

Gilbert Isbin - Easy Lute Pieces Vol. 2, ISBN 9781096259459

Review by Carsten Timpe

Shortly after the first volume of "Easy Lute Pieces Vol.2 ", Belgian composer, jazz musician, guitarist and lutenist Gilbert Isbin has already released a second volume ("Vol.2") and he may well be called one of the most prolific composers of new lute music !

Once again, the Belgian composer has succeeded in producing 12 short character pieces, each of which tell a short story - more on that below.

But first of all a brief review of the compositional work of the Belgian: Isbin recently introduced the lute community to '7 pieces of old Flemish songs for solo lute', "5 Songs for Lute" (see discussion Lauteninfo 2-3 / 2018) with new art songs, based on poems of well-known poets (eg Shakespeare), arrangements for lute of pieces by the early deceased Nick Drake, as well as the book "The improvising lutenist" (see review by Markus Lutz in the lute info), which lutenists should encourage to play improvised music. The guitarist and lutenist Stathis Skandalidis has recorded a CD with new lute music by Isbin and many works can also be viewed in various YouTube videos.

With the second volume, Gilbert Isbin again kindly thought of the lute beginners and composed these works for children and adults. The pieces fit well on the lute and consist of beautiful melodies - of course in a today's style.

The book begins with the silent awakening of nature in "Silent Spring" and already in the first bars you have the feeling that here and there a flower starts to bloom. In the second piece you might have arrived well into spring with "Being here". Eight note groups are repeated throughout with unusual sequences that do not sound "weird" or "atonal", but simply rearrange and revive our well-established listening habits. Something "blue" or maybe "bluesy" is evoked in "A blue song" - Quarter notes in a Tempo of 80 - so not too fast, a bit melancholic for sure. The piece will become faster and more lively in the second part. After this excursion to the "Blues", the first thing to do is to tenderly, sensitively and quietly continue with "Tender", at a tempo of 72. And as all of the pieces tell a continuous story, you arrive home with 'Homecoming' - somehow Isbin manages to turn the titles and their meaning into music in an astonishing way. So you "somehow" return 'home" on the third count with a dotted quarter note in the 4/4 bars. Once home, there is also the necessary comfort with "Solace", if the "world might not have been that good for you out there".

The following piece is "Late at Night" – Also this piece doesn't expect big technical playing requirements. However, one should practice the pieces carefully and pay good attention to the musical reproduction of the "piece's character".

If you have survived the night well, you may embrace the following morning with "Embracing the Morning". This little work also follows the modern tone language -

and it is a refreshing sound that Isbin generates here. Other songs will follow, "Romantic Notion" and the last song "Eastern Song" which will somehow remind you of Far Eastern sitar sounds.

In conclusion, it can be said that the quality of the lute pieces, despite the rapid succession of his writings, does not lose its expression and variety at all. One is always amazed which little short stories are implemented in music. At any rate, a series of motivic film sequences occurred to me spontaneously in each of his pieces. As mentioned in the last review, these pieces remind me of little expressive paintings.