

# Sharon Isbin

Guitarist

[www.sharonisbin.com](http://www.sharonisbin.com)

Acclaimed for her extraordinary lyricism, technique and versatility, multiple GRAMMY Award winner Sharon Isbin was named Musical America Worldwide's 2020 Instrumentalist of the Year, the first guitarist ever to receive the coveted honor in their 59-year award history. She was inducted into the 2023 Guitar Foundation of America Hall of Fame and received their Artistic Achievement Award. Hailed as "the pre-eminent guitarist of our time," she is the winner of *Guitar Player* magazine's Best Classical Guitarist award, Germany's Echo Klassik, Concert Artists Guild's Virtuoso Award, the Toronto and Madrid Queen Sofia competitions, and the first guitarist to win the Munich ARD Competition. Isbin has appeared as soloist with over 200 orchestras and has given sold-out performances in many of the world's finest halls across 40 countries, including New York's Carnegie and Geffen Halls, Boston's Symphony Hall, Washington D.C.'s Kennedy Center, Philadelphia's Kimmel Center, London's Barbican and Wigmore Halls, Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, Paris' Châtelet, Vienna's Musikverein, Munich's Herkulesaal, Argentina's Teatro Colón, and Madrid's Teatro Real. She has served as Artistic Director and soloist of festivals she created for Carnegie Hall and the Ordway Music Theatre (St. Paul), New York's 92NY, and the national radio series *Guitarjam*.

American Public Television's acclaimed one-hour documentary *Sharon Isbin: Troubadour* has been seen by millions on over 200 PBS stations across the U.S. and abroad. Winner of the ASCAP Television Broadcast Award, the film is available with bonus performances on DVD, Blu-ray, and streaming on Amazon and PBS Passport. Watch the trailer at: [www.sharonisbintroubadour.com](http://www.sharonisbintroubadour.com) Other recent national performances on PBS include the *Billy Joel Gershwin Prize* with Josh Groban, and *Tavis Smiley*. A frequent guest on NPR's *All Things Considered* and *A Prairie Home Companion*, Isbin has been featured on television throughout the world, including *CBS Sunday Morning*, Showtime's *The L Word*, and as soloist on the GRAMMY-nominated soundtrack of Scorsese's Oscar-winning *The Departed*. She performed at Ground Zero for the first internationally televised 9/11 memorial, in concert at the White House by invitation of President Obama, and as the only classical artist in the 2010 GRAMMY Awards. She has been profiled in periodicals from *People* to *Elle*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times*, as well as appearing on the covers of over 50 magazines.

Isbin's catalogue of over 35 albums from Baroque, Spanish/Latin and 20th Century to crossover and jazz-fusion, has sold more than a million copies and reflects her remarkable versatility. Her *Live in Aspen* was recorded with India's foremost sarod virtuoso Amjad Ali Khan at their sold-out Aspen Music Festival concert and released June 2024 for the Festival's 75th anniversary. Her recordings named Best of 2020 feature world premieres composed for her: *Affinity* showcasing Chris Brubeck's dazzling guitar concerto, along with works by Leo Brouwer, Tan Dun, Antonio Lauro and Richard Danielpour; and *Strings for Peace* with Khan and his sons Amaan and Ayaan Ali Bangash in a program of ragas for guitar, sarod and tabla. Her 2019 *Souvenirs of Spain & Italy* with the Pacifica Quartet showcases beautiful and rarely heard guitar quintets from the Baroque to mid-20th century, including works by Vivaldi, Boccherini and Castelnuovo-Tedesco, and debuted at #1 on Amazon; her *Alma Española* with opera star Isabel Leonard, the first Spanish art song album with guitar of its kind in 40 years, was

honored with a 2018 GRAMMY Award for Producer of the Year. She appears as a guest artist on bluegrass star Alison Brown's album *On Banjo* released in 2023.

Other recent #1 bestselling titles include *Sharon Isbin: 5 Classic Albums* and *Sharon Isbin & Friends: Guitar Passions* with rock and jazz guests Steve Vai, Steve Morse, Heart's Nancy Wilson, Stanley Jordan and Romero Lubambo. Her GRAMMY-winning *Journey to the New World* with guests Joan Baez and Mark O'Connor spent 63 consecutive weeks on top *Billboard* charts. Her *Dreams of a World* soared onto top classical *Billboard* charts, edging out *The Three Tenors*, and earned her a GRAMMY for Best Instrumental Soloist, making her the first classical guitarist to receive a GRAMMY in 28 years. Her world premiere recording of concerti written for her by Christopher Rouse and Tan Dun received a GRAMMY and Germany's prestigious Echo Klassik Award. She received a Latin GRAMMY nomination and GLAAD Media Award nomination for Outstanding Music Artist (alongside Melissa Etheridge) for her *Billboard* Top 10 Classical disc with the New York Philharmonic of Rodrigo *Concierto de Aranjuez/Ponce/Villa-Lobos* concertos, the Philharmonic's only recording with guitar, which followed their Lincoln Center performances with Isbin as their first guitar soloist in 26 years. Other bestselling titles include *Baroque Favorites for Guitar* with the Zurich Chamber Orchestra, and her GRAMMY-nominated *Journey to the Amazon* with Brazilian percussionist Thiago de Mello and saxophonist Paul Winter. Her recordings have received many other honors, including Recording of the Year in *Gramophone* and *CD Review*, Recording of the Month in *Stereo Review*, and Album of the Year in *Guitar Player*.

Other recordings include J.S.Bach *Complete Lute Suites*, Aaron Jay Kernis' *Double Concerto* with violinist Cho-Liang Lin and the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, *Wayfaring Stranger* with mezzo-soprano Susanne Mentzer, and concerti by Joaquin Rodrigo which the composer praised as "magnificent." She is also featured on the GRAMMY Foundation's *Smart Symphonies* distributed to over five million families.

Sharon Isbin has been acclaimed for expanding the guitar repertoire with some of the finest new works of our time, and has premiered over 80 works written for her by world-renowned composers, including more concerti than any other guitarist, as well as numerous solo and chamber works. Works for her by John Corigliano, Joseph Schwantner and Lukas Foss are featured on her *American Landscapes*, the first-ever recording of American guitar concerti. (In November 1995, it was launched in the space shuttle Atlantis and presented to Russian cosmonauts during a rendezvous with Mir.) She premiered *Concert de Gaudí* by Christopher Rouse with Christoph Eschenbach and the NDR Symphony, followed by the U.S. premiere with the Dallas Symphony. Among many other composers who have written for her are Joan Tower, David Diamond, Aaron Jay Kernis, Leo Brouwer, Howard Shore, Ned Rorem and Ami Maayani, with highlights including John Duarte's *Joan Baez Suite*, and a duo by rock guitarist Steve Vai which they performed in Paris' Théâtre du Châtelet. Recent premieres of works written for her include *Of Love and Longing* by Richard Danielpour co-commissioned by Carnegie Hall for its 125th anniversary and by Chicago's Harris Theater; *Affinity: Concerto for Guitar & Orchestra* by Chris Brubeck which honors his father Dave Brubeck; *Song of a Dreaming Sparrow* by Schwantner which she premiered with the Pacifica Quartet in New York City and on tour in 2022; the North American premiere in 2023 of Tan Dun's *Yi2* guitar concerto written for her; the world premiere of Karen LeFrak's *Bailamos* with the National Symphony in their 2023 Labor Day concert for over 10,000 on the US Capitol Lawn and her *Miami Concerto* in 2024.

Highlights include tours with the Zurich Chamber Orchestra, Austria's Tonkünstler Orchestra and Belgium's Philharmonique de Liege, a week of performances at the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris, Filarmonica Toscanini in Milan, MIDEM Classical Awards in Cannes, a 21-city Guitar Passions tour with jazz greats Stanley Jordan and Romero Lubambo, and most recently performances with the Detroit,

National and Montreal Symphonies, and sold-out recitals in the Kennedy Center, Philadelphia's Kimmel Center, and Carnegie Hall including a collaboration with Sting. Her latest partnership, Strings for Peace, with sarod master Amjad Ali Khan is an extraordinary program of ragas in an eloquent and impassioned call for harmony—in music, religion, and culture throughout the world. Strings for Peace debuted on a multi-city tour of India and continues to appear throughout North America.

Isbin has toured Europe annually since she was seventeen, and appears as soloist with orchestras throughout the world, including the New York Philharmonic, National Symphony, Baltimore, Detroit, Houston, Dallas, Pittsburgh, Minnesota, Montreal, St. Louis, Nashville, New Jersey, Louisville, Indianapolis, Milwaukee, Phoenix, Buffalo and Utah Symphonies; the London Symphony, Orchestre National de France; and BBC Scottish, Lisbon Gulbenkian, Prague, Milan Verdi, Belgrade, Buenos Aires, Mexico City, Jerusalem and Tokyo Symphonies; and chamber orchestras including Saint Paul, Los Angeles, Zurich, Scottish and Lausanne. Her festival appearances include Mostly Mozart, Aspen, Ravinia, Grant Park, Caramoor, Chautauqua, Interlochen, Santa Fe, Mexico City, Bermuda, São Paulo, Hong Kong, Montreux, Strasbourg, Paris, Athens, Istanbul, Ravenna, Prague and Budapest festivals.

As a chamber musician, Isbin has performed with the Emerson String Quartet and the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, soprano Jessica Rivera, a Guitar Summit tour with jazz greats Herb Ellis, Stanley Jordan and Michael Hedges, trio recordings with Larry Coryell and Laurindo Almeida, and duo recordings with Carlos Barbosa-Lima. She collaborated with Antonio Carlos Jobim, and has shared the stage with luminaries from Aretha Franklin to Muhammad Ali.

Born in Minneapolis, Sharon Isbin began her guitar studies at age nine in Italy, and later studied with Andrés Segovia, Oscar Ghiglia, and for ten years with noted Bach scholar and keyboardist Rosalyn Tureck with whom she collaborated on landmark editions/recordings of the Bach lute suites for guitar (Warner Classics/G. Schirmer). She received a B.A. *cum laude* from Yale University and a Master of Music from the Yale School of Music. She authored the *Classical Guitar Answer Book*, and is Director of guitar departments at the Aspen Music Festival and The Juilliard School (which she created in 1989 becoming the first and only guitar instructor in the institution's 100-year history). Her students from over 20 countries are among the world's leading performers, and include winners of Young Concert Artists, Concert Artists Guild, the Avery Fisher Career Grant, and four 1st Prize winners of Guitar Foundation of America's International Concert Artist Competition.

Sharon Isbin has been practicing Transcendental Meditation since age 17 and donates her time to perform benefits for the David Lynch Foundation, along with Katy Perry, Sting, Hugh Jackman, Jerry Seinfeld and Jay Leno, to bring TM to at-risk communities. In her spare time, she enjoys trekking in the jungles of Latin America, cross-country skiing, snorkeling and mountain hiking. Please visit her on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [www.sharonisbin.com](http://www.sharonisbin.com)

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