

# REVIEWS... PRIVATE CD RELEASES

## GILBERT BIBERIAN

24 Preludes for guitar - Book 1

No.1 *Tombeau*; No.2 *Arabesques*; No.3 *Las Campanelas*; No.4 *Colombine*; No.5 *Zodiac*; No.6 *Pierrot*; No.7 *The River*; No.8 *The Romantic*; No.9 *The Sufi*; No.10 *Bolero*; No.11 *The Harp*; No.12 *Harlequin*.

### Denian Arcoleo

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Private Issue

In his annotation, Gilbert Biberian points out that 'prelude' used to mean something that was followed by a more weighty work, a whole suite, a fugue or even an opera. As if to underline the point that a prelude has been an independent musical form for some time, he makes some of his quite lengthy and, it goes without saying, highly developed examples of his musical thinking. *The Sufi* is typical, over eight minutes, conveying a Middle Eastern atmosphere with its hints of the mystical doctrines held by the Sufis. Every so often there are delicate and precisely-placed tambura blows that contribute to the general effect, like roasted almonds on top of a rich cake full of oriental spices. It needs the length in order to develop the mood and the atmosphere. This is connected to the Turkish tradition, where an instrumental solo has affinities with the free interpretation of an India raga. It calls for a particular and almost trancelike attention from a listener, and that does not always happen in the West. But the performer has to have the ability to create that mood through the power of the music, and Denian Arcoleo does that very well.

*Harlequin*, another of the Commedia dell'Arte characters, is a testing virtuoso piece, handled with aplomb by Arcoleo. The astonishing range of moods in these twelve Preludes makes the recent neglect of this original composer all the more surprising. The opening two Preludes, *Tombeau* and *Arabesques*, are as different as chalk and cheese: the one dour and closed-in, going back on itself like a melancholy thought that will not go away; the other an open soaring melody that rises like a lark's song, higher and higher. *Las Campanelas*, with its ringing tones interspersed with some piquant harmony, is adjacent

to *Colombine*, a portrait of the Commedia dell'Arte character, a servant-girl with intellect and strength of character. And so it goes on, surprise following surprise.

A somewhat less developed version of *Zodiac* appeared in Classical Guitar in August, 1986. Mysticism is a strong element in the organisation of the melodic episodes and their harmonic structure. After *Pierrot* comes *The River*, which (like the *Ultava* episode in Smetana's tone poem *Ma Vlast*) has an appropriately flowing melody, albeit with some choppy waters around the middle. *The Romantic* uses harmony that manages to be compelling and familiar at the same time. Its length - over five minutes - may not recommend itself to today's short-attentioned audiences.

Not every private issue is worth hearing (you can say the same about commercial distributions), but this one certainly is, devoted as it is to the work of a serious composer who has done much for the guitar in his 65 years. In Denian Arcoleo, who studied with Biberian as well as with David Russell and Graham Klippel, he has found a guitarist who has both the technical and the intellectual capacity to triumph over everything that can be thrown at him. It leads inevitably to the hope that there will be more to come from the same source.

Colin Cooper

## CROSSED WIRES AND COLOURED STRINGS: THE CLASSICAL GUITAR MUSIC OF HAYLEY SAVAGE

SAVAGE : *Dodecaphonica*; *Passing Through*; *Crossed Wires*; *Falling Stars*; *Arabah Ca'ar*; *Coloured Strings*; *Lifeline*.

**Albach Duo** (1 and 2),

**Appassionata Trio** (5), **Hayley Savage** (remainder)

HSJS2 www.hayleysavage.co.uk

Hayley Savage's music is new to me although her reputation as a fine interpreter of her own music is not. Rebecca Baulch and David Black as the Albach Duo perform *Dodecaphonica*, a two-movement work of Eastern influence which is complex and intricate in the first movement and more static in the final movement *Stalemate*. *Passing Through* is a heartfelt tribute to a

friend's father who had died. The first thing that struck me was how refreshingly new it sounded. Constantly sad yet often having an inner motion that is hard to categorize, it made a lasting impression on me. *Crossed Wires* is livelier, a little jazzy in its harmonies, and a nice musical contrast to the former. *Falling Stars* is quietly calm and slightly mysterious in its harmonies, an evocative tone-painting of a desert night sky and the vastness of the cosmos. Amanda Cook, and Rebecca Baulch join Hayley as the Appassionata Trio in the Eastern inspired *Arabah Ca'ar*. It begins calmly enough with various little strands of melody and harmony before gathering momentum and becoming something quite violent and dramatic, before dying away again into deepening silence.

*Coloured Strings* is an eight-movement suite (an introduction preceding the seven visible colours of the spectrum). The musical material of the introduction is the basis for all the main material of the other seven items, in spite of each colour having its own inherent character. *Red's* music is deep and rich but having an emotional quality that is quite individual. The intrusion of *Orange* is sudden. It is nervous and jumpy music, contrasted by *Yellow*, which is becalming and comfortingly warm with a rapidly moving harmonic section in the middle. *Green* begins in a reticent fashion before opening up like a flower in the central part, whilst *Blue's* harmonies are often jazz-like. Again an inner motion springs up within the passagework contrasting within the slow opening, before dissipating into *Indigo* the emotionally intense hub of the entire work, which eventually eases into the final *Violet* and the opening material returns before the rainbow dissolves into nothingness. The 25 minutes of this suite are some of the most remarkable music I have ever had the privilege to hear. The last track *Lifeline* is a joyous yet movingly emotional journey and a fine ending to a stunningly individual CD. This lady is walking her own path, sounding like nobody else and yet writing music that everybody should listen to. This CD deserves every success.

Chris Dumigan