

CD Review: *Meng* — Meng Su, solo guitar

by Jeremy Reynolds



Meng Su is a superstar in the classical guitar world. After winning the Vienna Youth Guitar Competition at age 14, she took grand prize in the Tokyo International guitar competition at 17, and first place in the Parkening Young Guitarist Competition at 18. Last July, she released her first solo album: *Meng*. Those unfamiliar with her name prior to listening will certainly remember it after hearing this recording.

Classical guitar can sound repetitive or homogenous in large quantities to uninitiated ears. But there's an uncanny subtlety to Su's playing that makes each second of the album's

63-minute runtime engaging.

In the somber opening strains of John Williams's *Avner's Theme* (from the film *Munich*), she demonstrates a charming, delicate wistfulness. Su exhibits the same attention to detail in the slow movements of Castelnuovo-Tedesco's *Sonata* ("Omaggio a Boccherini"), Francisco Tarregá's *Gran Vals*, the "Loure" from J.S. Bach's *Lute Suite No. 4*, and the middle three movements from William Walton's *Five Bagatelles*. These are all well-played and nicely nuanced.

But the album really sparkles in its more virtuosic passages. In particular, the Prelude from the Bach suite is marvelous. To say it is clean would be an understatement — her playing is at once impeccable and effortless, the mark of a true master. Su plays the outer movements of Castelnuovo-Tedesco's *Sonata* with a gripping, nervous energy, tossing off the quicker riffs flawlessly. Her interpretation of Tarregá's *Rosita* ambles along quite cheerfully, and her playing in the final Walton bagatelle is astonishing for its rhythmic exactitude.

This album is well worth a concentrated listening session, but it would also figure nicely as the background to a dinner party — and this is meant as a compliment. Full of subtlety and nuance, her playing is not showy or aggressive, but quietly beautiful and profound. *Meng* was recorded on the Tonar Music label and is available for purchase on iTunes, at Amazon.com, and from other retailers.

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