

PREMIERE OF THE FORTNIGHT

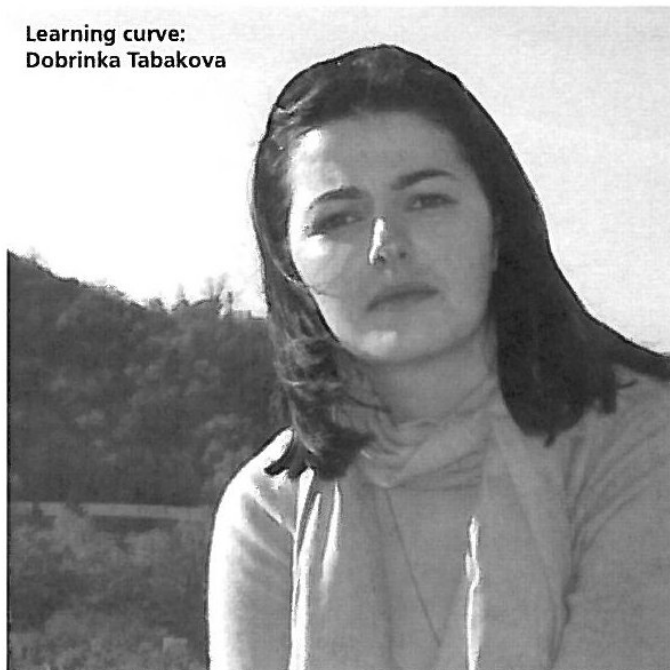
Dobrinka Tabakova found the process of composing a new work for guitarist Milos Karadaglic's Wigmore Hall debut something of a learning curve, not having composed for the solo instrument before: 'The guitar is one of the more difficult instruments for a composer as it's so idiomatic and the sound is so immediate.'

As a way into the soundworld for *Compass*, a ten-minute work in four movements, the 29-year-old Bulgarian-born composer looked toward the music of Paco de Lucia and the structure of flamenco dances. Coincidentally, one of the many meanings of 'compass' is 'rhythm' in Spanish, and like flamenco music, Tabakova's music features recurring patterns and ideas. A frantic and virtuosic first movement is contrasted with a second more delicate section that plays with effects such as harmonics, tremolos and crossed strings – where two strings are woven on top of each other and held, with one finger and plucked to produce a Cagian effect not unlike a prepared piano, explains Tabakova.

'I'm usually not a fan of using effects unless it fits into the whole of the work. Otherwise it's a gimmick and won't help the structure in any way. I generally prefer to write acoustic pieces, as I like to offer musicians the opportunity to play a completely new piece without any additional factors around it. I would say I've chosen the more difficult route, but so far I'm happy with the piece.'

A 'valse triste', song-like melody with traditional accompaniment in

Learning curve:
Dobrinka Tabakova



the third movement lies at the heart of *Compass*, says the London-based composer. She begins the last movement with a 'linear' melody, alluding to the sound of a cello or some other bold long sustaining instrument, before finishing with a more vertically structured chorale.

As well as the lute music of John Dowland, Britten's *Nocturnal* and popular works by Albéniz, Villa-Lobos, and Rodrigo, in preparation for the commission Tabakova listened to Karadaglic's recording of Carlo Domeniconi's *Koyunbaba* which he will also play at the Wigmore Hall. 'Looking at the folk melody woven into the piece, I realised how difficult it is to create a structure for such a specific and non-sustaining instrument, and that you need to change the timbres often to keep the interest. Milos plays it fantastically, his palette of colours is incredible so I'm delighted to write a guitar piece for someone who exhibits the strengths of the instrument so well.'

As for Karadaglic, he was drawn to the poetry of Tabakova's music and her ability to write for the guitar in terms of its real natural sound and ability. 'Unlike some composers who write as if the guitar was an alien instrument, she makes the guitar sound like a guitar.'

Susan Nickalls

Dobrinka Tabakova's Compass will be premiered by Milos Karadaglic at his Wigmore Hall debut recital on 8 January. The concert begins at 7.30pm.

www.dobrinka.com

www.milosguitar.com