

Lily Afshar

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 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 seh-tar, a traditional Persian instrument which evolved over many centuries into the guitar.

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.

For more information please visit www.lilyafshar.com