

Isaac Albéniz i Pascual was a child prodigy who first performed piano in public at the age of four and at 18 years he has already toured Europe, North and South America.

In 1883 Isaac Albéniz met the teacher and composer Felipe Pedrell, who was a leading figure in the development of nationalist Spanish music. Pedrell encouraged Isaac Albéniz to write music inspired by Spanish Folklore. Albéniz created in this way his style, combining the dance rhythms of Spain, the use of cante jondo (a moving song style), the use of exotic scales also associated with flamenco music and the transfer of guitar idioms into piano writing.

Transcribe Albéniz music on Guitar or Harp is for this reason obvious: for example the fifth movement of *Suite Española Op. 47 (Asturias)* and many other compositions originally composed for piano were later transcribed for guitar by Francisco Tárrega. Albéniz himself preferred Tárrega's guitar transcriptions to his original piano work.

Albéniz' *Suite Española Op. 47* was composed in 1886 and put together as a collection in 1887 in honor to the Queen of Spain. In the pieces composing the *Suite* the first title refers to the geographical region portrayed and the title in parentheses indicates the musical form or dance from that region. *Cuba* (which was still part of Spain in the 1880's) is a Notturmo in the style of a Habanera; *Asturias* is instead a Leyenda. In this piece the title *Asturias* was added in 1911 by the editor Hofmeister and is geographically inaccurate. Leyenda is an Andalusian flamenco rhythms which bears little resemblance to the music of the northern province Asturias, but this title is still the most used also today.

The opus number 47, also assigned by Hofmeister, has no relation to any chronological order in Albéniz' work, in which opus numbers were randomly given by publishers or by Albéniz himself.

Less famous and performed are instead the 2 *Danzas Españolas Op. 164*. Their style is similar to the pieces of *Suite Española* and both compositions were written in 1889 for piano. Still dance is the protagonist with a *Jota Aragonesa* (Op. 164 No. 1) and the *Tango* (Op. 164 No. 2).

Albéniz himself described this way these pieces: "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 sway 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."

FLORALEDA SACCHI

The pieces of this collection are part of the CD "Harp Dances" by Floraleda Sacchi (Decca Records).