
About the Music

España: Six Album Leaves, Op. 165 was composed around 1890 and published the same year. In this set of pieces, Albéniz magically transports the listener to colorful locations, each with its own special Spanish flavor. These attractive musical “postcards” are not particularly difficult technically, with a pedagogical level being somewhere between late intermediate and early advanced.

Albéniz created a new musical language for the piano, derived from Spain’s heritage as found in its indigenous folk music. The interpretation of his music requires expressing a wide range of emotions—including joy, nostalgia, excitement, passion and sadness—all portrayed with subtle dynamic nuances. His music is often an impression of a landscape, event, or personal human experience. Performers must connect emotionally, but with artistic freedom and a confident spontaneity.

Spanish folk music evolved from four prominent cultures: Byzantine, Moorish, Gypsy and Jewish. During the Moorish occupation of Spain, there were musical and cultural influences that profoundly affected Spanish music. However, with the expulsion of the Moors in 1525, the lutes, bowed rebabs and tambourines used by the Moors were substituted for instruments favored by the Gypsies. With the guitar, castanets, muffled hand clapping and finger snapping, the Gypsies developed the *cante hondo* style, which became the popular *cante flamenco* of today.

Albéniz made changes of scenery a vital force in his personal life, as well as in his music. Three of the pieces in this set—*Prélude*, *Tango* and *Malagueña*—are representative of the southern region of Spain known as Andalucía, the area from which the composer frequently found creative inspiration. This is the land of *cante flamenco* and Gypsy folk music. Taking the guitar and castanets as his instrumental models, and incorporating poignant melodies and dazzling dance-like rhythms, Albéniz captures the very essence of this exciting music.

Albéniz combines varied stylistic elements in *España*. For example, in the *Serenata*, he contrasts the expressive melodic fragments of the *cante hondo* section with more rhythmic dance-like passages. The final two pieces, *Capricho Catalán* and *Zortzico* represent the north-

east provinces of Catalonia and Basque, two regions of Spain whose people are renowned for their strong individualism. All of these pieces require subtle changes in tempo. Many of the ritardandos should be played as very slight rhythmic elongations, as if tempo rubato. Artistic pedaling—such as the use of half, quarter (or surface) depression, flutter pedal and una corda—allow for many different sonorities, and contribute to creating a mysterious, exotic ambience.

Performance Suggestions

No. 1, *Prélude* 6

This piece evokes Gypsy folk music. Its Arab-Andalusian influence includes use of the phrygian mode (with the lowered second step), used interchangeably with other pitch modifications. It is free in form, technically not demanding, and musically very rewarding. Create an intriguing, exotic mood by using visual imagery and imagination.

Compositionally, this piece uses stylistic elements of the Spanish idiom as found in the plaintively expressive melodic sections (measures 1–4). These phrases should be performed tempo rubato, alternating with the guitaristic passages (measures 5–8), which are performed in a more upbeat and steady tempo. At measures 17–28, the repeated triplet figures, simulating Spanish castanets, should be performed with absolute clarity and precision. In measure 34, lengthen the duration of the note on beat 2, creating an agogic accent for dramatic effect. At measures 46 and 48, the performer may explore the use of half pedal.

No. 2, *Tango* 10

One of Albéniz’s well-known compositions, this popular dance is a model of refined elegance. The swaying rhythmic pattern in the bass cradles a charming melody. This magically creates a pleasant ambience for the music’s message—a sentimentality both tender and nostalgic.

This piece employs rhythmic elements of the *habanera*, which is the ancestor of the Andalusian tango. Both are based on syncopated patterns within a $\frac{2}{4}$ meter. The

Tango

No. 2

Andantino (♩ = ca. 66)

p *mp*

5

poco rit. *a tempo* *cresc.*

poco rit. *a tempo* *cresc.*

10

mf marcato

mf marcato

15

f riten. *a tempo* *riten.* *a tempo*

f riten. *a tempo* *riten.* *a tempo*

a

a

Malagueña

Allegretto (♩ = ca. 200)

No. 3

Measures 1-5 of the piece. The right hand features a melodic line with slurs and accents, including triplet patterns. The left hand provides a rhythmic accompaniment with slurs and accents. Performance markings include *p staccato* and *mp ten. col pedale*. Fingering numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4 are indicated for the right hand.

6

Measures 6-10. The right hand continues with triplet patterns and slurs. The left hand has a steady accompaniment. Performance markings include *mf* and *ben tenuto*. Fingering numbers 1, 3, and 3-1 are shown.

11

Measures 11-15. The right hand features a melodic line with slurs and accents. The left hand has a steady accompaniment. Performance marking includes *poco a poco cresc.*

16

Measures 16-20. The right hand starts with an *8va* marking and a triplet pattern. The left hand has a steady accompaniment. Performance marking includes *ff sempre stacc.* Fingering numbers 1, 2, 3, and 5 are shown.

Serenata

No. 4

Allegretto (♩ = ca. 120)

mp *leggiero staccato*

Measures 1-4. Treble clef: 4, 2, 3, 131, 2, 1, 4, 3, 1, 5, 5, 3, 1, 4, 1, 2, 1. Bass clef: 2, 1, 3, 1, 3, 5, 3, 2, 4, 1, 1, 1. Includes circled 'a' and 'b' markers.

5

poco rit.

Measures 5-8. Treble clef: 2, 1, 4, 2, 4, 2, 2, 1, 2, 1. Bass clef: 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1. Includes a wavy line for flutter pedal.

9

Rubato

cantando, con affezione
mf

rit.

Measures 9-12. Treble clef: 232, 1, 5, 3. Bass clef: 1, 2, 3, 4, 1, 2, 121. Includes a wavy line for flutter pedal.

13

a tempo

leggiero staccato

cantando

Measures 13-16. Treble clef: 2, 3, 131, 2, 1, 4, 1-4, 2, 1. Bass clef: 2, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1. Includes a wavy line for flutter pedal.

(a) (b) Flutter pedal

Capricho Catalán

No. 5

Allegretto (♩ = ca. 112)

pp

p dolce

6

legato

11

dolce

poco cresc.

1

Zortzico

No. 6

Allegretto (♩ = ca. 160)

p ben marcato *dolce*

5

a 353

9

13

sf *p*

a

3 1 5 3