Isaac Albéniz

Triana

Iberia Book II No. 3

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The second book of *Iberia* was dedicated to Blanche Selva, a French pianist of Catalan origins; between 1906 and 1909 she premiered the complete set of all four books. In Seville, Triana is on the west bank of the Guadalquivir River, well-known for its Romany community. The music evokes a flamenco fiesta, with strumming guitars, clicking castanets, hand clapping, and stamping feet. We hear a *sevillanas* and a *pasodoble torero*, trumpeted by the band at bullfights.

When I first heard Alicia De Larrocha perform Albeniz I was amazed and impressed by the language and technical mastery of both composer and interpreter. And when I was finally able to attempt *Iberia*, I noticed that the text (Éditions Salabert) was often difficult to follow: there were inaccuracies, many accidentals and too many instructions, coupled with sub-standard engraving; so I decided to edit the music myself.

I plead guilty to not having religiously copied every dot, accent, sign, pedal marking and many others. Albeniz was very zealous in having often embellished many, sometimes conflicting, instructions — sometimes it seems as if every note has been “decorated” with every possible articulation and dynamic available.

I have tried to simplify the music within reason relying upon present-day sophisticated pianists and teachers reading the score philosophically.

This passionate music is certainly very difficult to read and play, and one is very tempted to leave out quite a few notes, or to at least rearrange them to suit one’s own hand and technique; indeed, 10 fingers often seem inadequate to manage all the crossing of hands, leaps and large chords. One can take comfort from Albéniz himself who confided to Manuel de Falla that he came close to destroying the manuscript because it seemed unplayable. Apparently, Arthur Rubinstein was once asked to play parts of *Iberia* by Albéniz’s widow and daughter. “It might shock you to hear me leave out many notes in order to project the essence of the music,” he replied. They insisted, and he offered Triana - and was told that his performance was ‘exactly’ as Albéniz had played it.

Albéniz was an extrovert with a keen sense of humour, loved and respected by all who knew him. In this wonderful and imaginative music, he was also flamboyant with long descriptions in French and pedalling directions which sometimes seem to be a whirlwind of far-fetched impossibilities — unreasonable and endearing as they are.

In addition to some suggested fingerings, the appendix contains comments, afterthoughts and a French vocabulary. Redistribution between the hands comes under close scrutiny to make certain passages easier or more persuasive. It is possible, even desirable, to use the sostenuto pedal effectively, although this is entirely editorial.
Allegretto con anima \( \dot{\text{J}} = 94 \)
gracieux et tendre

avec grâce et bien rythmé

staccato sans pédale

dolce

posé et bien chanté
bien sonore mais pas f'

R

staccato

pp

m.f

dimin.

cresc.

pp
47

52

55
a tempo e giocosamente

très rythmé

sans ♩ et avec gaminerie

poco sfz

rit.

a tempo con anima
Appendix

Comments, afterthoughts & vocabulary

- The original metronome speed is \( \frac{\text{d}^\text{\text{\text{d}}} = 94 \), possibly a little too fast to portray the character \text{gracieux et tendre}\)
- Albeniz's dynamic range is relatively restrained in this piece: \text{ppp to fff}\)
- There are many, many pedal (and other signs) and an observation by Debussy can provide a pertinent object lesson: “Pedalling cannot be written down. It varies from one instrument to another, from one room, or one hall, to another.”
- As with El Albaicín, Albeniz presented Triana with only one key signature

Duration: 5 minutes

- \text{59-90} this passionate and beautifully crafted central (main) section has been minimally modified to make it easier to read and slightly easier to play. Practically all the notes and signs are there but not necessarily with the original hand patterns. It is rather difficult but pianistically very rewarding.
- \text{67-74} presented in F with the accompaniment “rearranged”
- \text{75-80} presented in D flat
- \text{123-126} the sostenuto* pedal suggestion is editorial

* The sostenuto pedal was first shown in Paris at the Industrial Exposition of 1844. The idea was not immediately taken up by piano builders, but in 1874, it was perfected and patented by Steinway, soon to be fitted on all their grands and better uprights. One obvious commercial reason for not including the sostenuto pedal in musical scores must have been the thought of excluding buyers whose pianos didn’t have it. Debussy and Ravel certainly played such Steinways in the Paris salons. Apparently, in 1900 the composer René de Castéra bought a 3-pedal Steinway on the advice of Albeniz. One could say that it took over 100 years for it to become widespread.
This is Albeniz commenting on his own music written before Iberia: “Here are among them a few things that are not completely worthless. The music is a bit infantile, plain, spirited; but in the end, the people, our Spanish people, are something of all that. I believe that the people are right when they continue to be moved by Córdoba, Mallorca, by the copla of the Sevillanas, by the Serenata, and Granada. In all of them I now note that there is less musical science, less of the grand idea, but more colour, sunlight, flavour of olives. That music of youth, with its little sins and absurdities that almost point out the sentimental affectation... appears to me like the carvings in the Alhambra, those peculiar arabesques that say nothing with their turns and shapes, but which are like the air, like the sun, like the blackbirds or like the nightingales of its gardens. They are more valuable than all else of Moorish Spain, which though we may not like it, is the true Spain.”

gracieux et tendre  graceful and tender
avec grâce et bien rythmé  with grace and rhythmical
sans pédale  without pedal
posé et bien chanté  serene and in singing style
bien sonore mais pas forte  sonorous but not loud
très doux et nonchalant  very gentle and nonchalant
tranquillement sans presser  calmly without hurrying
bien en dehors  bring out the melody
bien marqué  well marked
avec gaminerie  playful and mischievous
gentiment  amiably