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Iran and the Guitar

Lily Afshar (pictured above)

Fresh from New Haven!

- **Endrikat, Katrin.** *Between the Worlds.*

Works by Barrios, Tansman, Berkeley, Bach, and Albéniz. No label or number, ca. 2015.

- **Mallett, Christopher.** *The Porcelain Tower.*

Works by R. Sainz de la Maza, Bogdanović, Morel, Koshkin, Berkeley, and Villa-Lobos. No label or number, 2014.

christophermallett.com.

Two very fine guitarists, Endrikat from Berlin and Mallett from San Diego, have recorded discs that are testaments both to their fine previous training and their “finishing” under the tutelage of Benjamin Verdery at Yale. Both CDs are in the traditional recital format but very well programmed with significant works on each. The Lennox Berkeley *Sonatina*—one of my favorite works—figures on both discs (also see above).

Endrikat begins with the familiar Barrios *La catedral*, very well played, but moves to the less well-known *Variations sur un thème de Scriabine* by Tansman. She plays it admirably with delicacy or power as needed. Her version of the Berkeley is very good. Her performance of the third movement is slower than many but allows the lyrical elements to be enjoyed. The Bach *First Lute Suite* is performed well, though there is a questionable note in the fifth measure of the Presto of the first movement. The knotty Courante is played with admirable fluency, which can also be said of the remaining movements in the suite. In the Gigue she uses a text that is not exactly one I have encountered before, but the choices work in context. Very impressively, there is a real feeling of continuity from one movement to the next. Three works by Albéniz conclude the album. All are often a bit too leisurely for my taste, though they bring a suitable conclusion to this excellent collection. There are slight variations in levels and presence among the pieces but not enough to be a problem with the very clean and detailed sound. Liner notes are good.

Mallett, one-half of Duo Noire (featured on the cover of *Soundboard* 40, No. 3), begins his fine disc with powerful performances of two dances by Regino Sainz de la Maza. The *Zapateado* and *Rondeña* have never sounded better. What follows is Dušan Bogdanović’s utterly charming *Jazz Sonatina*. Mallett plays it beautifully. Nikita Koshkin’s *The Porcelain Tower: Variations on a Theme of Stepan Rak* is one-sixth of a group of works in which John Duarte, Rak, and Koshkin agreed to compose works based on each other’s themes. (The whole set has been recorded by Stein-Erik Olsen.) Koshkin’s take on the Rak theme is a well-conceived and effective work, with the variations ingenious in themselves, but that articulate in such a way as to have a distinct cumulative effect. An impressive work and performance. If you don’t know the piece it is worth the price of the disc by itself. Mallett’s Berkeley *Sonatina* is very fine, and crisply virtuosic performances of Villa-Lobos *Etudes* 7 and 12 conclude the program. The recording was engineered by the great steel-string acoustic guitarist William Coulter, who has also performed with Benjamin Verdery. It is exceedingly well done. Get this disc: Mallett is a player to watch. – Al Kunze

