

**ALBÉNIZ**

**Iberia**

**Trio Campanella**



## Isaac Manuel Francisco Albéniz (1860-1909)

### Iberia (Arranged for three guitars by Christophe Dejour)

Isaac Manuel Francisco Albéniz was born on 29th May 1860 in the northern Catalan town of Camprodon. He was an unusually gifted child and first performed in public at the age of four. When he was six it seems that he had private lessons from Marmontel, a leading professor at the Paris Conservatoire, which it was then planned he should enter. Prevented by his immaturity, in 1868 he entered the Real Conservatorio in Madrid, leaving to take his chance as a pianist, giving concerts in various towns, as the opportunity offered. In 1876 he enrolled at the Conservatorium in Leipzig, but soon withdrew, later obtaining a royal stipend to study at the Brussels Conservatoire, where, in 1879, he tied for the first prize in piano performance.

A major turning-point in the life of Albéniz came in 1883, when he met Felipe Pedrell (1841-1922), a teacher, composer and researcher in Spanish music. Pedrell strongly believed that Spanish composers should write Spanish music, acquiring its idiom from native folk-songs and dances. Pedrell's ideas made a deep impression on Albéniz, who became one of the most important exponents of Pedrell's ideas. As a celebrated pianist, Albéniz toured Europe, living in Madrid, London and Paris, where he was to meet distinguished musicians such as d'Indy, Chausson, Fauré, and Dukas. Although still very Spanish, his pieces now took on a French touch, creating a unique synthesis, nowhere more successful than in *Iberia*, which was composed in Paris in the years before his death in 1909.

The *Suite Iberia* is an outstanding piano work in twelve movements, regarded as the definitive masterpiece of Spanish piano music of the twentieth century. The performance of music by Albéniz on the guitar is not a new idea, and much of it has been arranged for the instrument. Many of these guitar transcriptions are now considered standard elements in the repertoire of the classical guitar. Albéniz often referred to the instrument as the source of inspiration for many of his compositions and it often almost seems that

the guitar transcriptions are original pieces written for the instrument. For almost a hundred years the *Suite Iberia* had never been arranged for guitar in its entirety. In 1995 Christophe Dejour transcribed the entire work for three guitars and the Trio Campanella gave the first performance of the work in 1998 in Copenhagen.

Written between 1905 and 1908, the *Suite Iberia* was and is without any doubt Albéniz's masterpiece. *Iberia* is an ambitious and remarkably sophisticated composition with a formidable architectural structure of uniquely impressive dimensions. All the pieces are based on traditional Spanish dance rhythms, arranged in a freely artistic and idealised manner. The rhythmic dances smoothly alternate with the "vocal" part, the *copla*. In traditional Spanish music the *copla* is a characteristic part of the structure seen in many forms like the *saeta* (arrow), or a *cante jondo* (deep song), the song of deep feelings. Albéniz has included a *copla* in almost all of the pieces in *Iberia*.

The first piece, *Evocación*, is an idyllic composition with a gentle rhythm and a lyrical and dreamy melody, Albéniz in his most poetic and calmest mood. The final whisper of the piece takes us directly into the bright and joyous *El puerto*, depicting lively days at a southern seaport. *El Corpus Cristi* is a portrayal of a feast day procession through the narrow streets of Seville, beginning with a march-like theme approaching from the distance. The main theme with trumpets and drums culminates in a tremendous climax while the original melody continues insistently in the background.

The first two pieces of the second book describe two Andalusian towns. After *Rondeña*, a dancing and straightforward piece named after the mountain town Ronda, Albéniz takes us to the Mediterranean *Almería* and its calm, expressive beauty. *Triana* takes its name from a famous quarter in Seville. This catchy piece is perhaps the most frequently played among the pieces of *Iberia*.

The third book begins in *El Albaicín*, the old Arabic neighbourhood in Granada that faces the Alhambra

castle from the hill below. This is followed by *El polo*, a melancholy Andalusian song. The *polo* is one of those songs that always seem to have a burden of sorrow hanging around them. *Lavapiés* is the name of a working class quarter in Madrid. This is technically and rhythmically the most complex piece of the whole suite. Despite its difficulty Albéniz wrote that it should be played “joyfully, with freedom”.

The fourth book *Iberia* takes us to two other Andalusian towns. The first is *Málaga*, the old town in the south. Its music stems from the *malagueña* dance, with an attractive but simple melody. The second town

is *Jerez*, the centre of Spanish sherry production. The suite ends in *Eritaña*, a tavern on the outskirts of Seville. Claude Debussy wrote enthusiastically of this piece: “*Eritaña* is the joy of morning, the happy discovery of a tavern where the wine is cool. An ever-changing crowd passes, their bursts of laughter accompanied by the jingling of the tambourines. Never has music achieved such diversified, such colourful impressions: one’s eyes close, as though dazzled by beholding such a wealth of imagery”.

**Jonathan Irons**

## Trio Campanella



The Trio Campanella is regarded as one of the most promising Scandinavian guitar ensembles. Founded in 1997, the trio has worked hard to develop new repertoire for three guitars. Their stunning performance of Christophe Dejour's arrangement of Albéniz's *Iberia* has amazed listeners everywhere. The trio has given live performances on Danish National Television and Swedish National Radio and has performed at several festivals around Europe. The members of Trio Campanella are Christophe Dejour, Frank Massa and Thomas Winthereik. They have, among others, studied with Alberto Ponce, Jose Tomas and Göran Söllscher, and together they had the great honour of working with the extraordinary Spanish pianist, Alicia de Larrocha.

*Supported by the Danish Musicians Union*

Albéniz's twelve-movement piano work, *Suite Iberia*, scored here for three guitars, is often regarded as the definitive masterpiece of Spanish music of the twentieth century. Written between 1905 and 1908, it is an ambitious and remarkably sophisticated work based on traditional Spanish dance rhythms, and although not specifically programmatic is highly evocative of Spanish life. Debussy wrote enthusiastically of this piece "Never has music achieved such diversified, such colourful impressions: one's eyes close, as though dazzled by beholding such a wealth of imagery".

Isaac  
**ALBÉNIZ**  
(1860-1909)

**Suite Iberia**

(Arranged for three guitars by Christophe Dejour)

1 Evocación	5:23	7 El Albaicín	6:33
2 El puerto	4:29	8 El polo	6:14
3 El Corpus Christi en Sevilla	8:36	9 Lavapiés	6:34
4 Rondeña	6:20	10 Málaga	4:56
5 Almería	8:21	11 Jerez	9:31
6 Triana	5:07	12 Eritaña	5:21

**Trio Campanella**

(Christophe Dejour, Frank Massa and Thomas Winthereik, Guitars)

Recorded at Torpen Chapel, Denmark, from February - July 2000  
 Engineer: Viggo Mangor • CD mastering: Jorgen Knub (SDC Studios, Denmark)  
 Booklet Notes: Jonathan Irons  
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 (Private Collection / Bridgeman Art Library)

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