

Title: Asturias. Op 47 No 1

Composer: Isaac Albeniz

Style: Spanish Romantic

Key: Bm (originally Gm)

Time: 3/4

About: Asturias is perhaps the most famous Spanish guitar piece ever written. Ironically it wasn't written for guitar, it was written for piano by Isaac Albeniz and forms part of the Suite Española Op 47. Each piece which forms part of Suite Española is named after a city or province of Spain, and Albeniz includes the elements of that region's musical style in the piece they are named after. For example, Sevilla (no.3) is in the style of a Sevillianas (this is not entirely accurate for all pieces in the suite).

Notes:

The A section has an unrelenting semiquaver movement mainly consisting of a melody in the bass with an alternating open b string, which we often find in flamenco guitar music. These passages are broken up with fiery chords played quickly between the phrases as the piece gathers in suspense and tension. The B section is more serene and lyrical, with the melody evoking flamenco singing with guitar accompaniment. The opening section is quite straight forward and most intermediate guitarists will get this part to work, but we find some trickier passages in the middle of the A section. The main challenge of this section is negotiating the semiquaver triplets with the quick in-between chords, so the RH needs to stay precise but relaxed. The B section poses more challenges. The opening octaves will need to be practiced smoothly and rhythmically. There are many embellishments which could be left out when first learning the piece to keep the rhythms clean and correct. That being said there is room for expression and lyricism here but will need to be done musically and tastefully.