

Gilbert Isbin - New Compositions For Renaissance Guitar, ISBN 9781073681310
By Carsten Timpe

The Belgian composer, jazz musician, guitarist and lutenist Gilbert Isbin, currently arguably one of the most prolific composers for new lute music, has been concentrating since a few months on composing for the renaissance guitar.

Recently, the versatile artist Isbin has published numerous interesting music publications for lute, e.g. the "Easy Lute Pieces Vol. 1 and Vol. 2 "(see comments in the Lute Info).

Who owns a Renaissance guitar, - in comparison to the Renaissance lute a not so frequently played instrument with a repertoire that is reasonably overlooked-, knows that there exist a rather limited number (some hundred, but musically superb) pieces, mostly written by French composers, such as Guillaume Morlaye, Adrian Leroy and the from Augsburg to Paris emigrated Gregory Brayssing (known as "Gregoire Brayssing").

There are also some wonderful Spanish pieces by Alonso Mudarra, Miguel de Fuenllana, a few pieces from Italy and England and a few transcriptions from recent times.

The reviewer was all the more delighted to receive the book 'New Compositions For Renaissance Guitar'. One thing to be said straight away : Isbin's eight newly composed pieces for the 4 course Renaissance guitars do not draw on the typical musical idioms back to the Renaissance, but rather open a door to completely new sounds on the instrument.

You have to give yourself some time to dive into the world of Isbin's compositions.

Again, the Belgian composer wrote some little, often impressionistic mood pictures comparable to paintings or even modern short stories.

The book begins with "From A Window", tempo 80 (Quarter notes), playable with hardly any technical challenges for the amateur player.

The following piece "Fascination", is predominantly composed in sixteenth notes (quarter notes at 80), with less easy fingering positions, is more intended for the professional musician. This is also true for some other pieces which are more technical challenging than the "Easy Lute Pieces".

One of my favourite pieces is "All The Colours You Bring", which Isbin composed originally for the lute, was recorded by guitarist / lutenist Stathis Skandalidis on an Isbin CD and which he now arranged for the Renaissance guitar with some modifications.

Isbin frequently uses large intervallic leaps on the chanterelle to the "i", "k" or "l" (in tablature) which require some more intense practice to perform them clean.

It's difficult to tell whether Isbin composed these pieces on a Renaissance guitar or with the use of appropriate software (the pieces you can be listened to on YouTube). In some pieces he approaches the instrument in a different way. But then other compositions reconcile with common technical aspects of the instrument.

"The Road To You", "The Piece Within", "Heart Piece "and" First Light "can be played pretty well technically and impress also by their musical beauty. After a few weeks of getting accustomed with Isbin's new compositions for the Renaissance guitar, the melodies become more familiar and some become catchy tunes ! As I said, they are not sequels of the pieces of the Renaissance, but entirely new musical "Entities" that you have to listen to. Who gets involved and likes it, he/she is rewarded by these eight little musical sketches. The author liked them more and more. In any case, the lute and renaissance guitarist community should be thankful that a gifted composer like Gilbert Isbin is writing after more than 400 Years new works for a virtually forgotten instrument! The compositions are for sale in the relevant trade, You can listen to the pieces in advance on YouTube or on the homepage of the composer.

(www.gilbertisbin.com)