

# Spanish Heart



ISAAC ALBÉNIZ: **ASTURIAS-LEYENDA**



Back by popular demand, **Bridget Mermikides** transcribes Asturias-Leyenda – one of the most popular pieces ever written for classical guitar...

## ABILITY RATING



Advanced

**Will improve your:**

- ✓ Classical fingerstyle technique
- ✓ Fretting hand stamina
- ✓ Finger independence

ASTURIAS-LEYENDA, BY the Spanish composer Isaac Albéniz (1860-1909), is among the most famous and best-loved pieces in the classical guitar repertoire. Asturias is so evocative and magical to such a range of guitarists and music lovers, that it could easily be argued to be the embodiment of Spanish guitar music. It is considered an essential piece for the virtuoso classical guitar soloist, has been recorded and performed innumerable times and its clear influence may be heard in artists as diverse as The Doors, Iron Maiden and Roger McGuinn.

For this reason, it is particularly ironic that Albéniz never composed for guitar. Asturias was written for solo piano and Albéniz himself was an astonishing piano virtuoso. However, it is clear that Albéniz wrote music that purposefully echoed the sound of the guitar with the use of pedal tones, spread voicings and 'strummed' chords. It is therefore quite natural that guitarists such as Tárrega, Llobet and Segovia transcribed Asturias-Leyenda from piano to the guitar. Reportedly, Albéniz himself was very pleased with the results.

## TECHNIQUE FOCUS

## TONE AND CONTROL

■ This piece should be played on a nylon string classical guitar using well shaped and polished fingernails for string plucking. Consistency of tone and control of attack especially on p (thumb), i (first finger) and m (second finger) are essential in order to cope with the technical requirements of the main outer sections. It is advisable to practise these

sections slowly in chunks, gradually working up the necessary stamina and speed. This can take considerable time, so please be patient!

This transcription is not an exact replication of the original piano score but is, in fact, an adaptation and amalgamation made up from various other arrangements.



Isaac Albéniz wrote Asturias-Leyenda while in London...

nostalgia and romantic imagery of the Andalusian landscape. A Moorish influence can be heard throughout, from the unforgettable open-string pedal point in the opening section to the sophisticated middle section (bars 63 – 86) which references the 'cante jondo': the emotional solo vocal improvisation of the Indian-Jewish-gypsy culture.

This is followed by a Flamenco-inspired section in bars 87 – 115. After a recap of the cante jondo and a repeat of the whole main theme, the piece is skilfully completed with a series of diatonic choral harmonies in the coda. These represent the imposition of the Christian church on the ancient Moorish culture. **GT**

Asturias was ultimately placed as the prelude to the extremely beautiful Suite Española, a set of pieces each inspired by a different region or

city of Spain. I would encourage you to explore this wonderful set of works as soon as possible! Written in London, Asturias-Leyenda is full of devastating

## TRACK RECORD



I would recommend listening to the original piano works of Suite

Española. Alicia de Larrocha's recording is often cited as the definitive version. For guitar versions, check out Segovia's historic 1953 version and you can't go wrong with any John Williams recording.

**“Julian Bream and I are both dead average sight-readers by orchestral standards but, among guitarists, we are outstanding!” John Williams**







third finger ('a') to the first finger (i) in a fanning motion. Notice also at bar 25 that the fretting hand finger repeated notes have switched from p i m in the previous section to p m i on the repeated Bs where it has become a miniature tremolo. Many people find it more natural to play repeated notes on the same string this way round.


26.148

29.151



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**ON THE CD**  Track 12

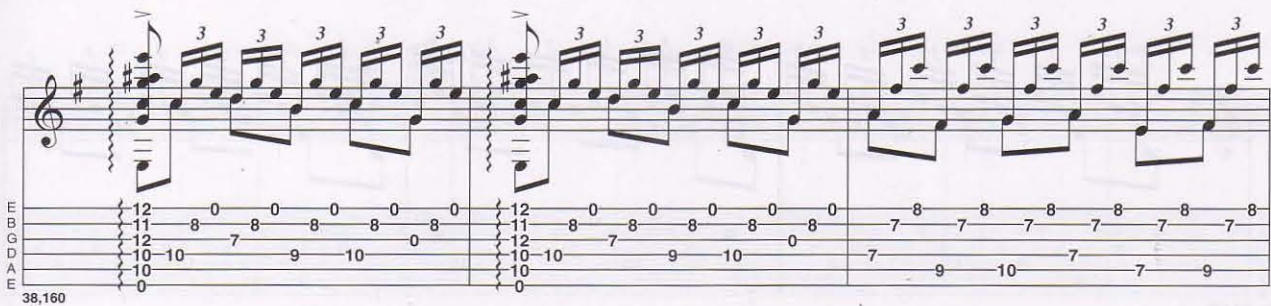
**[Bar 37]** Once the C7/E chord has been struck, keep the fretting hand second finger in contact with the second string and drag it back to the 8th fret (keeping it there) while grabbing the C with the fourth finger on the 10th fret. This gives some anchorage to the fretting hand during this tricky moment.

35,157

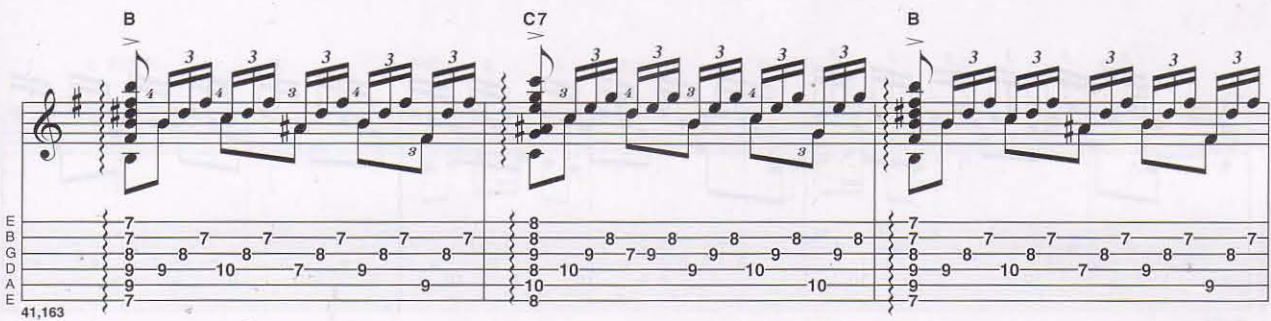


p i m p i m p i m p i m

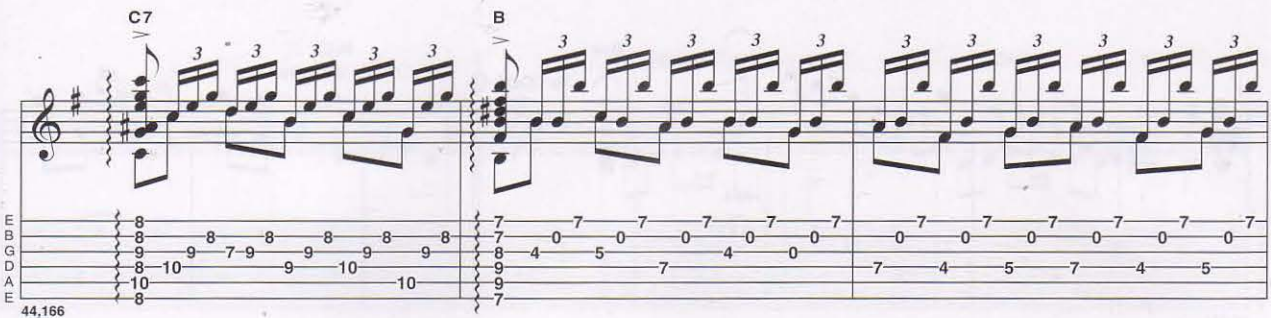
38,160



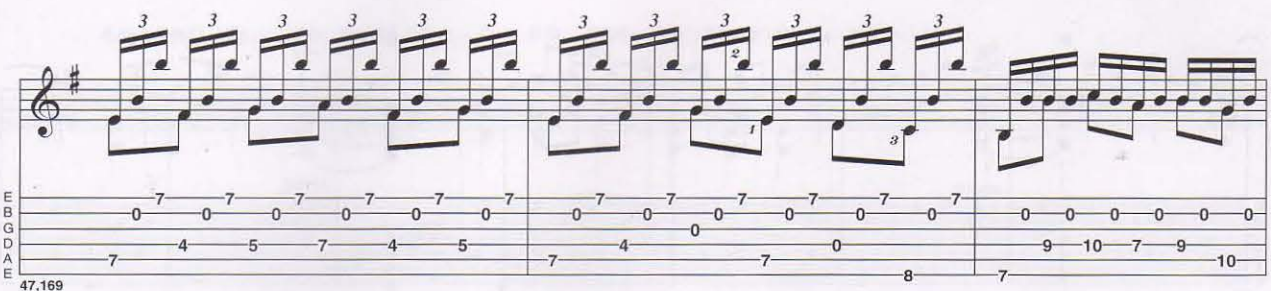
41,163



44,166



47,169





## ISAAC ALBÉNIZ **ASTURIAS-LEYENDA**

**[Bars 59-60]** The quavers here may sound rushed but this is often interpreted as a flourish at the end of the fast triplets and seems to carry its own momentum.

50,172

53,175

56,178

59,181

65







## ISAAC ALBÉNIZ ASTURIAS-LEYENDA

**[Bars 118-120]** The harmonics are played by lightly touching the string at the indicated fret with the first finger of the picking hand and plucking the same string with the third 'a' finger. In bars 118-120 this is done while simultaneously plucking the lower octave note with the thumb. Enjoy – and, remember, learn it in manageable sections.

Chords: D7/A, A#dim7, B, N.C., B, N.C., B

Staff 1 (Treble Clef): Melody line with notes and rests.

Staff 2 (Bass Clef): Bass line with notes and rests.

Staff 3 (Fretboard): Fret numbers for strings E, B, G, D, A, E.

Bar 106: E (5), B (3), G (5), D (7), A (5), E (5)

Bar 107: E (7), B (5), G (7), D (9), A (7), E (7)

Bar 108: E (8), B (9), G (8), D (10), A (8), E (8)

Bar 109: E (7), B (9), G (7), D (10), A (7), E (7)

Bar 110: E (8), B (9), G (8), D (10), A (8), E (8)

Bar 111: E (7), B (9), G (7), D (10), A (7), E (7)

Bar 112: E (8), B (9), G (8), D (10), A (8), E (8)

Staff 1 (Treble Clef): Melody line with triplets.

Staff 2 (Bass Clef): Bass line with triplets.

Staff 3 (Fretboard): Fret numbers for strings E, B, G, D, A, E.

Bar 112: E (7), B (8), G (7), D (8), A (7), E (7)

Bar 113: E (7), B (8), G (7), D (8), A (7), E (7)

Bar 114: E (7), B (8), G (7), D (8), A (7), E (7)

Bar 115: E (7), B (8), G (7), D (8), A (7), E (7)

Bar 116: E (7), B (8), G (7), D (8), A (7), E (7)

Bar 117: E (7), B (8), G (7), D (8), A (7), E (7)

Bar 118: E (7), B (8), G (7), D (8), A (7), E (7)

Bar 119: E (7), B (8), G (7), D (8), A (7), E (7)

Bar 120: E (7), B (8), G (7), D (8), A (7), E (7)

Chords: N.C., B, N.C., C7b5, D.C. al CODA

Staff 1 (Treble Clef): Melody line with notes and rests.

Staff 2 (Bass Clef): Bass line with notes and rests.

Staff 3 (Fretboard): Fret numbers for strings E, B, G, D, A, E.

Bar 115: E (7), B (5), G (7), D (10), A (7), E (7)

Bar 116: E (7), B (5), G (7), D (10), A (7), E (7)

Bar 117: E (7), B (5), G (7), D (10), A (7), E (7)

Bar 118: E (7), B (5), G (7), D (10), A (7), E (7)

Bar 119: E (7), B (5), G (7), D (10), A (7), E (7)

Bar 120: E (7), B (5), G (7), D (10), A (7), E (7)

CODA

Chords: C, G, Am, Em, F, Bbm, F, Am/B, B7

Staff 1 (Treble Clef): Melody line with notes and rests.

Staff 2 (Bass Clef): Bass line with notes and rests.

Staff 3 (Fretboard): Fret numbers for strings E, B, G, D, A, E.

Bar 185: E (0), B (4), G (0), D (2), A (2), E (3)

Bar 186: E (0), B (0), G (0), D (0), A (0), E (3)

Bar 187: E (1), B (2), G (2), D (4), A (0), E (0)

Bar 188: E (0), B (0), G (0), D (0), A (0), E (0)

Bar 189: E (1), B (1), G (2), D (3), A (2), E (0)

Bar 190: E (1), B (1), G (2), D (3), A (2), E (0)

Bar 191: E (1), B (1), G (2), D (3), A (2), E (0)

Bar 192: E (1), B (1), G (2), D (3), A (2), E (0)

Bar 193: E (1), B (1), G (2), D (3), A (2), E (0)

Bar 194: E (1), B (1), G (2), D (3), A (2), E (0)

Chords: N.C., Em

Staff 1 (Treble Clef): Melody line with notes and rests.

Staff 2 (Bass Clef): Bass line with notes and rests.

Staff 3 (Fretboard): Fret numbers for strings E, B, G, D, A, E.

Bar 194: E (0), B (0), G (0), D (0), A (0), E (0)

Bar 195: E (0), B (0), G (0), D (0), A (0), E (0)

Bar 196: E (0), B (0), G (0), D (0), A (0), E (0)

Bar 197: E (0), B (0), G (0), D (0), A (0), E (0)

Bar 198: E (0), B (0), G (0), D (0), A (0), E (0)

Bar 199: E (0), B (0), G (0), D (0), A (0), E (0)

Bar 200: E (0), B (0), G (0), D (0), A (0), E (0)