

Isaac Albéniz

Tango



Continuing her quest to arrange and transcribe top classical tunes for solo guitar, **Bridget Mermikides** delights us with another glorious piece from Spanish genius, Isaac Albéniz.

ABILITY RATING

● ● ● ● ● Advanced

INFO	WILL IMPROVE YOUR
KEY: D	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fretting hand stamina
TEMPO: 45 bpm	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Repertoire of Romantic works
CD: TRACKS 39-40	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Melodic phrasing

ALTHOUGH SPANISH COMPOSER Isaac Albéniz (1860-1909) never composed specifically for the guitar, his work captures the essence of the instrument so effectively that several of his compositions are now among the most famous and well-loved in the solo classical guitar repertoire. These have been recorded and performed countless times by a huge variety of players (some of whom appear in Track Record, below).

Albéniz was an astonishing piano virtuoso - he didn't play guitar at all - but was deeply influenced by traditional Spanish music and

especially the sound of its guitar. He often mimicked the instrument's use of pedal tones in his compositions, as well as its spread voicings and attacked 'strummed' chords. It is therefore quite natural that guitarists such as Tárrega, Llobet and, most famously perhaps, Andrés Segovia transcribed Albéniz's music from ivory keys to gut or nylon strings.

Albéniz himself was reportedly very pleased with the results. The formidable Asturias for example is an evergreen guitar favourite for performers and listeners alike.

Tango is the second piece from Albéniz' 1890 six-work set, Espana for solo piano. Each piece from the suite references specific places and musical styles of Spain. Tango incorporates a traditional Spanish lilting bass-line (found in bars 1-2), which Albéniz enjoyed using as a repeating figure in several of his other works. This bass-line would be played by the left hand of the piano, while the right hand delivered the gorgeous melody and

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typically evocative, guitaristic harmonies.

Of course the challenge of playing these two parts simultaneously and effectively on solo guitar is considerable, but in my arrangement I've strived to find a balance between playability and respect for the original work. The tab captions in the transcription will guide you through the trickier sections of what is a relatively challenging piece to play.

One particular musical device in traditional Spanish music is to have this Tango-style bass-line - with its dotted quaver-semiquaver rhythmic figure - played against triplets (see bars 36-37 for example). Be careful not to play the final triplet and the semiquaver together - as many mistakenly do. The semiquaver occurs just after the triplet, and when this is correctly performed it creates a delightful rhythmic interplay. Therefore I'd ask you to take your time to internalise and perfect this cross-rhythm, as it's a vital nuance within the piece.

Take your time to enjoy this beautiful piece - and, as I always say, enjoy the learning process too. I hope Tango inspires you to listen and play other stunning works by this Spanish master. If you have any suggestions for pieces you'd like me to arrange and transcribe for future editions of GT, please write to the magazine and we will do what we can. See you next month! 



TECHNIQUE FOCUS

The importance of posture

When playing classical guitar, posture is vital in order for both hands to work efficiently. When you're sitting right, everything else falls into place so the arms and hands are not hampered. The traditional method is to sit up straight on the front edge of an upright chair and raise the left knee (right-handed players) by using a footstool. The guitar sits on the left thigh with its headstock tilting upwards. This sets the plucking hand forearm at the correct angle and leaves the fretting hand free. For long playing stints, some prefer both feet on the floor, keeping the pelvis level. Good modern alternatives to the footstool are the Dynarette guitar cushion, the Gitano guitar rest and the ErgoPlay guitar support.



TRACK RECORD It's always instructive listening to the original piano scores of Albéniz's works, such as Shura Cherkassky's release of *Kaleidoscope* (2011 Decca), as it gives us context from which to take inspiration. For guitar versions of Albéniz check out John Williams' recordings. Albéniz - Granados (1981 Sony) is a terrific album which includes Tango among other beautiful masterpieces.



Isaac Albéniz
performing at
the piano-forté

PLAYING TIPS

CD TRACK 40

Despite its relaxed and easy sounding feel, this piece is something of a challenge to play to performance standard. The best approach to learning it would be to break it down into sections and work carefully on one bit at a time. After the two-bar intro the main melody begins in bar 3. Play the first three F# notes rest stroke so they stand out. Using the second finger on this note 'anchors' it on the string as it moves up a fret for the G leaving the fourth and first fingers free for the grace note A (4) then F# (1). The second finger needs to be solid on the G note to cater for the grace note pull-off, and this can take practice to make it come out crisp and clean.

On the last half beat of bar 5 a barre across five strings is needed and I use the third finger on the last F# of the bar in order to slide it up a fret to the G in bar 6. The A9 chord on the third half-beat of bar 8 is spread upwards using the thumb to drag through the two lower notes as indicated. At bar 11 use a barre at the 7th fret for two and a half bars. On the last B note of bar 13 I use a 'hinge barre' - keeping the first finger straight and pressing the B with the side of the finger, creating a smooth link to the barre on the first chord of bar 14. I do the same thing on both C# notes in bar 16 to help prepare for the chords to follow. If you're not used to hinge barres this will take practice.

D
♩ = 45 approx



E
B
G
D
A
D

1
Dropped D tuning

5

9

13

33

C#7 3 F#A# F#m7b5 3 F#7

E 4 6 9 7 6 4 9 6 7 9 13 13 11 9 6 4 6 4 2 7

B 6 6 4 6 4 7 6 6 6 0 6 4 6 4 3

G 4 6 4 6 4 6 5 6 4 6 4 6 4 3

D 4 4 8 4 4 4

37

B/F# C#7 F# 3 C#7/F# 3 C#7 F# D7 3

E 7 7 6 4 7 6 6 6 7 8 9 13 11 9 7 9 13 13 11 14 11 5 10 12

B 7 6 4 6 6 7 7 8 9 13 11 9 6 9 13 13 0 11 7 5 12

G 4 4 6 6 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4

D 4

41

A7 3 C#7 F# B7b9 3 F#m/E 3 A7 D 3 D/A

E 5 8 10 6 9 2 2 5 3 2 5 12 5 6 7 7 7 7 10 8 7

B 6 8 4 4 2 2 4 5 3 2 5 12 5 6 7 7 7 7 10 8 7

G 6 8 4 4 2 2 4 5 3 2 5 12 5 6 7 7 7 7 10 8 7

D 5 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4

rit. *a tempo*

45

D D/A D B/D# A7/E A7 A7/C# A7 Asus9

E 10 11 10 12 14 9 12 10 7 8 6 8 10 12 9 10 12 10

B 10 11 10 12 14 9 12 10 7 8 6 8 10 12 9 10 12 10

G 10 11 10 12 14 9 12 10 7 8 6 8 10 12 9 10 12 10

D 0 0 12 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

NH NH

PLAYING TIPS

The D7 chord on bar 40 is spread and begins with the thumb striking twice (sixth then fourth string). The same thing happens on bar 57. At bar 44 the main tune comes but it changes at bar 52. There is recommended fretting

hand fingering indicated here to help you achieve a secure technical solution and a fluid performance, so do pay attention to it. It really is worth putting the effort in to learn this fantastic piece - as I hope you'll agree.

49

A7/E A9 A7sus4 F#m/A A7 Ddim7 D Bb

E 10 9 12 10 9 3 7 5 10 10 12
B 8 12 12 8 10 5 6 7 6 11 10
G 12 12 9 11 11 0 0 0 0 0 0
D 7 6 7 7 11 0 0 0 0 0 0
A 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

53

F/A 3 Daug/G Gdim D 3 B7b9

E 15 13 8 5 6 5 6 6 6 7 8 6 9 12 10 5 3 2 2 3 5 3 5 3 2
B 0
G 0
D 0
A 0

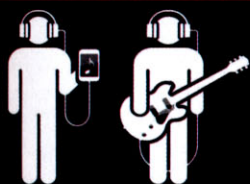
57

Emadd9 3 Em A7b9 A6 A7 D

E 2 7 0 8 7 7 5 5 5 2 2 10
B 0 7 0 6 6 6 6 7 7 3 3 11
G 4 0 0 8 7 7 5 7 7 4 4 0
D 2 7 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
A 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

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DIRECTIONS:



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