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CD Releases / Interview with classical guitarists: Maria Camahort Quintet (UK) | Album "Iberian Colours"

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I'm delighted to have London-based Spanish guitarist **Maria Camahort**.

Today, Maria will tell us about Maria Camahort Quintet's debut album '**Iberian Colours**'.

Q1. Please tell us about yourself and your quintet.

About myself: Classical trained guitarist with a particular focus in chamber music and creative/collaborative projects, working with any artistic profiles that the context and the opportunity makes it possible! With years of experience in arranging music, and now starting slowly to compose at small scale...

About quintet: The quintet is a very special ensemble that focuses in music by Spanish composers influenced by traditional music. The original idea came from one of my last recitals as a Master Student at Guildhall School of Music, and the ensemble got together in November 2011. We have been lucky enough to keep the same musicians from the very beginning until present; this fact, with time, has made

us develop a very strong personality as an ensemble. Also, we have a very special timbre as a quintet, an unusual combination of instruments: Violin&voice, soprano, guitar, cello, percussion&guitar, and we try to get most of this characteristic as well.

Q2. Please tell us about your album 'Iberian Colours'. What inspires you to create this album?

The inspiration is exactly the same one that with the origin of the quintet project. The Album has been just the natural consequence of having been working together on different repertoire since 2011. Again, the album is entirely formed by music by Spanish composers that were inspired in traditional music, with our very own way of re-creating this music. I do the arrangements, but believe me the result has lots to do with all the energy and time spent in rehearsals. And also it has to do with the great dynamic we have between us, created from the fact that everyone in the ensemble deeply respects the musicianship of each other in the quintet.

Q3. You are very passionate about ensemble/collaborative performances and making a fusion of different styles and aesthetics as we can hear in this album. Please tell us about your artistic vision.

My artistic vision simply came from the fact of realizing one particular day that I didn't want to become a Solo performer, although it was and it is one of the main pathways in my career, Classical guitar. Together with this, and more or less at the same time, I was lucky enough to learn from two particular teachers (Feliu Gasull and Emilio Molina) to be creative with the music I was learning, instead of having classical interpretation as my only relationship with music-making. Also the fact of starting my first chamber projects, back in Barcelona...and starting learning from reading and listening repertoire not-for-classical-guitar... All of this led to the artistic ambition I have now... which is as simple as to keep learning from working from different musicians (and artists in general), and to try, anytime is possible to have the opportunity, to create music by arranging or even, sometimes, writing new material.

Q4. You are also very keen on arranging music. Please tell us about it (and your arranging process, anecdotes, etc.).

This is all part of the same said in last question... When I realized that I didn't want to become a Soloist, I also realized how little opportunities, compared to other instruments, classical guitarists have to play in different ensembles and contexts.

Yes, there are particular compositions for chamber music, duos, concertos... but you can't compare with other string instruments, or wind... So the fact of arranging came simply from the need of creating repertoire, as simple as that. And it results I love it, so I do spend lots of time doing this.

There was a particular project, this time not-classical related, that helped me lots to develop this facet in me, which was the first collaboration with Violeta García, singer and violinist of the quintet. I don't know how, but suddenly we were immersed in this idea of creating very particular versions from a specific genre of Spanish song, called Coplas... She had the idea, and I just said yes....

The thing is, Violeta had never sung before in concerts... and I don't think I did arrange anything before that wasn't a score, that wasn't written music ... neither of us did know much about the way of playing those songs either... And still, we went for it... And with this project, she started to sing, and I properly started to arrange.... And we still do now!!

Q5. This album includes two songs in flamenco style composed by yourself to the poems of Federico García Lorca. Please tell us about those works.

First of all, they are NOT in flamenco style... They are just inspired by that style. I deeply respect flamenco, but sadly I can't play it!! I just can learn from it when listening, take ideas and enjoy it!

These two compositions with poetry by Federico García-Lorca were created for a collaboration with flamenco singer Lina León, about two years ago. I met Lina for the first time years ago in Barcelona, during a project held at Escola Superior de Música de Catalunya, and we had the opportunity to work again together in London in different occasions. Lina also enjoys a succesful career as a flutist, and her strong musicianship allows her to collaborate either in many different projects related with classical music, flamenco, Cuban music, jazz, etc.

I was asked to write these two songs with poetry by Lorca in a style that could recreate in some way flamenco music, that was the idea given to me... And this represented a great challenge for me. However, to collaborate with Lina gave me

plenty of ideas to develop, until I managed to compose something that I was happy with. The rest was just a matter of recreating musically the powerful images that Lorca describes in two of his most well-known poems: La Cogida y la muerte and Poema de la Soleá - ¡Ay!.

Poems that I totally recommend to read...

Q6. Please tell us about the guitar you used for the recording.

The guitar is from the luthier, Renee Barslaag. I got it about ten years ago I think... and I still love its sound...!!

Q7. Please tell us about your next project.

I'm working at the moment in an arrangement for the quintet, this time a Sephardic song called "Arvoles lloran". This arrangement it actually comes from an earlier arrangement of this song for Violeta and myself, but the quintet needs now some music from earlier periods than SXX-XXI for future concerts, so I am starting to investigate on this direction!

And in terms of playing, I have coming a concert with wonderful flutist Lucy Driver, a concert at Milton Court on 20th of October with the quintet (sharing stage with guitarists Jorge Skogmo and Ahmed Dickinson!!), and a UK tour with the theatre company Little Soldiers productions, which I am looking forwards!

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