the guitar.

Related Links

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[Five Popular Persian Ballads, arranged by Lily Afshar](#) (Mel Bay Publications)

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[New England Conservatory of Music](#)

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[Aspen Music Festival and School](#)

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[Egberto Gismonti](#)

[Bruno Netti](#)

[Michael Kasha](#)

[Joe Glaser, Glaser Instruments +1 615 298 1139](#)

Discography

24 Caprichos de Goya, Op. 195 (Summit Records, 1994)

1. *Francisco Goya y Lucientes, pintor*

2. *Tal para qual*

3. *Nadie se conoce*

4. *Ni asi la distingue*

5. *Muchachos al avio*

6. *El amor y la muerte*

7. *Estan calientes*

8. *Dios la perdone: Y era su madre*

9. *Bien tirada esta*

10. *Al Conde Palatino*

11. *Y se le quema la casa*
 12. *No hubo remedio*
 13. *Quien mas rendido?*
 14. *Porque fue sensible*
 15. *Si sabra mas el discipulo?*
 16. *Brabisimo!*
 17. *De que mal morira?*
 18. *El sueno de la razon produce monstruos*
 19. *Hilan delgado*
 20. *Obsequio a el maestro*
 21. *Que pico de oro!*
 22. *Volaverunt*
 23. *Linda maestra!*
 24. *Sueno de la mentira y la inconstancia*
- All pieces composed by Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco*

A Jug of Wine and Thou (Summit Records, 1999)

- 1 - 4: Koyunbaba, Op.19 (C. Domeniconi)
 - ...1. Moderato
 - ...2. Mosso
 - ...3. Cantabile
 - ...4. Presto
- 5 - 9: Five Popular Persian Ballads (Arranged by Lily Afshar)
 - ...5. Gol-e Gandome
 - ...6. Dareneh-Jaan/Aziz Joon
 - ...7. Leila-Leila
 - ...8. Jaan-e-Maryam
 - ...9. Lala-ee
10. Waltz, Op.8, No.4 (A. Barrios Mangore)
11. Tango, Op.165, No.2 (I. Albeniz)
12. Sevilla (I. Albeniz)
13. Estrellita (M. Ponce)
14. Andaluza (E. Granados)
15. Petenera (R. Sainz de la Maza)
16. Asturias/Leyenda (I. Albeniz)
17. Aire De Joropo (B. Canonico)
18. Recuerdos de la Alhambra (F. Tarrega)
19. Juguetando (J. Morel)

Possession (Archer Records, 2002)

1. Scherzo, Op. 47 (S. Brotons)
2. Omar's Fancy (D. Bogdanovic)
3. Waltz, Op. 8, No. 3 (A. Barrios Mangore)
4. Un Dia de Noviembre (L. Brouwer)
5. Introduction, Passacaglia and Fugue for the Golden Flower (D. Bogdanovic)
6. Afro-Cuban Lullaby (L. Brouwer)
- 7 - 9: Three Lullabies (B. Kolb)
 - ...7. Falling...
 - ...8. As Sleep Falls
 - ...9. In the Innocent Air
10. Broken Slurs (B. Kolb)
11. Invocation and Dance (J. Rodrigo)
12. Ojos Brujos (L. Brouwer)
13. Agua e Vinho (E. Gismonti)
14. MKG Variations (K. Ince)

Hemispheres (Archer Records, 2006)

1. Kara Toprak (A. Veysel)
2. Schnee in Istanbul (C. Domeniconi)

3. Gozaar (Calligraphy No. 5) (R. Vali)
- 4 - 6 Triptych, Op. 102 (G. Drozd)
- ...4. Prelude
- ...5. Eternal Song
- ...6. Dreams of a Clown
7. Prelude (J. Schneider)
8. Fugato (J. Schneider)
9. Adagio, Op. 44 (G. Drozd)
10. Danza del Altiplano (L. Brouwer)
11. Fantasia on a Traditional Persian Song (G. Eister)
12. Morgh-eh-Sahar (Bird of Dawn) (M. Neydavood)
13. Misionera (F. Bustamante)

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Concerto Repertoire List

| | |
|---|---------------------------|
| Concerto in D Major | Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco |
| Concerto #1 for Guitar and Chamber orchestra | Stephen Dodgson |
| Dayspring (A Fanfare/Concertino for guitar and orchestra) | Dan Locklair |
| Concierto del Sur | Manuel Ponce |
| Concierto de Aranjuez | Joaquin Rodrigo |
| Fantasia para un Gentilhombre | Joaquin Rodrigo |
| Zareh | Loris Tjeknavorian |
| Concerto for Guitar and small orchestra | Heitor Villa-Lobos |
| Concerto in D Major | Antonio Vivaldi |
| Concerto in C Major | Antonio Vivaldi |
| Concerto in A Major | Antonio Vivaldi |

Chamber Music Repertoire

Guitar and String Quartet

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Boccherini: | Quintetts 1-5 |
| Castelnuovo-Tedesco: | Quintett, OP. 143 |
| Guastavino: Quintet: | Las Presencias NO. 6, Jeromita Linares |
| Giuliani: | Quintett, Op. 65 |
| Niccolo Paganini: | Quartetto NO. 7 for violin, viola, guitar, violoncello |
| Terzetto Concertante: | viola, guitar, violoncello |
| Vivaldi: | Concerto in D Major |

Violin and Guitar Duets

| | |
|------------|---|
| Bartok: | Rumanian Folk Dances |
| Graghani: | Sonata #1 |
| Kolb: | Umbrian Colors |
| Leisner: | Dances in the MadHouse |
| Paganini: | Sonata Concertata, OP. 61 Centone di Sonate Cantabile Sonatas I-VI |
| Scheidler: | Sonata in D Major |
| Piazzolla: | Histoire du Tango |

Cello and Guitar Duets

| | |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|
| De Falla: | Siete Canciones Espanolas |
| Tchaikowsky: | Valse Sentimentale, Op. 51, No. 6 |

Guitar and Flute Duets

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Bach: | Air on the G String Arioso Sonata in E Minor |
| Bozza: | Berceuse & Serenade |
| Castelnuovo-Tedesco: | Sonatina |
| Diabelli: | Serenade |
| Campra: | Minuet Vif et Gigue |
| Couperin: | Les Petits Moulin a Vent |
| Debussy: | Girl with Flaxen Hair |
| Faure: | Sicilienne |
| Giuliani: | Sonata, Op. 85 Sonata, Op. 52 Gran Potpourri, Op. 126 |
| Gossec: | Tambourin |
| Handel: | Sonata in A Minor |
| Ibert: | Entr'acte |
| Loeillet: | Sonata in A Minor |
| Pepusch: | Sonate |
| Piazzolla: | Histoire du Tango |
| Poulenc: | Mouvements Perpetuelles |
| Ravel: | Piece en Forme de Habanera Pavane for a Dead Princess |

| | |
|--------------|--|
| Rodrigo: | Serenata al Alba del Dia |
| Sierra: | Primera Cronica del Descubrimiento |
| Truhlar: | Sonatina Semplice |
| Takemitsu: | Toward the Sea |
| Villa-Lobos: | Distribution of Flowers Bachianas Bresilieras |

Voice & Guitar Duets:

| | |
|---------------|---|
| Almeida: | Brazilian Folk Songs |
| Argento: | Letters from Composers |
| Berlioz: | Songs |
| Britten: | Song from the Chinese Folk Song Arrangements |
| Dowland: | Song Collection |
| Falla: | Seven Spanish Songs |
| Faure: | En Priere |
| Moretti: | 12 Songs |
| Musgrave: | Five Love Songs |
| Rachmaninov: | Vocalise |
| Rodrigo: | Aranjuez, Ma Pensee Three Songs |
| Schubert: | Songs |
| Seiber: | Four French Folk Songs |
| Sor: | Seguidillas |
| Valderrabano: | Ay De Mi |
| Villa-Lobos: | Modinha Bachianas Brasilieras |

Voice & Guitar Duets Continued:

Walton: Anon in Love
Weber: Gittarrelieder

Bassoon & Guitar:

Goepfert: Sonata

Oboe & Guitar:

Bach: Adagio from Toccata, Adagio & Fugue in C Major
Satie: Gymnopedie

Harpichord & Guitar:

Bach: Trio Sonatas I-VI
Boccherini: Introduction & Fandango
Dodgson: Duo Concertant
Ponce: Prelude
Sonata

Piano & Guitar:

Beethoven: Andante con Variazioni
Beethoven: Serenade, Op. 8 (violin, viola, guitar)

Organ & Guitar:

De Blasio: God is Our Righteousness

Mixed Ensemble:

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Castelnuovo-Tedesco: | Ecloghe (fl, eng hrn, gtr) Romancero Gitano (mixed choir & guitar) |
| Giuliani: | Serenata (gtr, vln, vc) |
| Paganini: | Terzetto Concertante (gtr, vc, vla) Serenata (gtr, vc, vla) Quartetto No. 7 (vln, vla, gtr, vc) |
| Upensky: | Musical Sketches on Pushkin's Eugene Onegin (gtr & chamber ensemble) |
| Vivaldi: | Sonata in G Moll, Op. 13a, No. 6 (fl, rec, vln, oboe, gtr, basso continuo) |

Guitar Duets: various from different periods

Lily Afshar – Testimonials

Joseph Hagedorn
Music Dept.
University of Wisconsin-River Falls
River Falls, WI 54022
612-669-2883

March 1, 2017

As the Artistic Director of the Minnesota Guitar Society, I have had the pleasure of booking Lily Afshar on three different occasions to perform recitals for our Minneapolis-Saint Paul audiences. In every case, Afshar's concerts drew good-sized audiences. Her concert programs offered an excellent variety of repertoire, were masterfully played, and Afshar's stage manner was always relaxed and engaging. In her role as a performing artist, I give her the highest recommendation.

Sincerely,

Joseph Hagedorn

Joseph Hagedorn
Artistic Director
Minnesota Guitar Society
<http://www.mnguitar.org/>

Managing Director
Minneapolis Guitar Quartet
<http://www.minneapolisguitarquartet.com/>

Lecturer of Music-Guitar
University of Wisconsin-River Falls
<http://www.uwrf.edu/music/>

Price Rubin & Partners

Toll Free: 866-PRI-RUBI (774-7824) ext. 1

LA: 310-254-7149 Skype: pricerubin



For Booking Information contact:

Jack Price, Managing Director

jp@pricerubin.com | <http://www.pricerubin.com>

Lily Afshar – Testimonials

“It was great having you here. You played an outstanding concert and taught a very insightful master class. You got a standing ovation at the end of the first half and two more at the end. This is rare. Great job!”

– William Jenks, Portland Classic Guitar

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Lily Afshar – YouTube Links

Aranjuez Concerto, First Movement

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fqnIZpMjWyE>

Aranjuez Concerto, Second Movement

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-H65dCUhSFQ>

Aranjuez Concerto, Third Movement:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6F4tyjVi5RA>

Koyunbaba, Mov. I (excerpt)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DS2dHe-BHfU>

Koyunbaba, Mov. IV (excerpt)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9uAQsbB6HDE>

Misionera (excerpt)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Qo5sWpVnco>

Gragnani Sonata I for Violin & Guitar

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ad-sEdcXyql>

Recuerdos de la Alhambra

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gKHvw0BbDQU>

Persian Ballad: Dareneh Jaan

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5IBDkod23el>

No Hubo Remedio by Castelnuovo-Tedesco

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AHGIVtH4dgE>

Vivaldi Concerto in D

I. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dJSovPiOZ5E>

II. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B_czmxH8O-A

III. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5TzxI5S3qk8>

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Lily Afshar – YouTube Links

Una Limosna por el Amor de Dios

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yRLMquXZsZY>

Sevilla

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y8z9g0pRcFQ>

Capricho Arabe

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6rGlkw4QPoo>

Bach Prelude BWV1007

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ahrarjEPTqk>

Bach Prelude BWV 998

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jAFZODqQEro>

Artist Website: www.Lilyafshar.com

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Lily Afshar – Photo Gallery



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