A PEDAGOGICAL ANALYSIS OF SELECTED PIECES FROM ISAAC ALBÉNIZ'S *IBERIA*

by

AHUI

(Under the Direction of Martha Thomas)

ABSTRACT

Composed between 1905 and 1909, the piano suite *Iberia* is considered Albéniz's crowning achievement, with a total of twelve pieces divided into four books. Each piece possesses an evocative title that depicts elements of Spanish life. The integration of traditional Spanish dance music and impressionistic compositional style makes *Iberia* one of the most distinctive and exotic piano masterpieces in the entire piano repertoire.

Iberia is a highly demanding composition, requiring a well-trained pianist with advanced skills in order to execute the countless technical aspects of the work. In addition, the complexity of musical expression requires the performer to accurately portray the Spanish musical style that incorporates complex Spanish dance rhythms and singing melodic lines. In this dissertation, I will discuss four selected pieces from *Iberia* and provide a detailed pedagogical analysis of each piece, including technical and musical elements. Furthermore, I will include a list of preparatory repertoire that is less advanced in nature to help younger students develop the skills they will need to eventually perform pieces from *Iberia*. Included also are detailed teaching suggestions and practice guides.

INDEX WORDS: Piano pedagogy, Isaac Albéniz, *Iberia*, Impressionism, Spanish music, Technique, Pedagogical analysis, Preparatory repertoire, Practice strategies, Teaching suggestions

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2023

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May 2023

DEDICATION

I could not have accomplished anything without the support of my family, including my father, Siqingbateer, my mother, Chen Shu, and of course, my dear sister, Baodisi. They have all given me unconditional love and support and have formed my strongest spiritual pillar as I navigated my life and study here in America. Although I have not been able to see them in person very often, the countless video chats, phone calls, and messages always inspired me to push through and be strong.

I dedicate my dissertation to my family.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to all the members of my doctoral advisory committee. In particular, I would not have been able to finish my dissertation without the guidance, suggestions, and support from my major professor, Dr. Martha Thomas. I have learned so much and progressed enormously as a pianist and teacher during my studies with her. I also want to thank the other two members of my committee, Dr. Peter Jutras and Dr. Emily Gertsch, for their expertise and invaluable assistance with my prospectus and dissertation.

Lastly, I give thanks to those whom I love that supported me throughout the process of finishing my dissertation.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Composed between 1905 and 1909, the piano suite *Iberia* is considered Isaac Albéniz's crowning achievement, with a total of twelve pieces divided into four books. Each piece possesses an evocative title that depicts elements of Spanish life. The integration of traditional Spanish dance music and impressionistic compositional style makes *Iberia* one of the most distinctive and exotic piano masterpieces in the entire piano repertoire.

Iberia is a highly demanding composition, requiring a well-trained pianist with advanced skills in order to execute the countless technical aspects of the work. In addition, the complexity of musical expression requires the performer to accurately portray the Spanish musical style that incorporates complex Spanish dance rhythms and singing melodic lines. In this dissertation, I will discuss four selected pieces from *Iberia* and provide a detailed pedagogical analysis of each piece, including teaching suggestions and practice guides for each technical and musical element. Furthermore, I will include a list of preparatory repertoire that is less advanced in nature to help younger students develop the skills they will need to eventually perform pieces from *Iberia*.

Brief Biography of Albéniz

Born in 1860, Isaac Albéniz quickly emerged as a piano prodigy and gave his first public performance at the age of four in Barcelona. He passed the entrance exam at the Paris Conservatory at age seven, after studying with Antoine François Marmontel for only nine months, but he was eventually denied admission due to his young age. In 1868, Albéniz's family moved to Madrid, and he began studying at the Conservatorio Superior de Música.[1] However,

[1] Frances Barulich, "Isaac Albéniz," *Grove Music Online,* 2001, accessed in February 2021, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/ 9781561592630.article.00421.

Albéniz's piano study at the conservatory was eventually interrupted when his father decided to take Albéniz and his sister (also a performer) on concert tours, giving performances in the provinces of Spain. While on tour, the talented young musician wrote and published his first piece, the *Marcha Militar* for piano, when he was only eight years old. His successful touring career as a child prodigy in Spain opened up more performance opportunities in Cuba and Puerto Rico. Indeed, Albéniz created a sensation on the music scene in Cuba, and as a result, he and his father resided in Cuba for a period.[2]

In 1875 Albéniz returned to serious music studies. He had the opportunity to study at the Leipzig Conservatory in 1876 but only stayed for two months due to financial difficulties. After leaving Germany, Albéniz received a pension that supported his studies with Belgian pianist and composer Louis Brassin at the Brussels Conservatory until 1879; while there, Albéniz won first prize in a competition, which provided him more touring opportunities in Europe.[3] From 1880 to 1882, Albéniz lived in Madrid and continued to pursue his career as a performing artist, giving concerts in various locations throughout Spain. In early 1882, he became the director for a musical theater company based in Madrid and developed a strong interest in composing for the stage. While there, he wrote three *zarzuelas*, a form of Spanish musical theater. [4]

In 1883, Albéniz moved to Barcelona with the hope of developing as a composer. He began studying composition with Felip Pedrell, a passionate nationalist who focused on evoking Spanish music, obtaining inspiration and ideas from traditional Spanish folklore and dance music. Pedrell's compositional philosophy affected Albéniz tremendously and inspired him to write music in a much different style from that of his European contemporaries. Influenced by

[2] Walter Aaron Clark, "Albéniz: The Man and His Music," in *Isaac Albéniz: A Guide to Research* (New York: Garland, 1998), 5-6.
[3] Clark, "Albéniz: The Man and His Music," 6.
[4] Clark, "Albéniz: The Man and His Music," 7-8.

his teacher, "Albéniz's increasing output of charming and distinctive Spanish style pieces for the piano received an enthusiastic reception by the concert-going public in Spain and elsewhere around the 1880s."[5] In 1883, Albéniz married his pupil Rosita Jordana, and the couple moved back to Madrid two years later. From 1889 to 1892, as a successful concert pianist, Albéniz went on recital tours in England, Germany, Austria, and France. His compositions during this period were highly influenced by Spanish dance music. While in London, Albéniz signed a contract with Henry Lowenfeld, who later became his manager and held exclusive rights to publish his music.[6]

In 1894, Albéniz was determined to seek larger audiences for his works and eventually moved to Paris, where he met many notable French composers, including Gabriel Fauré, Paul Dukas, and Amédée-Ernest Chausson. Given the rich musical environment in Paris, Albéniz realized the necessity of producing compositions that not only possessed deeper meaning than his earlier light dance pieces but also represented his Spanish musical roots. This period foreshadows the birth of *Iberia*.

After 1900, Albéniz's health began to decline because of kidney disease. The illness negatively impacted his ability to perform, and instead, he focused heavily on composing. Barulich, author of the article "Isaac Albéniz" published in *Grove Music Online*, observes that Albéniz attempted to publish some of his operatic scores during 1900-1902.[7] Failing to get his operas produced deterred Albéniz from composing more theatrical works and ultimately persuaded him to shift his focus back to writing for the piano. Albéniz started writing *Iberia* in 1905. And in 1909, just after its completion, his life was tragically cut short from his illness.

[5] Clark, "Albéniz: The Man and His Music," 10.
[6] Barulich, "Isaac Albéniz," *Grove Music Online*.
[7] Barulich, "Isaac Albéniz," *Grove Music Online*.

Compositions

Although the majority of the compositions by Isaac Albéniz are for solo piano, he also wrote a number of songs for voice and piano, several operas and theater works, chamber music, and a few orchestral works. A prolific composer, prominent changes appear throughout Albéniz's life in terms of his compositional style, and similar to the music of Beethoven, Albéniz's works can be divided into three different stylistic periods. The first compositional period started in 1868 with his first published composition, *Marcha Militar*, and lasted through the beginning of 1880. In this early period, due to his lack of formal training, Albéniz's piano works are viewed as modest, improvisatory pieces that fit into the style of traditional character pieces. Representative works from this first stylistic period include *Estudio Impromptu*, Op. 56, and *Mazurkas de Salon*, Op. 66, both of which share a kindred spirit with the character pieces of Chopin, Schubert, and Brahms.[8] Although Albéniz created a large body of works, many scores written in this period are lost, including a piano trio and some *zarzuelas*.

The second period started in late 1880 and lasted until 1896. It was during the 1880s that Albéniz met and was greatly influenced by his mentor Felipe Pedrell, an advocate of Spanish musical styles and an important figure in Spanish music history. The influence of the Spanish folkloric music emerges in Albéniz's music in this second stylistic period, resulting in a striking change in his style. According to Baytelman, "there are four main elements of Spanish music that the composer incorporates into his own musical language during the second stylistic period:

1. The wide variety of Spanish dance rhythms.
2. The use of serious and profound *flamenco*, or Spanish Roma gypsy song.
3. The use of various modes associated with *flamenco* music.

[8] Pola Baytelman, "Piano Works: Three Stylistic Periods," in *Isaac Albéniz: Chronological List and Thematic Catalog of His Piano Works* (Warren, MI: Harmonie Park Press, 1993), 9-10.

4. The transfer of guitar idioms into piano writing."[9]

Even as Albéniz incorporated the Spanish folkloric style, he never used or transcribed existing folk tunes. Spanish musical elements were carried through into his later mature compositions. He also wrote the majority of his operas, as well as works for theatre, voice, and orchestra, during this middle period.

During his third and last compositional period, which started around 1897 when he was living in Paris and lasted until his death in 1909, Albéniz was active in the music scene of the city. Because of his association with a number of leading French composers, he absorbed many of their ideas in his compositions, such as experimenting with the musical structure, use of whole-tone scales and other modernistic harmonic languages, and emphases on musical tone and color. After years of composing, teaching, and studying, Albéniz realized that his early works were too simple in structure and lacked depth in harmonic vocabulary. This recognition resulted in an important stylistic change in his later works, "noticeable with the rich harmony and the complex polyphony."[10] Albéniz completed the piano suite *Iberia*, his crowning achievement, in the last few years of his life, and this suite is a prime example of his growth in compositional techniques. In *Iberia*, the integration of sophisticated European compositional technique and the nationalistic musical style that Albéniz developed with Pedrell combine to form one of the most brilliant piano works of the 20th century. Albéniz also left behind unfinished works, some of which were eventually completed by his friends and pupils. For example, his friend, Enrique Granados, finished *Azulejos*, and his pupil, Déodat de Séverac, completed *Navarra*; both of these works were written for solo piano.

[9] Baytelman, "Piano Works," pp. 13-14.
[10] Baytelman, "Piano Works," pp. 17.

Related Literature

General biographical information on Isaac Albéniz can be found in many sources. This dissertation draws primarily from the following sources: *Isaac Albéniz: Portrait of a Romantic*, by Walter A. Clark; [11] *Isaac Albéniz: A Guide to Research* by Walter A. Clark;[12] *Isaac Albéniz: Chronological List and Thematic Catalog of His Piano Works* by Pola Baytelman;[13] and "Isaac Albéniz" by Frances Barulich.[14] These sources provide extensive details regarding the composer's biography, analysis of his compositions, and guidance for further research on Albéniz. The sources for general information about Spanish dance music referenced in this dissertation are *The Music of Spain* by Gilbert Chase[15] and *The Dance in Spain* by Anna Ivanova.[16]

There are over fifteen dissertations on the topic of Albéniz's *Iberia*. In this document I refer to the following dissertations: "Style and Structure in *Iberia* by Isaac Albéniz," by Paul B. Mast;[17] "Nationalism and Exoticism: Performing Isaac Albéniz's *Iberia*," by Anne-Lise Longuemare;[18] "Isaac Albéniz's *Iberia* and the Influence of Franz Liszt," by Myungsook Wang;[19] and "Spanish Dances and the Piano Music of Albéniz, Granados, Falla, Turina, and Mompou," by Leslie Downs.[20]

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[11] Walter A. Clark, *Isaac Albéniz: Portrait of a Romantic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).
[12] Walter A. Clark, *Isaac Albéniz: A Guide to Research* (New York: Garland, 1998).
[13] Pola Baytelman, *Isaac Albéniz: Chronological List and Thematic Catalog of His Piano Works* (Warren, MI: Harmonie Park Press, 1993).
[14] Frances Barulich, "Isaac Albéniz" Grove Music Online, 2001, accesed in Feburary 202, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.00421.
[15] Gilbert Chase, *The Music of Spain*, 2nd ed. (New York: Dover, 1959).
[16] Anna Ivanova, *The Dance in Spain* (New York: Praeger, 1970).
[17] Paul B. Mast, "Style and Structure in *Iberia* by Issac Albéniz" (Phd. diss., Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester, 1974).
[18] Anne-Lise Longuemare, "Nationalism and Exoticism: Performing Issac Albéniz's *Iberia*" (DMA diss., University of California, 2004).
[19] Myungsook Wang, "Issac Albéniz's *Iberia* and the Influence of Franz Liszt" (DMA diss., City University of New York, 2004).
[20] Leslie Downs, "Spanish Dances and the Piano Music of Albéniz, Granados, Falla, Turina, and Mompou" (DMA diss., University of Oklahoma, 2010).

I have included two pedagogical piano repertoire sources for reference concerning repertoire that prepares the pianist specifically for studying *Iberia*. These two sources are *The Pianist's Guide to Standard Teaching and Performance Literature*, by Jane Magrath,[21] and *Piano Repertoire Guide: Intermediate and Advanced Literature*, by Cathy Albergo and Reid Alexander.[22]

Audio sources include two of my favorite recordings of *Iberia* by the famed pianist Alicia de Larrocha – her two recordings from 1974 and 1988, both of which won the Grammy Award for Best Instrumental Soloist Performance.[23] Alicia de Larrocha remains "best remembered as a performer without equal when it comes to Spanish/Catalan composers such as Albéniz, Granados, and Mompou."[24] Her recordings of Albéniz's *Iberia* are widely acclaimed by musicians and scholars.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to discuss four selected pieces from *Iberia* and provide a detailed pedagogical analysis of each piece, including technical and musical elements. I chose one piece from each of the 4 books for the pedagogical analysis. These pieces are "Evocación" from Book 1, "Triana" from Book 2, "El Albaicín" from Book 3, and "Málaga" from Book 4. Following a brief overview for each of these four pieces, I discuss practice strategies and teaching suggestions for advanced pianists. Preparatory pedagogical repertoire that targets the

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[21] Jane Magrath, *The Pianist's Guide to Standard Teaching and Performance Literature* (Van Nuys, CA: Alfred Publishing, 1995).
[22] Cathy Albergo and Reid Alexander, *Piano Repertoire Guide: Intermediate and Advanced Literature* (Champaign, IL: Stipes, 2011).
[23] Alicia de Larrocha, *Iberia*, tracks 1–12, on *Albéniz: Iberia; Navarra; Cantos de España*, Decca, 1974, CD. Alicia de Larrocha, *Iberia*, tracks 1–12, on Albéniz: *Iberia*, *Navarra*, *Suite Española*, Decca, 1988, CD.
[24] "Alicia de Larrocha (1923-2009)," *BBC Music Magazine*, September 28 2009, https://www.classical-music.com/news/alicia-de-larrocha-1923-2009/.

needed pianistic skills are also included, with the aim of preparing developing pianists so that they may eventually perform the whole of this monumental work. Thus, this document is intended to serve as a helpful source for those who aspire to learn *Iberia* but are not yet technically prepared.

Outline and Methodology

The document consists of four chapters. Chapter 1 serves as an introduction to this document and includes a brief biography of the composer, an overview of his compositions, a discussion of related literature, the purpose of study, and an outline and methodology. Chapter 2 includes general information about *Iberia* and discusses typical late-Romantic piano techniques that appear throughout the movements of the suite. In Chapter 3, I provide a pedagogical analysis of four selected pieces from *Iberia* and discuss their technical challenges and stylistic elements. Also included are recommended preparatory works that focus on the necessary skills for playing the movements from *Iberia*. The final chapter includes the conclusion and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER 2

COMMON PIANISTIC FEATURES OF *IBERIA*

Overview of *Iberia*

In 1905, Albéniz was by now far beyond where he had been fifteen years earlier in terms of his compositional techniques. He had just finished writing his opera, *Merlin*. "However, the combination of discouragement with the continued lack of interest in Spain in his opera and inability to get a production of *Merlin*, persuaded him to redirect his focus on what he did best, writing for the piano."[25] Albéniz was inspired to create the monumental composition that became *Iberia* – a composition that pianists and audiences alike would appreciate as an expression of profound technical and musical mastery. This set of compositions is arranged into four books of three pieces each. Albéniz gave every piece a descriptive title that evokes a location, festival, or song concentrating on life in the various regions of Spain.

Among the many factors that make *Iberia* an extraordinary work, its rhythmic complexity is unquestionably one of the most striking features. Although Albéniz incorporated Spanish dance rhythmic idioms into his work, he never limited himself to a particular dance rhythm for each piece. Instead, he combined different dance rhythms and meters that create a diverse palette of rhythmic patterns. Compared to his early piano compositions which are predominantly homophonic, pieces from *Iberia* have a highly polyphonic texture, reflecting his growth as a sophisticated composer. Moreover, the extensive thematic transformations, rich harmonic language, and Lisztian piano techniques exhibit challenging technical difficulties and demands for the pianist.

[25] Clark, "Albéniz: The Man and His Music," 25.

Book Number	Movement Order	Title Information
Book 1	"Evocación"	Translates as evocation
	"El Puerto"	Named for El Puerto de Santa Maria, a port in Cádiz, Spain and known locally as El Puerto
	"Fête-dieu à Séville," also known as "Corpus Christi en Sevilla"	Describes the procession scene on the Corpus Christi Day
Book 2	"Rondeña"	Named after the city, Ronda, located in Andalusia - also a type of *fandango* dance
	"Almería"	A seaport in Andalusia
	"Triana"	A district in Seville, Spain
Book 3	"El Albaicín"	Named after a district in Granada, Spain
	"El Polo"	A type of Andalusian song and dance
	"Lavapiés"	The name of a district in Madrid, Spain
Book 4	"Málaga"	A port city in Spain
	"Jerez"	The name of a city in Andalusia
	"Eritaña"	The name of a popular inn in Seville, Spain

Table 1. *Iberia*: General information

Common Pianistic Features

Although each work of the suite is inspired by music in different locations of Spain, different Spanish dances and songs, and of course, different stories, they all share something in common in terms of technical and pianistic devices. In her dissertation, Myungsook Wang discusses the technical difficulties of *Iberia* that are reminiscent of the late Romantic virtuosic style of Franz Liszt.[26] Liszt expanded the range of modern piano playing with his flashy and often acrobatic techniques, such as lightning-fast tempi, rapid scales and arpeggios, chromaticism, difficult jumps, thick chords, and octaves. Liszt's piano music is not simply brilliant, but also possesses deep emotional meaning that requires a pianist who has both the

[26] Myungsook Wang, "Isaac Albéniz's *Iberia* and the Influence of Franz Liszt."

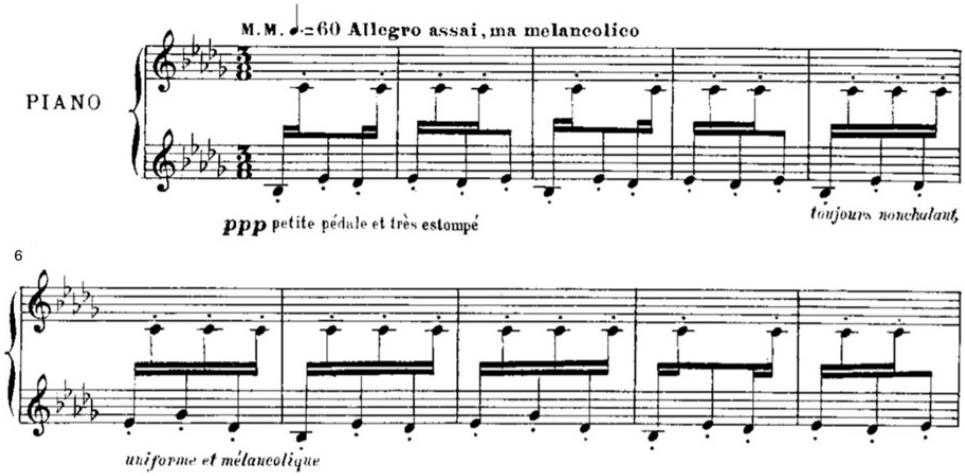
technical ability and the interpretive ability to perform his music. The virtuosic techniques and profound Spanish music that evoke the different emotions of Albéniz's *Iberia* align with those characteristics of Liszt's piano works.

I will focus on the common musical elements and technical features found in the twelve pieces from *Iberia*: pedaling; ornaments; rapid passages; chords; overlapping hand positions; instrumental idioms; extreme dynamics; extreme registers; large leaps; and rhythmic complexities. These pianistic features may have been inspired by the music of Liszt and other Romantic composers. By discussing these common pianistic features, students can understand the expectations and the virtuosic demands when performing pieces from *Iberia* and relate its expectations to the works of Liszt and other Romantic composers.

Pedaling

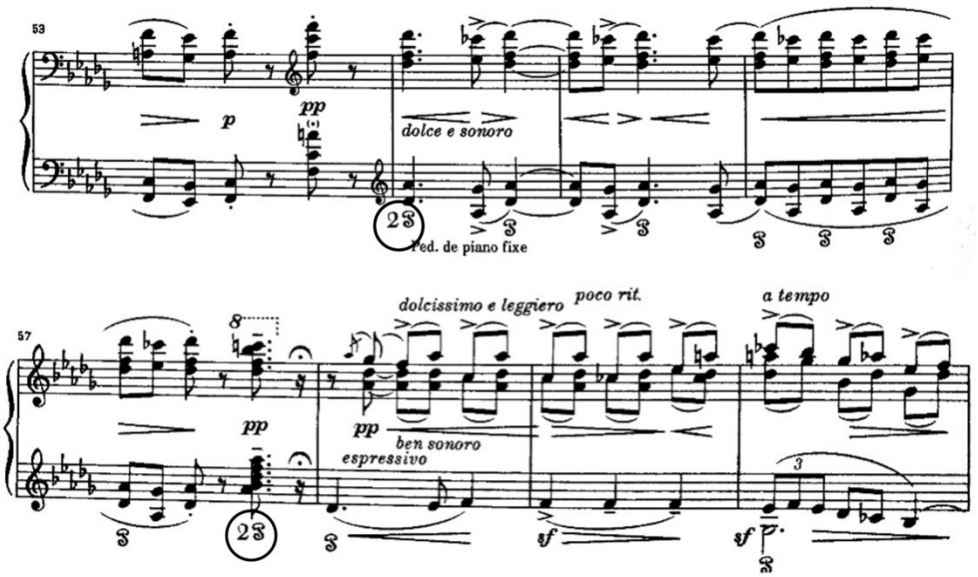
There are many specific damper pedal indications throughout each piece in *Iberia*. Furthermore, for a specific sound effect to be performed appropriately according to the Spanish style of the piece, Albéniz used detailed instructions, such as *petite pédale et très estompé* ("with *una corda* pedal and very faded damper pedal") at the beginning of "El Albaicín," or *sans pédale* ("without pedal") indications in "Triana." These pedal directions require the pianist's examination and understanding of the purpose of such an instruction. For example, the opening of "El Albaicín" is marked by triple *pianissimo*; hence it is appropriate to use the *una corda*. Furthermore, Albéniz's piano writing in this opening recalls the sound of a flamenco guitar, with a theme that is entirely staccato. Because the guitar strings would be naturally resonant, Albéniz instructs the pianist to be very careful with the pedal and gives the instruction of *petite pédale et très estompé*. In other words, he gives permission for the pianist to carefully and discreetly add

some pedal to the sound. The ideal sound comes when we can hear the percussive theme clearly with a natural sense of resonance rather than an overly sustained and blurred sound.



Example 1. Albéniz, "El Albaicín" from *Iberia*, Book 3, mm. 1-10, pedaling.

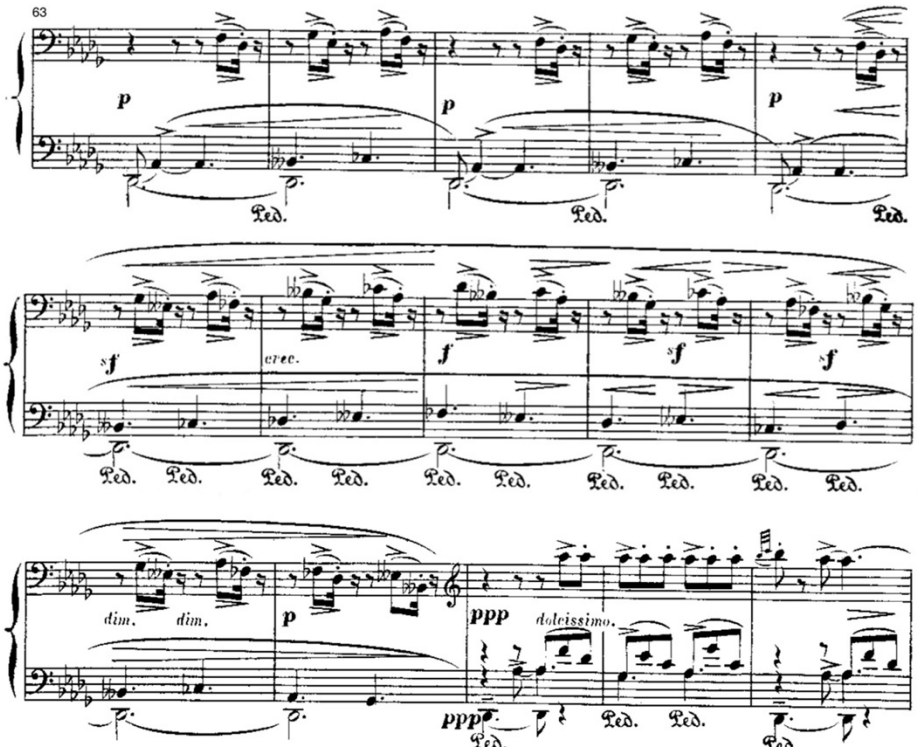
Albéniz's instructions for incorporating the *una corda* pedal can be found in measure 54 and measure 57 of "Málaga," where he added the number 2 directly in front of the damper pedal sign (See the circled pedal notations in measures 54 and 57 of Example 2). Such notations can be found in both the Henle and Dover Editions of "Málaga." Based on my extensive listening to many performances and recordings of the work, I can attest that it is appropriate to use the *una corda* in the passages that include this special pedal instruction.



Example 2. Albéniz, "Málaga" from *Iberia*, Book 4, mm. 53-60, *una corda* and damper pedal.

Although Albéniz is very specific about using the damper pedal, there are instances where I would suggest incorporating the *sostenuto* pedal in various pieces throughout the suite. Using the *sostenuto* pedal can help to facilitate large stretches in the bass staff, support the harmonic context, and enrich the overall sound. In several pieces of *Iberia*, there are prolonged pedal tones, typically in the bass line, that need to be sustained over several measures. This will require the use of the *sostenuto* pedal while also changing the damper pedal frequently. In measures 67-74 of "El Puerto," the bass note is tied over eight measures, and this is an excellent example where both the damper and *sostenuto* pedals are needed. The melody lies in the higher voice of the left hand, and the pedal markings in the score suggest changing the damper pedal on each dotted-quarter note, starting in measure 68. I suggest pressing down the *sostenuto* pedal on the downbeat of measure 63, allowing the left hand to move away from the lower bass note and

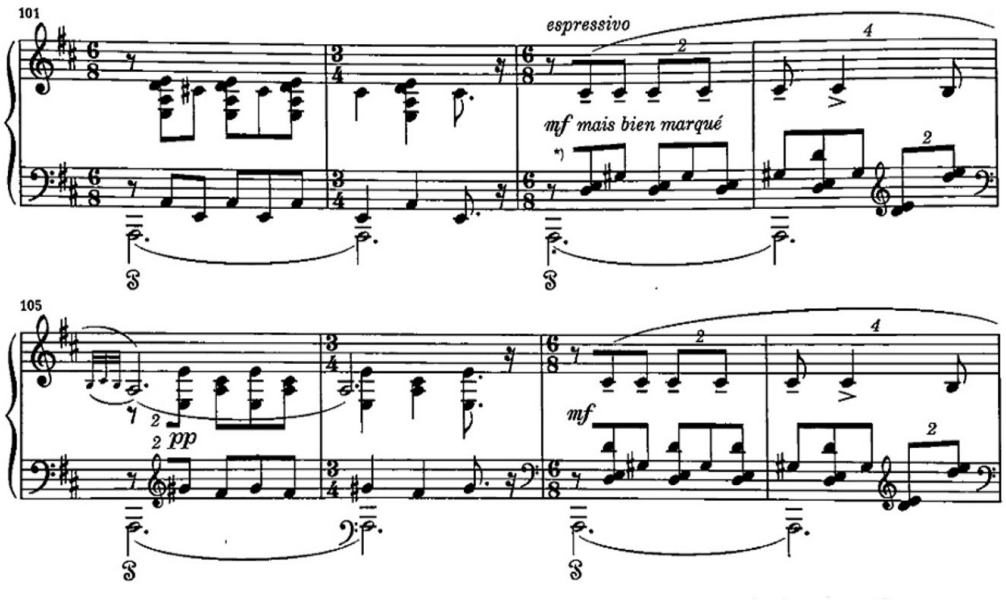
assuming a more comfortable hand shape to better serve the phrasing and shaping of the inner melody throughout measures 67-74.



Example 3. Albéniz, "El Puerto" from *Iberia*, Book 1, mm. 63-77, *sostenuto* and damper pedal used together.

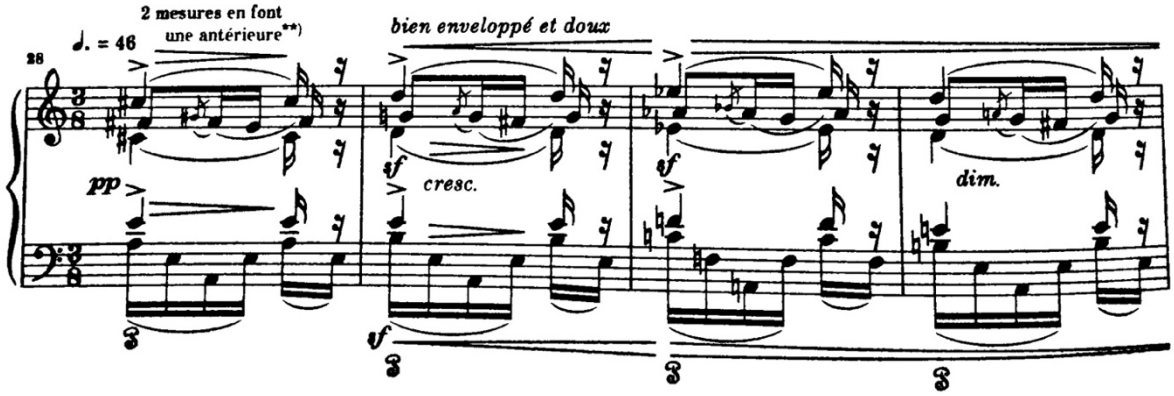
Ornaments

The most frequently used ornaments throughout *Iberia* are grace notes and trills. Within a melodic line that purposefully repeats a pitch to heighten the sense of tension, ornaments often appear at the end of the phrase, releasing the harmonic tension. For example, in the *copla* (meaning "song") of "Rondeña," starting at measure 103, the tension slowly builds with the repeating C♯ that is played six times with tenutos and accents. Finally, the tension is released when the melodic line moves down by step to A with a triplet ornamenting figure. The next six phrases occur successively with the same contour of the melody and the ornaments, except centering around different pitch levels.



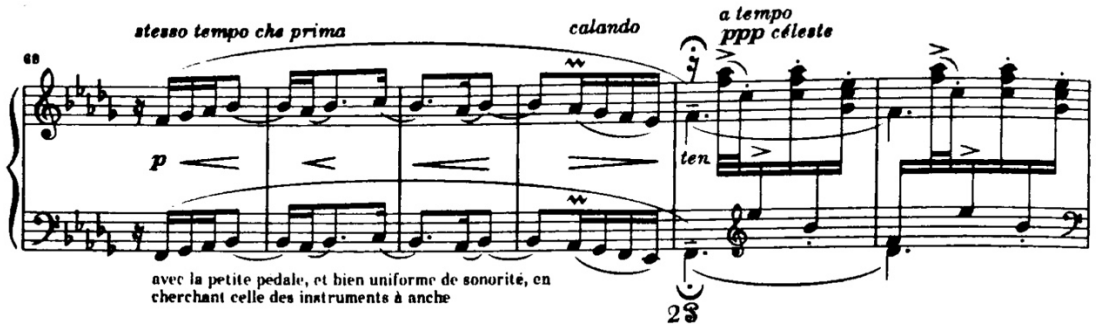
Example 4. Albéniz, "Rondeña" from *Iberia*, Book 2, mm. 101-108, ornaments.

Grace notes frequently appear at the beginning or middle of passages and are meant to imitate a guitar accompaniment. For example, starting at measure 28 of "Jerez," grace notes appear in the guitar-like interjections and repeat steadily at different pitch levels. After consulting de Larrocha's recording, I would suggest playing the grace notes before the beat and unaccented.



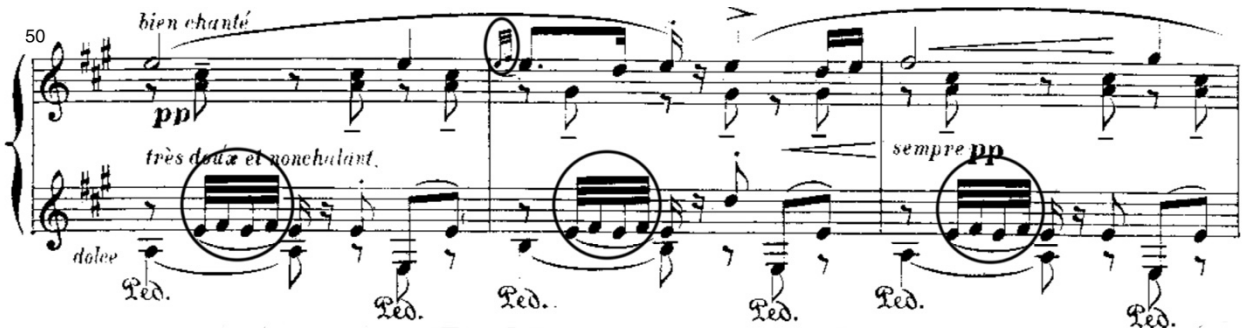
Example 5. Albéniz, "Jerez" from *Iberia*, Book 4, mm. 28-31, grace notes.

Albéniz often uses short trills in the melodic line, like that occurring in measure 72 of "El Albaicín."



Example 6. Albéniz, "El Albaicín" from *Iberia*, Book 3, mm. 69-74, short trill.

Albéniz often wrote the trills out on the staff rather than using a trill sign. For example, in measures 50-52 of "Triana," the trills are written out with thirty-second notes in both staves. The left-hand trills in measures 50-52 imitate castanets, and the right-hand trill in measure 51 ornaments the melodic line.

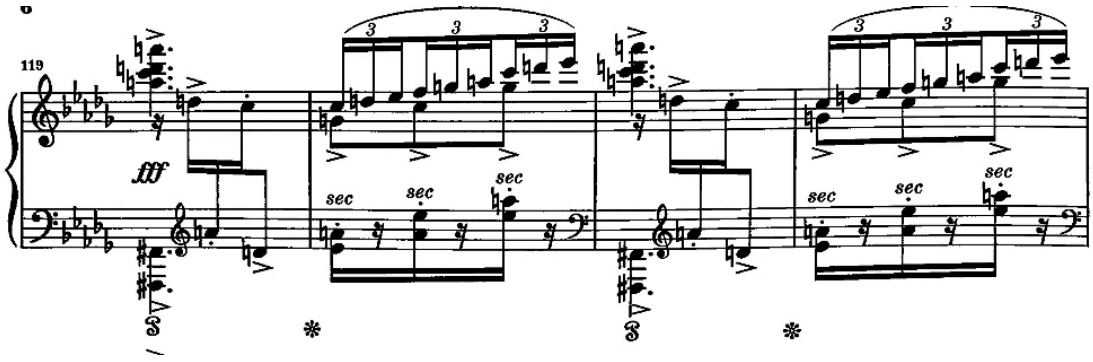


Example 7. Albéniz, "Triana" from *Iberia*, Book 2, mm. 50-52, trills written out.

Rapid Passages

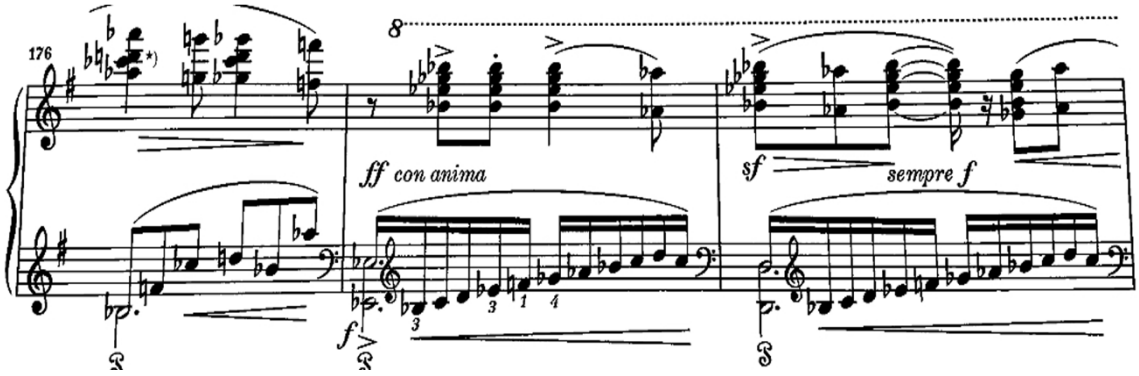
The ability to play a fast passage brilliantly is crucial for virtuosic pianists, and Albéniz employs rapid scale and arpeggio passages in many pieces of *Iberia*. These scalar passages frequently appear in groups of triplets and sixteenth notes. Whether the scales are meant to be

played freely or strictly in time varies in different scenarios. For example, the triplet scale passages in measures 120 and 122 of "El Albacín" establish a clear triple-meter rhythm, leaving no room for rhythmic freedom; therefore, these scales should be played in strict time against the accompaniment.



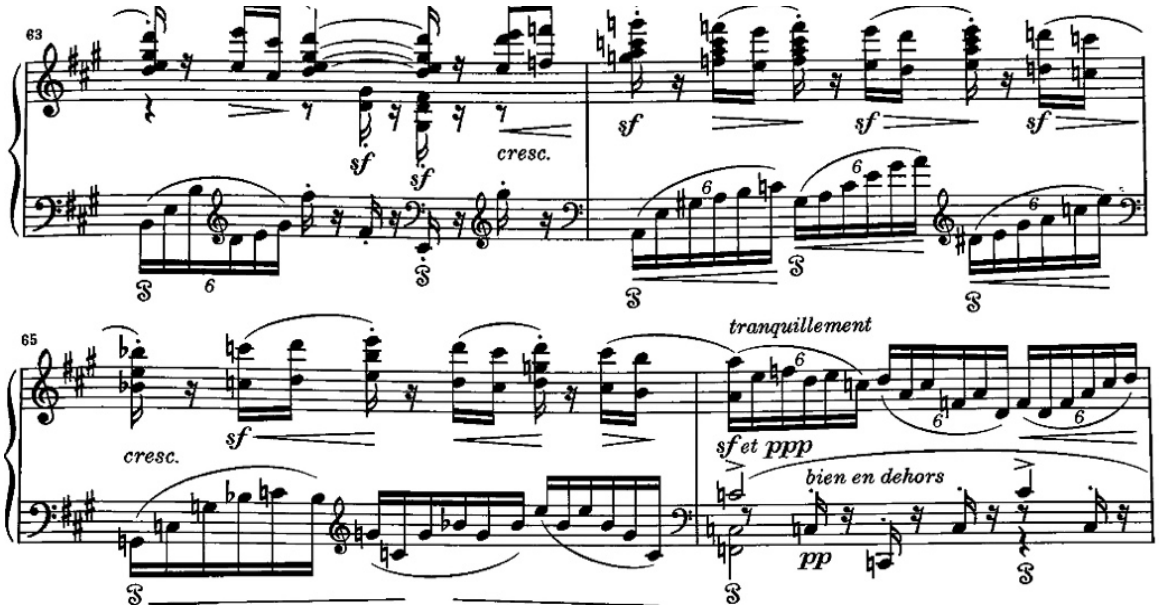
Example 8. Albéniz, "El Albaicín" from *Iberia*, Book 3, mm. 119-122, rapid passages played in strict meter.

A similar example of a fast scale passage appears in measures 177 and 178 of "Almería," where the left-hand scale becomes the accompaniment. Written in groups of sixteenths, the scale sounds more like a series of flourishes that brush through the keys than a strict scalar passage. Maintaining a brilliantly clear sound in the scale is key to performing such passages.



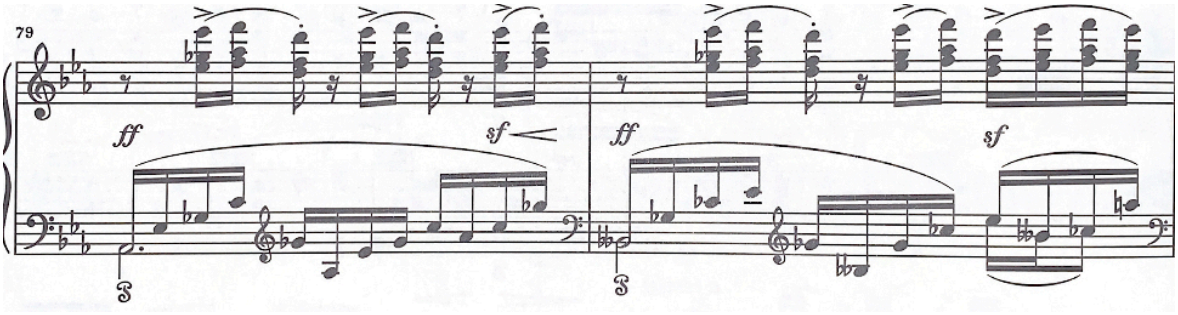
Example 9. Albéniz, "Almería" from *Iberia*, Book 2, mm. 176-178, scale flourishes.

Arpeggios in *Iberia* mostly appear as accompaniment material in the left hand, reminiscent of the arpeggios and broken-chord patterns of Chopin's nocturnes. Albéniz often added his own innovative elements to arpeggiated passages, including using numerous non-chord tones and irregular intervals. The arpeggios are often paired with a pedal tone. In the middle section of "Triana," arpeggiated runs are exchanged between the right and left hands. For example, in measures 63-65, the left-hand arpeggios contain a large variety of intervals, including seconds, thirds, fourths, fifths, sixths, and sevenths.



Example 10. Albéniz, "Triana" from *Iberia*, Book 2, mm. 63-66, arpeggios.

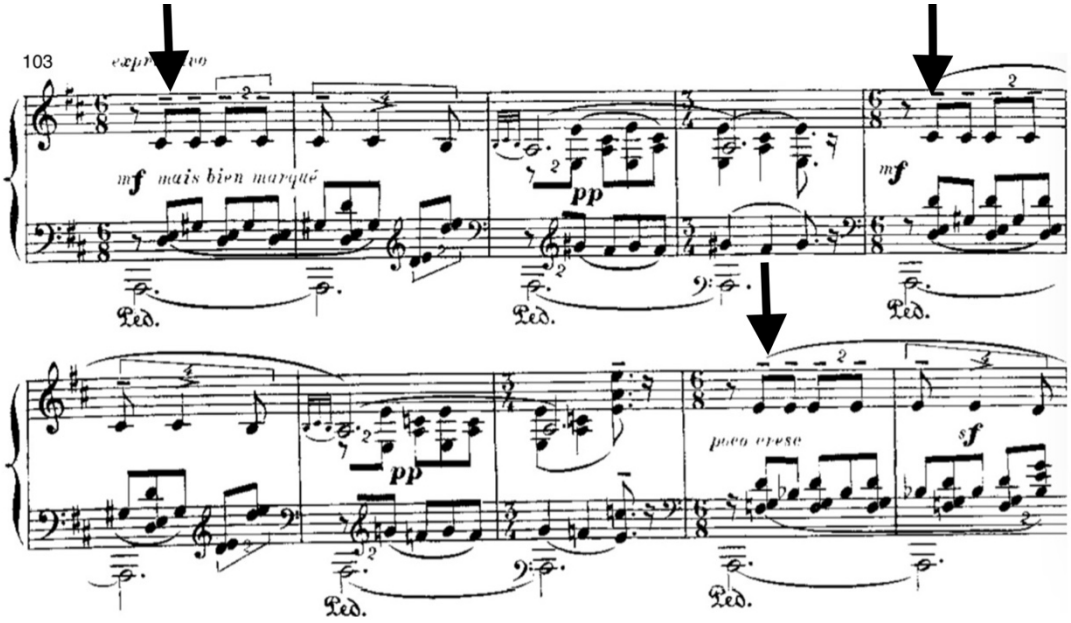
In measure 79 of "Eritaña," the fast arpeggio in the left hand gradually ascends over the pedal tone on A♭. Then in measure 80, the arpeggio follows a similar contour from the previous measure over the pedal tone on B𝄫. This left-hand arpeggiated pattern requires quick and accurate movements in the left hand.



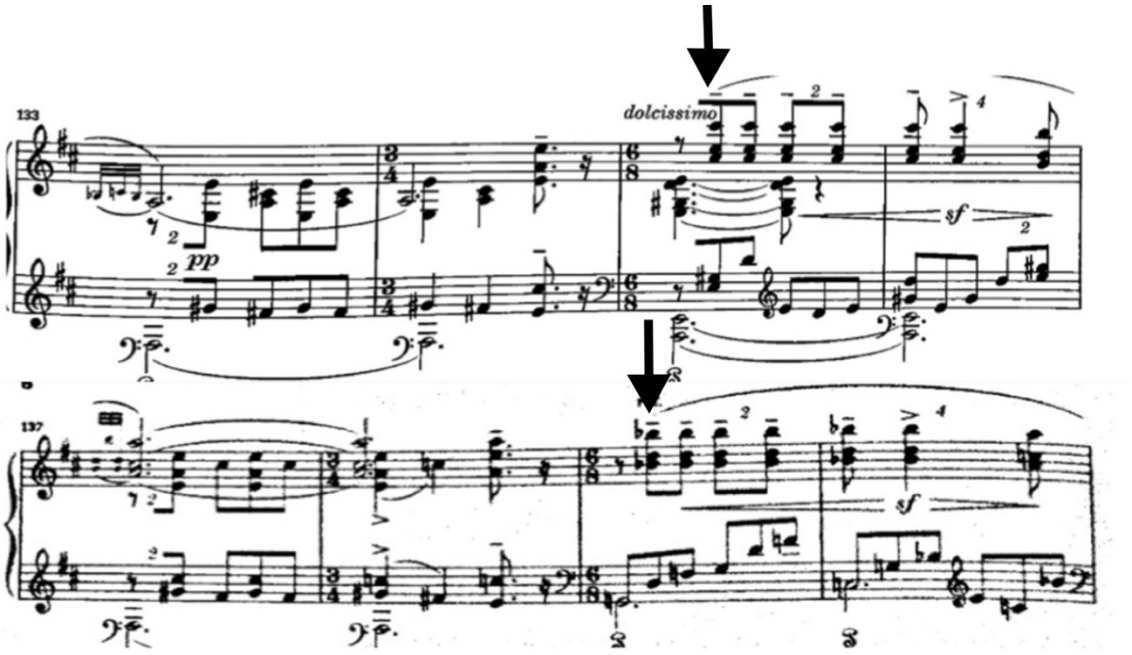
Example 11. Albéniz, “Eritaña” from *Iberia*, Book 4, mm. 79-80, pedal tone and arpeggios.

Chords

Along with fast scales and arpeggios, frequent use of chords also commonly occurs in many of the pieces from *Iberia*, greatly increasing the difficulty level of the piece and adding an orchestral depth to the sound. Albéniz frequently presents the melody first in a simple fashion, typically with single melodic notes. Then, through a series of thematic transformations and modulations, the climax of the song appears, usually supported by octaves and thick chords in the melodic line. In the *copla* of “Rondeña,” starting at measure 103, the melody is presented monophonically in the right hand (See arrows in Example 12). After a series of phrase repetitions in different pitch materials, the *copla* repeats at measure 135 with a thicker texture, where Albéniz adds octaves and chords to the melody (See arrows in Example 13).

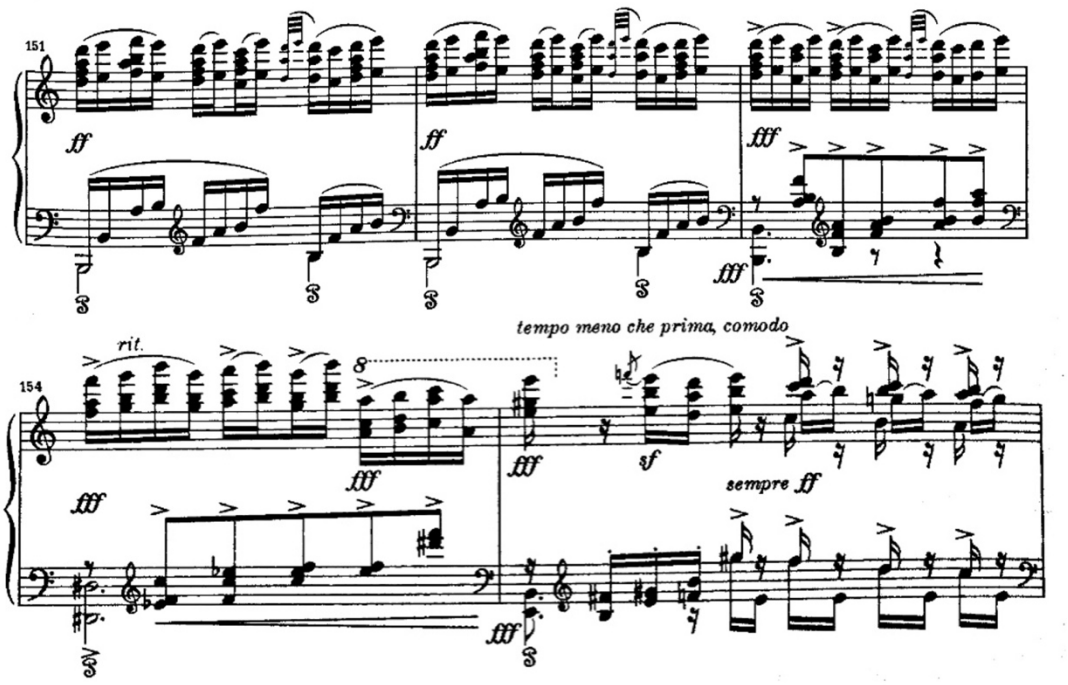


Example 12. Albéniz, "Rondeña" from *Iberia*, Book 2, mm. 103-112, single melodic notes.



Example 13. Albéniz, "Rondeña" from *Iberia*, Book 2, mm. 133-140, melody with chords.

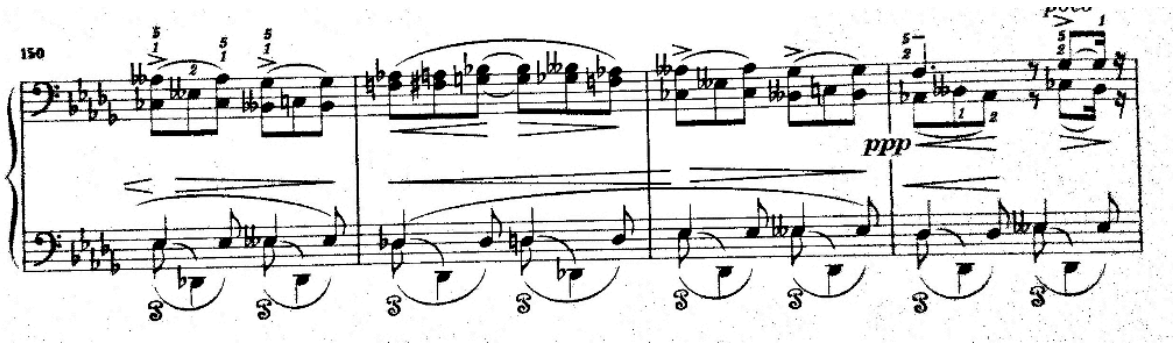
Albéniz often uses dense and repetitive chordal passages to stress the tension. Such a passage can be found in measures 151-155 of "Jerez."



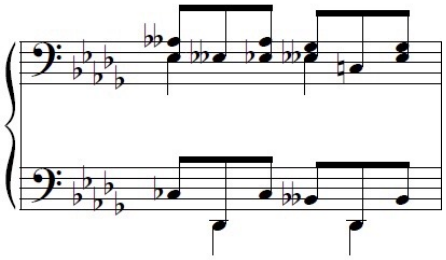
Example 14. Albéniz, "Jerez" from *Iberia*, Book 4, mm. 151-155, dense chord passages.

Overlapping Hand Positions

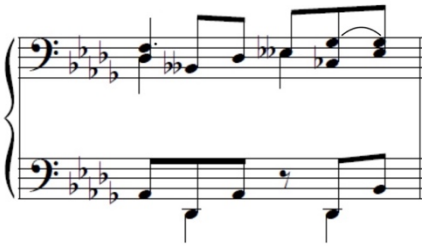
In several pieces of *Iberia*, Albéniz writes in such a way that the hands overlap, resulting in extremely awkward hand positions that can create potential problems in accuracy, tension, and voicing. Some of these passages with overlapping hands can benefit from a redistribution of notes for easier execution. Example 15 below shows Albéniz's score of measures 150-153 from "El Puerto." If played as indicated, the pianist's thumbs will overlap many times, potentially creating problems in voicing and accuracy. The notes in measures 150 and 153 can be redistributed so that the problem of overlapping thumbs is eliminated. See Examples 16 and 17 for suggested redistributions.



Example 15. Albéniz, “El Puerto” from *Iberia*, Book 1, mm. 150-153, overlapping notes.



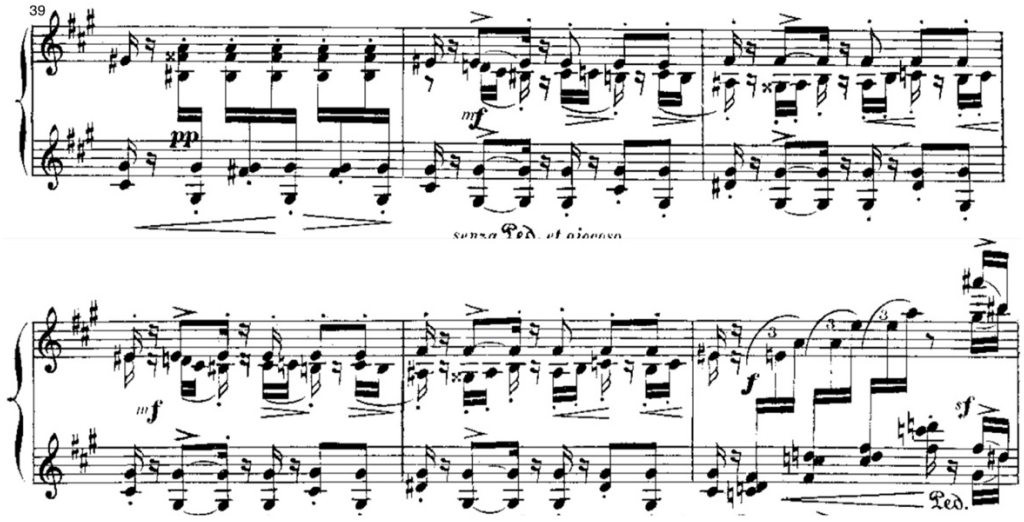
Example 16. Albéniz, “El Puerto” from *Iberia*, Book 1, m. 150, notes redistributed.



Example 17. Albéniz, “El Puerto” from *Iberia*, Book 1, m. 153, notes redistributed.

See Example 18 below for another example of overlapping hand positions, this time in measures 40-44 of “Triana.” In this instance, the right hand is written in such a way that it remains underneath the left hand for measures 40-43. With the inevitable bouncing of the staccato notes, both hands will stay in contact the entire time. Getting used to this close contact between the hands while still bringing out the rhythmic patterns and accents makes this even more challenging to play. Further examination will reveal to the pianist the overlapping hand

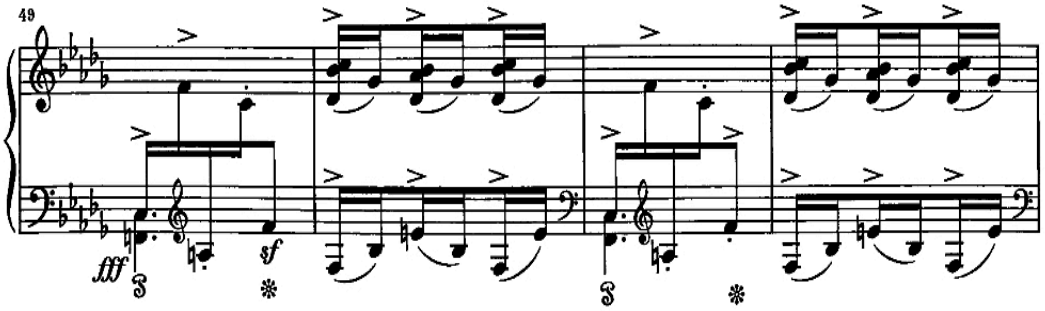
positions in passages and, if needed, what redistribution of fingerings might make it easier to play. When there are no options for redistributing the notes, the pianist should ensure that the hands, wrists, and arms are free from tension for performing such passages.



Example 18. Albéniz, "Triana" from *Iberia*, Book 2, mm. 39-44, overlapping hands.

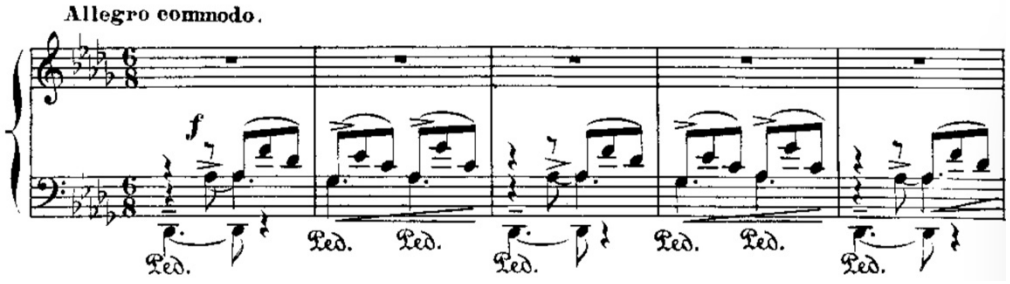
Instrumental Idioms

The guitar is the primary instrument for accompanying Spanish dances and songs, and undeniably the guitar contributes to the signature Spanish musical sound. Albéniz successfully captured the characteristics of the guitar and transferred them into his piano music. The most frequent styles of Spanish guitar idioms that occur throughout *Iberia* are *rasgueado* (strumming) and *punteado* (plucking). *Rasgueado*, where the player violently strums dissonant chords in accompanying flamenco dancers, serves a rhythmic, harmonic, and emotional function in performance. An example of *rasgueado* occurs in measures 50 and 52 of "El Albaicín."



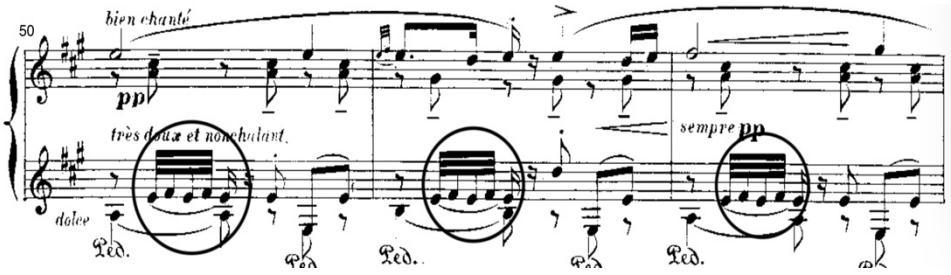
Example 19. Albéniz, "El Albaicín" from *Iberia*, Book 3, mm. 49-52, *rasgueado*.

Punteado usually accompanies the melodic passages with Chopinistic arpeggios or broken-chord patterns. A prime example of *punteado* can be found in the instrumental introduction of "El Puerto."



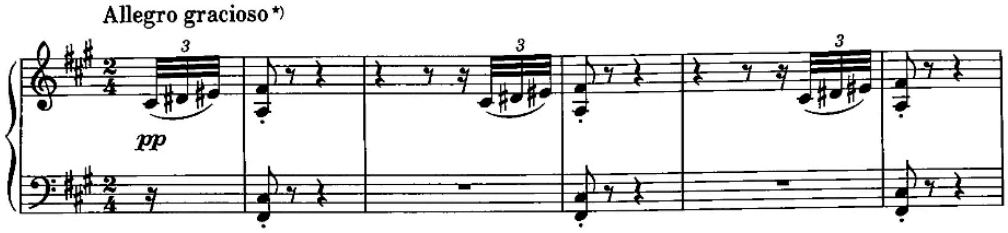
Example 20. Albéniz, "El Puerto" from *Iberia*, Book 1, mm. 1-5, *punteado*.

Not only did Albéniz experiment with transferring guitar performance idioms into his piano writing, but he also imitated percussion instruments, including castanets, drums, and tambourines. Albéniz recreated the sound of the castanet on the piano by using a fast-measured trill (See Ex. 21). It is easy to distinguish the castanet figure based on tempo, mood, and style. Often such a figure is interjected into a slow melody, as seen in the example below.



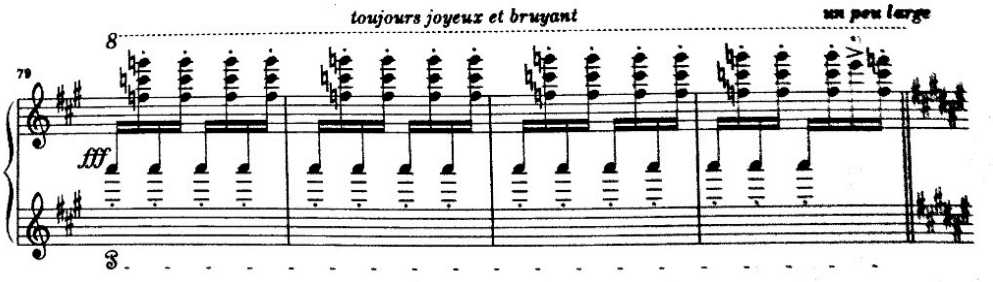
Example 21. Albéniz, "Triana" from *Iberia*, Book 2, mm. 50-52, castanet figure.

The opening of "Fête-Dieu à Séville" imitates the percussive sound of a snare drum, with the dynamics suggesting it is coming from a distance.



Example 22. Albéniz, "Fête-Dieu à Séville" from *Iberia*, Book 1, mm. 1-5, snare drum imitation.

In measures 79 to 82 of "Fête-Dieu à Séville," the left and right hands alternate quickly in the highest register of the piano, imitating the rattling sound of a tambourine.

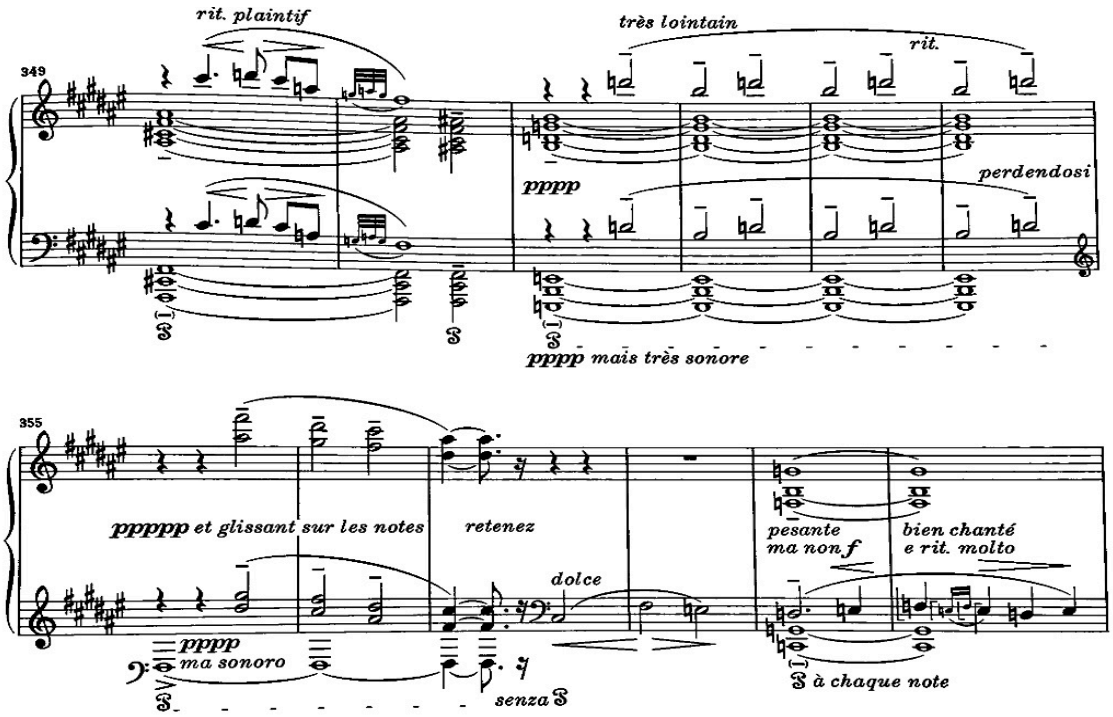


Example 23. Albéniz, "Fête-Dieu à Séville" from *Iberia*, Book 1, mm. 79-82, tambourine.

Extreme Dynamics

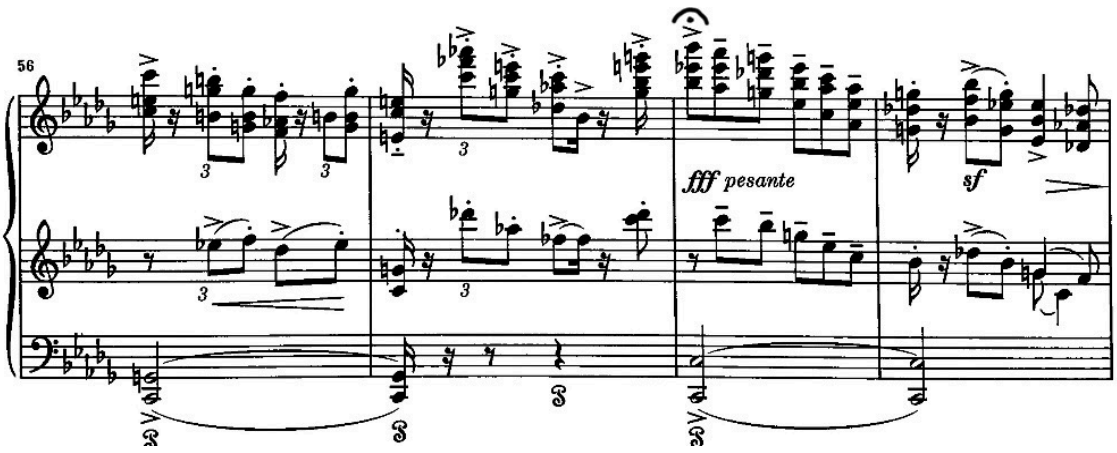
Throughout the suite, Albéniz uses a wide range of dynamic markings to express a variety of tones, colors, and emotions, and these dynamics are as extreme as ***ffff*** to ***ppppp***. Certainly, following the dynamic markings in the score is important, but pianists must remember that dynamics are relative. One can always design and plan the direction of the phrase or passage to enhance the loudness or softness as suggested by the composer. For the extremely soft sounds of ***ppp*** and ***pppp***, the pianist can employ the use of the *una corda*. But rather than simply trying to play as softly as possible, the idea is for the pianist to capture the mood and the picture of the passages.

In measures 351-354 of "Jerez" as shown below, the pianist might interpret the ***pppp*** as related to the markings in the score – *trés lointain* (very far away*)* followed by *perdendosi* (dying away). Not surprisingly, the dynamic decreases to ***ppppp*** in the following measure, with *ma sonoro* (with rich tone) over the bass note and *et glissant sur les notes* (sliding over the notes) for the double-note intervals. Although the entire section remains soft, there are numerous layers of sounds that require precise distribution of weight on the keys, as well as sensitive musical expression.



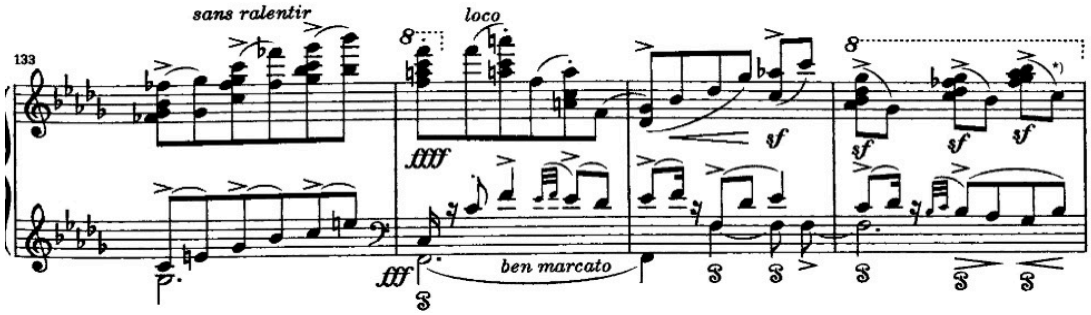
Example 24. Albéniz, "Jerez" from *Iberia*, Book 3, mm. 349-360.

While it is impossible for a pianist to literally match the volume of an entire orchestra, the pianist might still emphasize the strong dynamic by incorporating practical pianistic strategies. Before the triple *forte* in measure 58 of "Lavapiés," the volume of measures 56 and 57 is already very loud due to the accents and thick texture. Although the dynamic strength of measures 57 and 58 might not be significantly different, I suggest using other methods to emphasize the dynamics. For example, the pianist might add some extra time as they move from the last chord of measure 57 to the downbeat of measure 58, thus delaying the downbeat slightly. They could also add a short fermata to the downbeat of measure 58 for emphasis. The extra time spent on the downbeat not only emphasizes the accents but also provides extra travel time to the second eighth-note of the measure for the left hand. Notice the tenuto signs in the top two staves of measure 58 – these indicate a much heavier sound than in the previous measure.



Example 25. Albéniz, "Lavapiés" from *Iberia*, Book 3, mm. 56-59.

Albéniz's instructions are highly specific, even when it comes to extreme dynamics like ***ffff***. For example, in measure 134 of "Málaga," Albéniz asks for a louder right hand with the marking of quadruple *forte* and the triple *forte* in the bass staff.

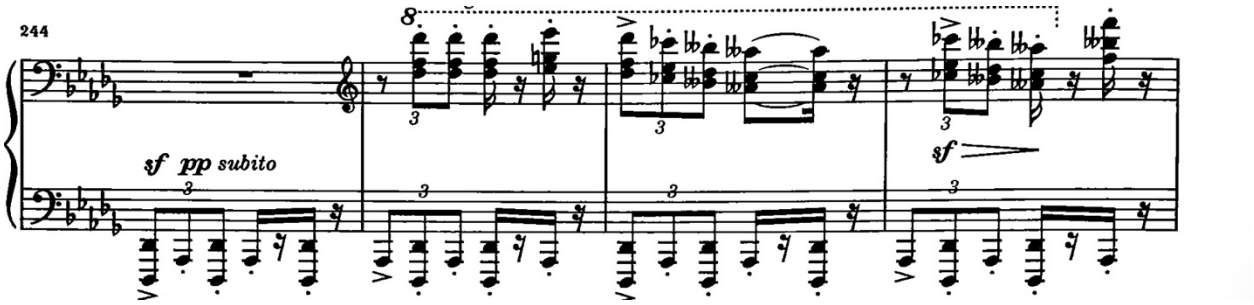


Example 26. Albéniz, "Málaga" from *Iberia*, Book 4, mm. 133-136.

Extreme Registers

Toward the end of "Lavapiés" in measures 245-247, Albéniz exploits extremely high and low registers on the piano simultaneously, placing the left and right hands six octaves apart. The wide distance between the hands might be especially challenging for young pianists of shorter stature, as it can lend discomfort to the arms. Maintaining a healthy upper body posture with the

back straightened can help prevent tension in the arms. And because the left hand stays in one position without moving in measures 244-247, the pianist can focus on looking at the right hand to ensure accuracy.



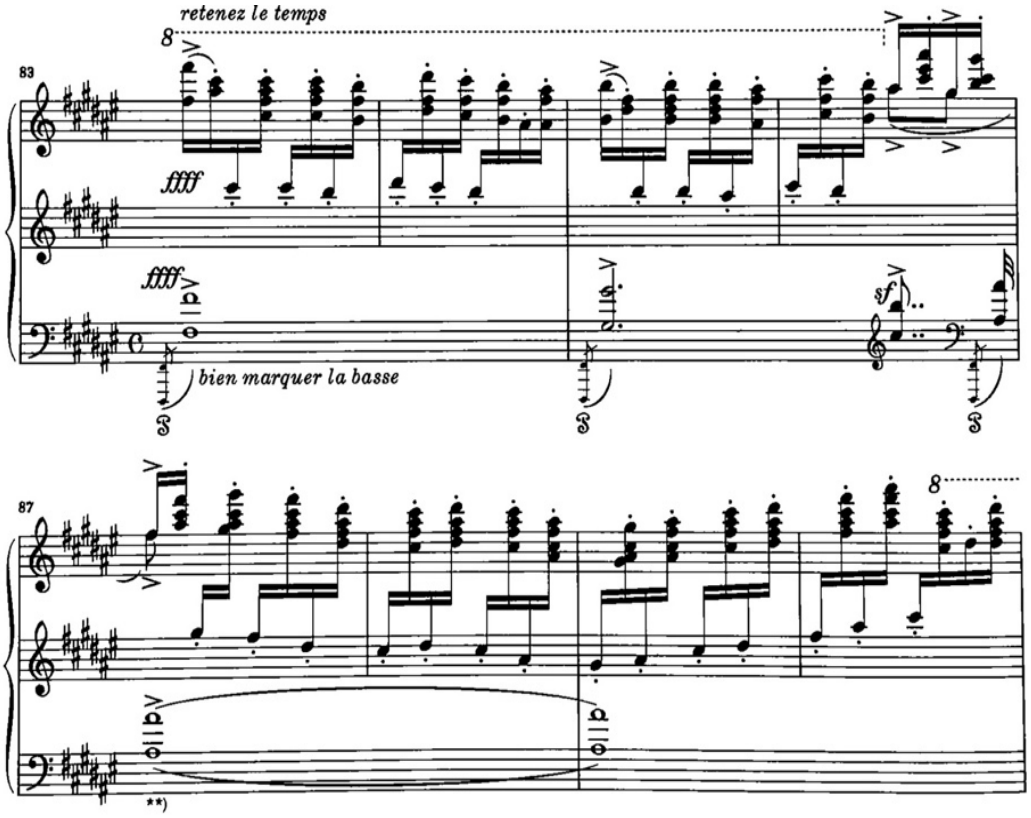
Example 27. Albéniz, "Lavapiés" from *Iberia*, Book 3, mm. 244-247.

Large Leaps

Albéniz often incorporates large leaps on the keyboard, contributing to the virtuosic aspect of his music. Moving fast in different octaves and hand positions is crucial when executing the sections involving large leaps. The *saeta* ("sung in free rhythm during a procession"[27]) starts at measure 83 of "Fête-Dieu à Séville"; the distance between the lowest and highest note covers seven octaves, almost the entire range of the keyboard. This passage requires the left hand to leap up and down on the keyboard while the right hand moves in an overall descending stepwise pattern for the first six measures before ascending in measures 89 and 90. The first leap in the left-hand covers two octaves, from a grace note on F♯1 and F♯2 to a whole note on F♯3 and F♯4. This is followed immediately by the left hand jumping up to C♯6 for the melody. Then in measure 85, the left hand moves down again for the low F♯ octaves.

[27] Clark, *Portrait of a Romantic*, 229.

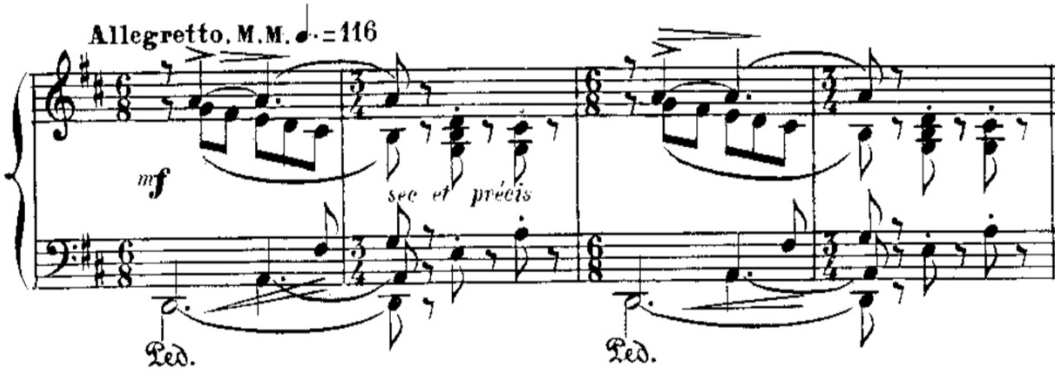
For such a passage, taking advantage of the style of the music can help with the quick movements in the left hand. I recommend that the pianist hold the bass note slightly longer than written, because *saeta* is usually sung in free rhythm. Although the first F♯ octave is marked as a grace note, it can be held slightly longer. With the pedal sustaining the first F♯ octave, move the left hand immediately toward the next octave. This means that both of these octaves need to be played with one gesture, and the left-hand wrist should remain loose. To help with accuracy, the pianist will need to maintain the octave hand position while moving from the lower to the higher octave, aiming at the leap with the thumb. Additionally, the *saeta* is marked with *retenez le temps*, which allows the player to take extra time for the leaping motion on the keyboard. An accurate measure of the distance is a must.



Example 28. Albéniz, "Fête-Dieu à Séville" from *Iberia*, Book 1, mm. 83-90, large leaps.

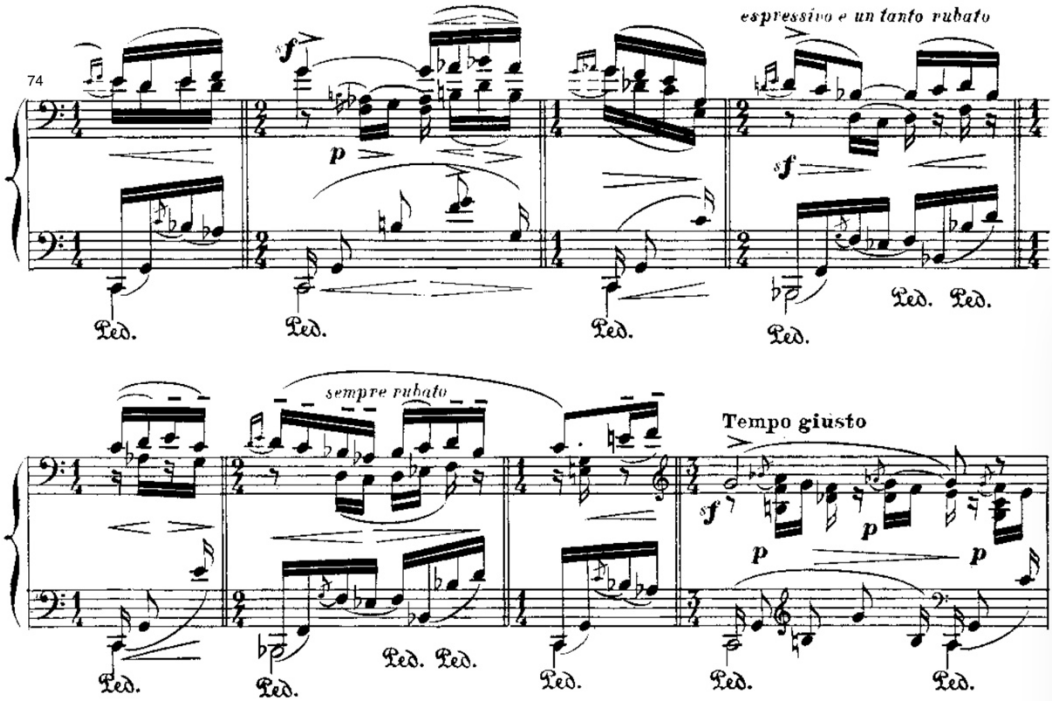
Rhythmic Complexities

Frequent meter changes, metrical ambiguity, "wrong" placements of accents, and hemiolas are the most common rhythmic challenges encountered when studying *Iberia*. These rhythmic challenges directly relate to the style of Spanish music and dance. Thus, understanding the piece's historical background and studying the fundamental characteristics of the dance or music that inspired each piece becomes an integral aspect of the learning process. The introduction of "Rondeña" forms a good example of meter change, where the metric alternation between 6/8 and 3/4 creates a feeling of hemiola.



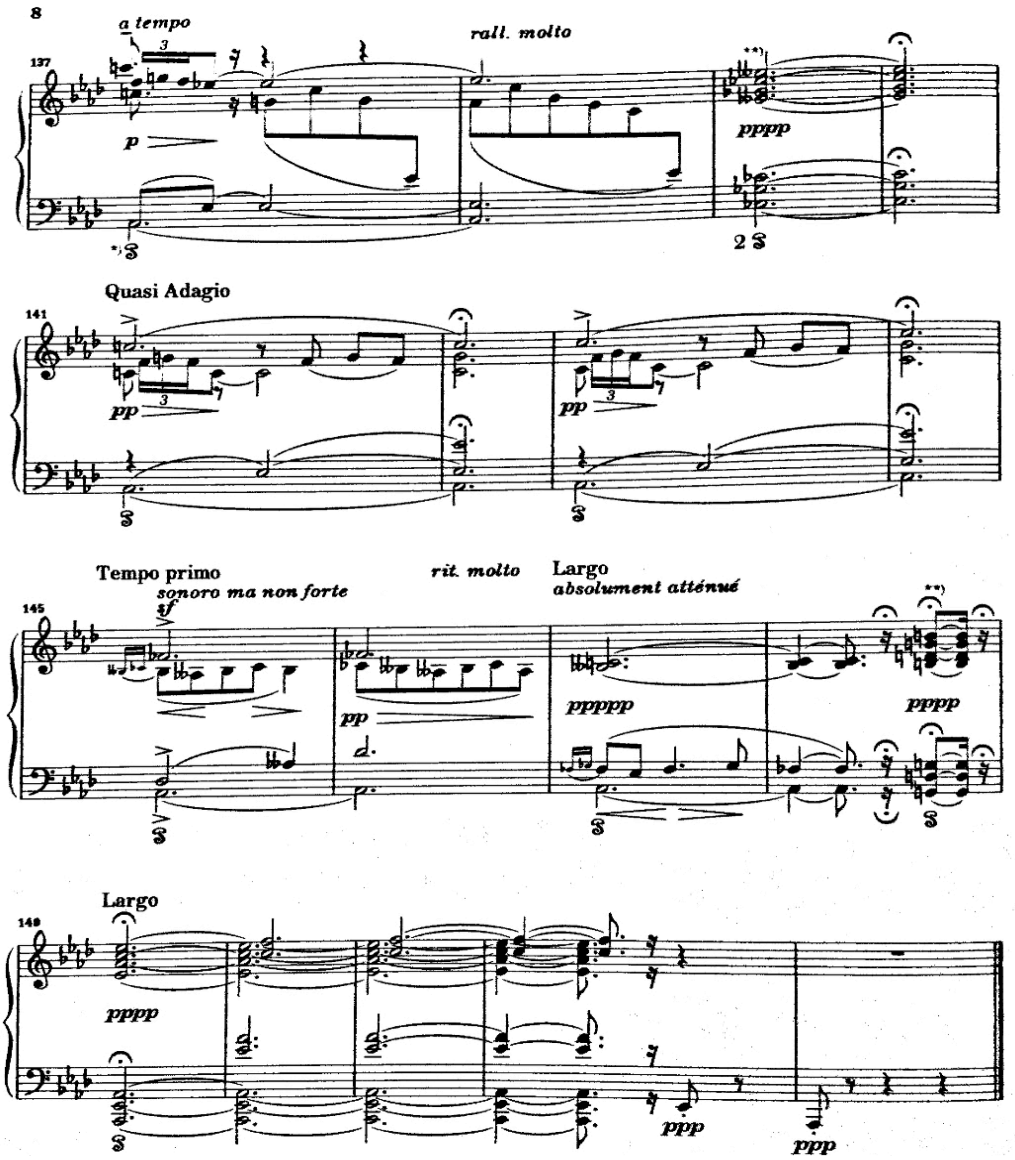
Example 29. Albéniz, "Rondeña" from *Iberia*, Book 2, mm. 1-4, meter changes.

Aside from the rather steady pattern of meter changes, Albéniz also likes to present surprises with the meter. In measures 74-81 of "Jerez," the meter constantly changes from one measure to the next, alternating primarily from 1/4 to 2/4 in successive measures, then changing to 3/4 in measure 81. The slow *copla* (song) melody should be played freely and expressively. This, along with the frequent meter changes, adds another degree of metrical ambiguity.



Example 30. Albéniz, "Jerez" from *Iberia*, Book 3, mm. 74-81, frequent meter changes.

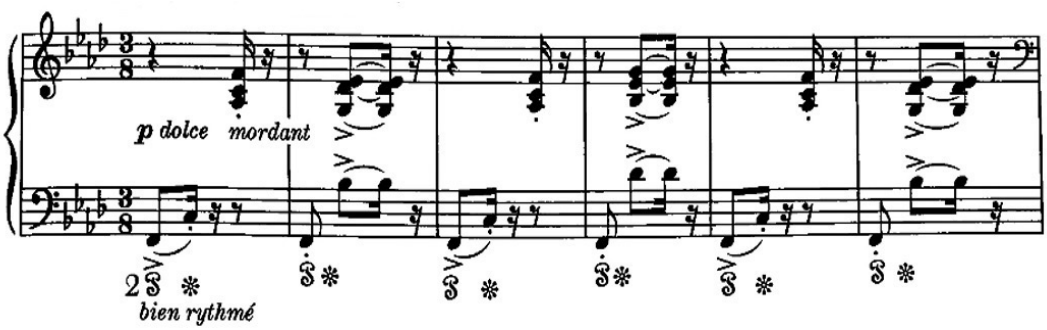
Furthermore, Albéniz is very specific regarding the tempo indications. For example, in measures 137-153 of "Evocación," the tempo changes from *a tempo* to *Quasi Adagio*, back to *tempo primo*, and finally ends with *Largo*.



Example 31. Albéniz, "Evocación" from *Iberia*, Book1, mm. 137-153, frequent tempo changes.

The unconventional placement of accents is another important factor in the rhythmic complexities of *Iberia*, and the emphasis on the rhythm directly relates to the Spanish style and dance rhythms. To capture the Spanish sound and rhythm of each work, we must treat the accents carefully. For example, in the introduction of "El Polo," the meter is 3/8, and the accents appear first on the downbeat of one measure and then on the second beat of the following

measure. This pattern continues for a number of measures until the melody enters. The unconventional accents contribute to the distinct sound effect.



Example 32. Albéniz, "El Polo" from *Iberia*, Book 3, mm. 1-6, unconventional accents.

Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed many of the commonly shared pianistic features that appear throughout the twelve pieces of *Iberia*, presenting a comprehensive overview of this work. These shared features include the following topics: pedaling; ornaments; rapid passages; chords; overlapping hand positions; instrumental idioms; extreme dynamics; extreme registers; large leaps; and rhythmic complexities. It is well-known among pianists and pedagogues that the technical difficulties of *Iberia* require a well-advanced pianist to perform the pieces from the suite. The technical virtuosity of *Iberia* resembles many pieces from the Late-Romantic piano repertoire, especially the works of Liszt. Therefore, when students encounter similar technical challenges in *Iberia*, teachers can relate these techniques to the Late-Romantic period and can explain the expectations for such piano techniques.

CHAPTER 3

PEDAGOGICAL ANALYSIS OF SELECTED PIECES FROM *IBERIA* AND PREPARATORY REPERTOIRE

In this chapter, I will be discussing four pieces from *Iberia*, one from each of the books: "Evocación" from Book 1; "Triana" from Book 2; "El Albaicín" from Book 3; and "Málaga" from Book 4. An overview of each piece will be presented, followed by an analysis of the challenging technical and stylistic elements. Finally, preparatory repertoire that relates to these challenging elements will be introduced. These preparatory compositions, which are less complex than the pieces from *Iberia,* will help to prepare students with the needed techniques and understanding to study *Iberia*.

Iberia, Book I, No. 1, "Evocación"

"Evocación" opens Albéniz's impressive piano suite with a mournful melody in A♭ minor and functions as a prelude to the entire suite. The title of this opening piece does not refer to a specific regional style or dance, as do the titles of the other pieces in *Iberia*. Instead, the title "Evocación" indicates that this piece is meant to evoke a Spanish atmosphere. Clark describes the primary characteristics of "Evocación" as "the triple meter combined with a minor key, descending minor tetrachord, use of augmented second and certain arabesque turns of the phrase."[28] The tempo indication for "Evocación," *Allegretto espressivo,* stays steady throughout the piece. There are certain elements of "Evocación" such as the triple meter, the minor key, and the sudden pauses, fall into the category of the *fandango* or *fandanguillo* (meaning *little fandango*). However, the slow tempo of "Evocación" is unsuitable for the characteristics of a

[28] Clark, "Iberia" in *Isaac Albéniz*, 225.

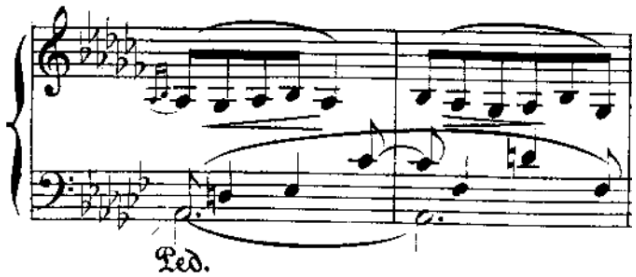
fandango dance since the *fandango* is usually a partner dance with triple meter and a lively tempo.[29] Therefore creating a sense of ambiguity in terms of the style.

With a total of 153 measures, this is the shortest movement in the cycle and is considered the easiest in terms of technical difficulties. However, the emotional depth, the multi-voice texture, and the singing quality of the melody that would require an overlapped touch for the desired sound could still pose challenges for younger students. The main theme comprises a melody with a dotted-rhythm pattern over a syncopated ostinato figure in the left hand, with the features of whole-tone passages and harmonic changes over long pedal tones. In my opinion, the beautiful main melody possesses a sense of melancholy that accurately reveals Albéniz's emotions as he reminisces about life in his native country.

Technical Elements

a. *Overlapping Hand Positions*

Albéniz frequently uses the device of overlapping hand positions throughout "Evocación."



Example 33. Albéniz, "Evocación" from *Iberia*, Book 1, mm. 11-12.

[29] Israel J. Katz, "Fandango," Grove Music Online, 2001, accessed April 02, 2021, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.09282).

In Example 33, both hands lie in the same position on the keyboard but are executing different tasks – the right hand plays an ornamented melodic figure, and the left-hand plays leaping intervals over a long pedal tone. The awkward hand placements require fine coordination and flexibility of both hands. When the left-hand plays the leaping intervals, this can potentially lead to students raising their left shoulder. Therefore, it is important to remain relaxed in the forearms and the shoulders to avoid the harsh sounds produced when one's arms are tense.

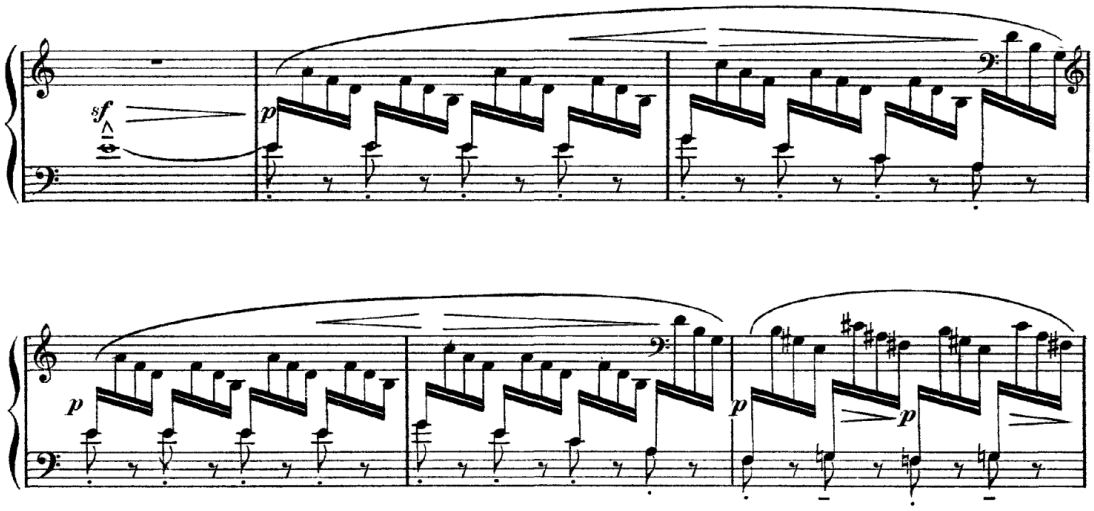
Without a doubt, the most helpful instructions when playing a passage with overlapping hand positions are to have a flexible hand posture and to decide which hand will remain underneath and which hand will be played over the other. In measures 11-12 of "Evocación" (see Ex. 33), either the left or right hand can remain under the other. For example, if the right hand is to remain under the left hand, we can teach the student to practice the left-hand notes as written while the right hand plays G♭, A♭, and B♭ as a blocked pattern. By doing so, students can sense that their right hand needs to remain quite flat in the hand shape, and raising the left-hand wrist is necessary to prevent the hands from colliding with each other. Although both hands will still be in contact with each other when using the irregular hand shapes, by simplifying the right-hand notes to a blocked pattern, students have the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the hand shapes and overcome the discomfort without having to play every note as written. When students can play the left-hand notes as written with the blocked right-hand pattern comfortably, they can then move on to play the notes as written.

Similarly, suppose the left hand is to remain under the right hand. In that case, students can use the same practice strategy as stated above but with the hands inverted. Now, the right hand will be positioned closer to the fallboard, and the right-hand fingers will remain curved while the left-hand fingers will play flat. The principle of playing passages involving overlapping

hand positions is that the player must adjust the hand position and the shapes of one or both hands to succeed.

Recommended Preparatory Repertoire

Claude Debussy, "Doctor Gradus ad Parnassum" from *Children's Corner*



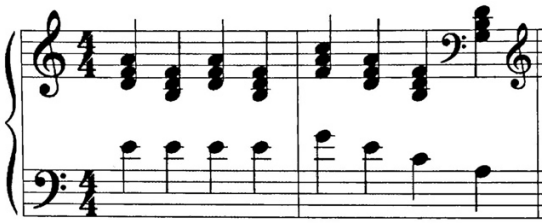
Example 34. Debussy, "Doctor Gradus ad Parnassum" from *Children's Corner*, mm. 12-17.

Overlapping hand positions occur within every four-note group of sixteenth notes in this passage, measures 12-17 of "Doctor Gradus ad Parnassum," making this an excellent preparatory piece for students to practice overlapping hand positions.

In order to manage this passage, pianists must decide which hand works best, being placed above or below the other. The aim is to ensure accuracy, control, and ease of playing. Based on my personal experience of working on this passage, I recommend positioning the left hand above the right hand. Consequently, the left hand needs to remain very close to the fallboard to avoid interfering with the hand below. The left arm and wrist must be held fairly high to create more distance between the left-hand and right-hand positions, and the left-hand

fingers should be played in an almost vertical fashion. The right hand must remain very close to the keys with a flattened and relaxed hand shape to bring out the fast sixteenth-note figure.

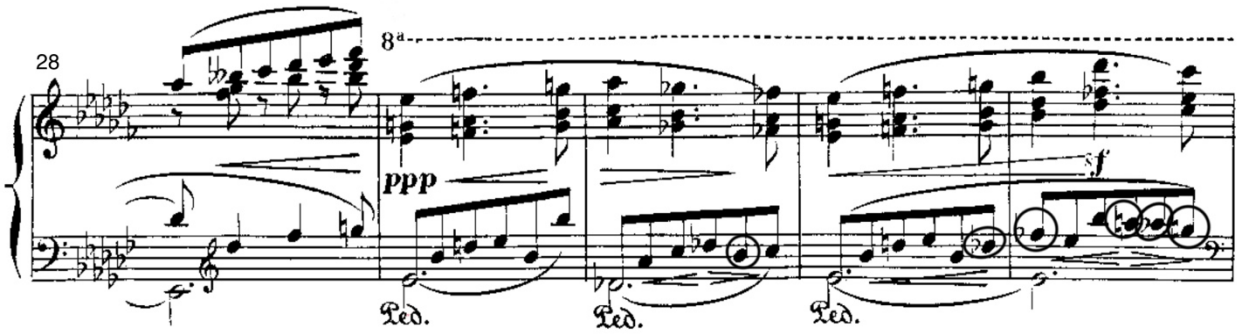
When students first approach this passage in measures 12-17, they can practice playing each quarter-note beat with four sixteenth notes as a blocked pattern (See Ex. 35). For example, in measure 13, play the left-hand E at the same time as the A, F, and D in the right hand. In measure 14, maintain the blocked pattern as it moves down a third every four sixteenth notes. This will give students ample opportunity to become familiar with the overlapping hand positions and know exactly where to move for each group of sixteenth notes. When students can play the blocked pattern comfortably, then they can play the passage as written in the score.



Example 35. Debussy, "Doctor Gradus ad Parnassum" from *Children's Corner*, mm. 12-13, blocked-chord practice pattern.

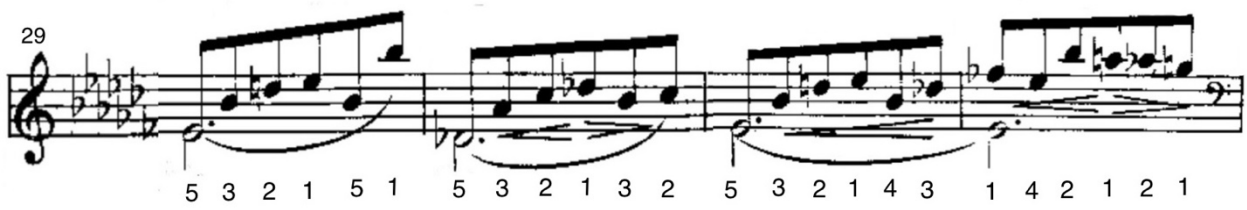
b. *Irregular Left-Hand Accompaniment*

Albéniz's use of accompanimental figures, such as arpeggios and broken chords, frequently does not follow traditional accompaniment patterns, as illustrated in Example 36 below. Instead of using strictly harmonic tones for arpeggiated passages, Albéniz often incorporates non-harmonic tones in the arpeggios, creating an irregular order of intervals that demands adjustments in both the fingerings and handshapes.



Example 36. Albéniz, "Evocación" from *Iberia*, Book 1, mm. 28-32.

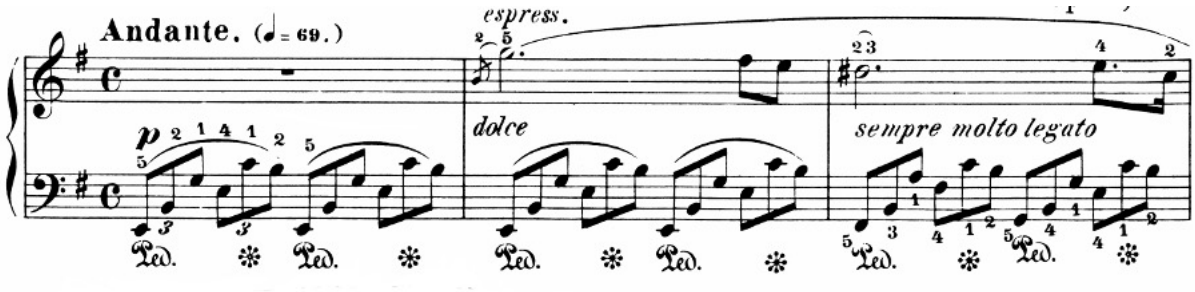
In measure 29, the left-hand figure revolves around the E♭ major seventh chord. Measure 30 revolves around the D♭ minor seventh chord with a non-chord tone circled in Example 36. Then, in measures 31-32, there is a sense of harmonic ambiguity with the presence of several non-chord tones, and the descending chromatic notes at the end of measure 32 create a brief secondary melody in the left hand. For the left-hand accompaniment in measures 29-32, it is necessary to establish efficient fingerings for the irregular intervals involved (see Ex. 37 for my suggested fingerings).



Example 37. Albéniz, "Evocación" from *Iberia*, Book 1, mm. 29-32, left-hand suggested fingerings.

Recommended Preparatory Repertoire

Chopin, Nocturne in E minor, Op. 72, No. 1

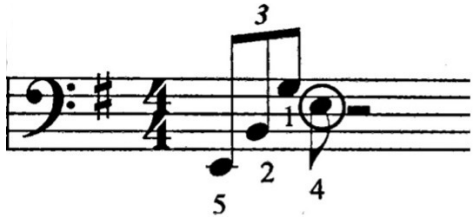


Example 38. Chopin, Nocturne in E minor, Op. 72, No. 1, mm. 1-3.

Practicing Chopin's accompanimental broken-chord passages might be a helpful preparatory exercise that allows students to work on broken chords with irregular intervals. For example, in Chopin's E minor Nocturne, the left-hand arpeggiated passage shown in Example 38 is essentially a tonic triad combined with an incomplete neighbor tone, C♮, that resolves down a half step to B. The player must quickly adjust their fingerings in order to play this passage accurately and musically. By practicing this nocturne, students can gain expertise in establishing flexible fingerings and transfer this ability to executing broken-chord patterns found in "Evocación."

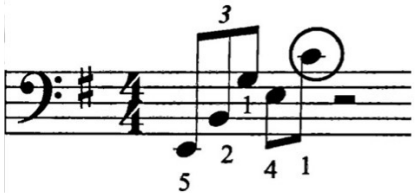
Effective fingering is crucial to playing accompanimental patterns that contain irregular intervals. Example 39 illustrates one of the ways to teach this broken-chord pattern by focusing on building familiarity with the different intervals, sensing the distance between those intervals, and practicing the fingerings that fit the hand well. For example, to practice the broken chord accompanimental pattern in Example 39, students might employ a technique I call "silent practice." The first step involves simply playing the opening *three* notes, E, B, G, using fingers 5, 2, and 1, but moving finger 4 "silently" to the fourth note, E. The student should feel the

contraction in the hand shape as the fourth finger moves up to play the E. The “silent note” is circled in the example below:



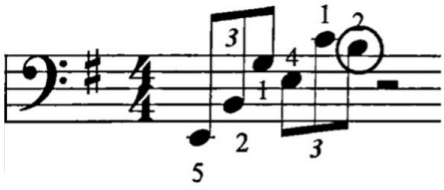
Example 39. Left-hand practice step 1.

In the second step, the student plays an additional note so that the first *four* notes of the measure can be heard out loud. The student stops silently on the *fifth* note of the measure, and the silent note is played using the left-hand thumb. The player should sense the shift in the hand as the left-hand thumb moves from the third note, G, to the fifth note, C.



Example 40. Left-hand practice step 2.

In the third step, the student plays the first *five* notes out loud but stops silently at the *sixth* note in the measure.

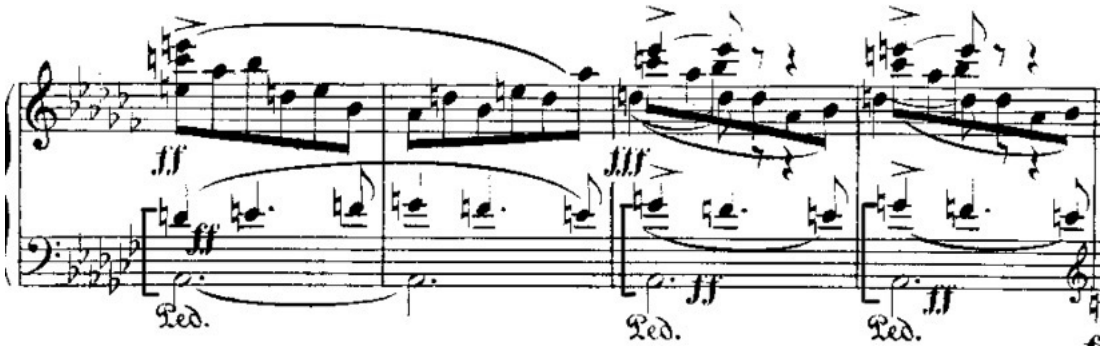


Example 41. Left-hand practice step 3.

The fourth and final step requires the student to finally play all six notes out loud without pause. The pianist might repeat each step several times to become familiar with the broken-chord pattern. When following these practice steps, it is important that the hand remain flexible as the hand shape will expand and contract while playing through the passage. To help with moving from one note to the next quickly and familiarizing the contracting and expanding in the hand shape, start each practice step slowly and gradually increase the speed.

c. *Wide Left-Hand Leaps*

Albéniz frequently uses intervals larger than an octave in the left hand, requiring the performer to have a practical plan for execution, whether that is to incorporate the *sostenuto* pedal or to roll the wide intervals quickly. Example 42 below provides an excellent illustration of intervals in the left hand that are too large to be played as solid chords. The downbeat of measure 87 contains the interval of an 11th, and the downbeats of measures 89 and 90 both have the interval of a 14th. These intervals are bracketed in Example 42. Clearly, most pianists would be facing an impossible task if they were required to play these as harmonic intervals. Therefore, the left hand must roll the large intervals fast without significantly delaying the tempo.

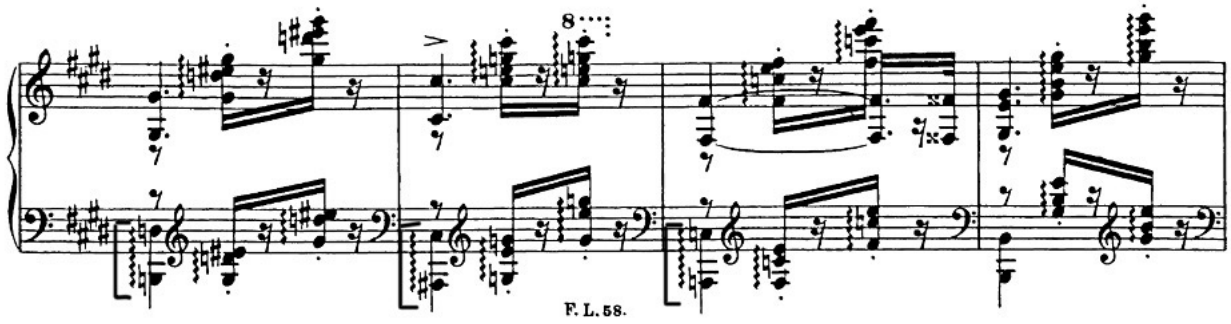


Example 42. Albéniz, “Evocación” from *Iberia*, Book 1, mm. 87-90.

Large leaps in the left hand can be especially challenging for pianists with smaller hands. In the example above, students must incorporate the pedal effectively, being mindful of fully capturing the sound of the prolonged bass note before moving up to the higher voice in the left hand. In these measures, the bass note should be played slightly before the downbeat to prevent delaying the tempo.

Recommended Preparatory Repertoire

Liszt, Consolation No. 6 in E major, S.172.



Example 43. Liszt, Consolation No. 6 in E major, S. 172, mm. 69-72.

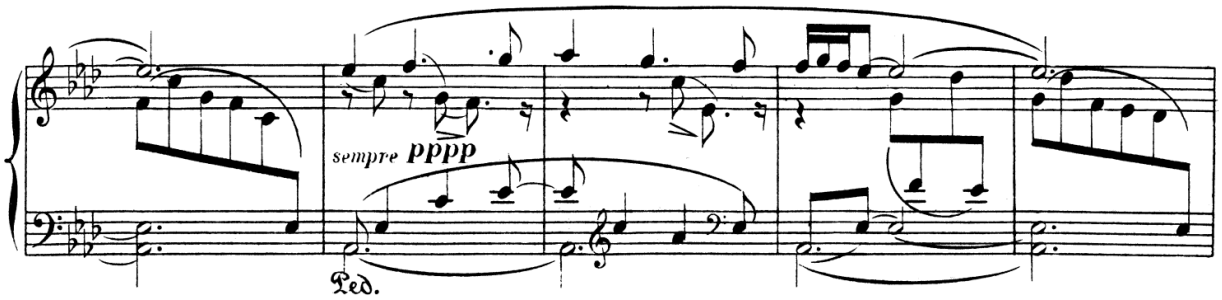
Franz Liszt's Consolation No. 6 in E major contains several wide left-hand leaps, similar to the leaps shown in Example 42 of Albéniz's "Evocación." In measures 69-71 of Consolation No. 6, an interval of a 10th appears in the left hand at the beginning of each of these measures. Pianists, especially those with smaller hands, must move quickly between the two notes in order to maintain a steady rhythm. Relax the wrist while playing the wide leaps in the left hand, and use wrist rotation to reduce tension and create the desired sound.

It is important to incorporate the pedal effectively in this piece, especially for students with small hands, as they must necessarily release the bass note swiftly and leap toward the top

note. Catching the bass note in the pedal will allow the student to release the bass note in advance and prepare for the leap while the bass note still sounds.

d. *Multi-Voice Texture*

Because of the rich and full sounds of Albéniz's music, the performer must analyze the score to determine the primary and secondary lines of music. Additionally, the performer must pay special attention to projecting the important lines when balancing the different voices.



Example 44. Albéniz, "Evocación" from *Iberia*, Book 1, mm. 117-121.

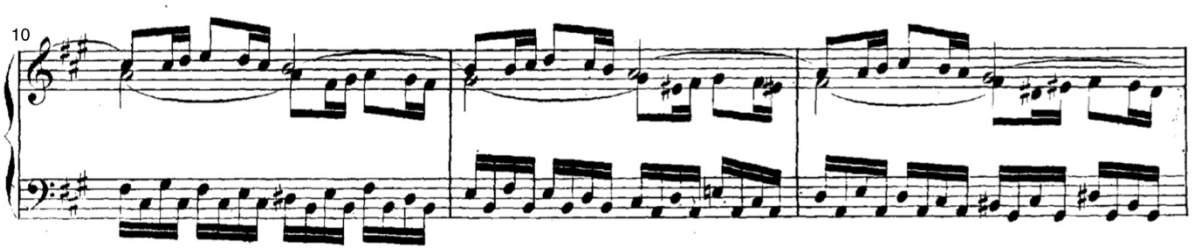
As shown in Example 44, four voices—two in each hand—occur in this passage. Of course, the melodic line must be voiced above the others while also maintaining the *sempre* ***pppp*** dynamic, which also requires the remaining voices to be significantly softer than the top voice. Meanwhile, the bass note must be held out for the two-measure duration. This requires that the performer have a well-balanced technique to deliver the multi-voice texture, which might be achieved by practicing voices individually according to the needed sound, as well as pairing voices together, such as soprano with bass or soprano with tenor.

Measures 118 to 121 could be challenging, not only because of the multi-voice texture but also because of the wide handspan. Thus, we can divide this passage into smaller sections and work on the different tasks needed step by step. First, the pianist should practice the voices

individually, being aware that the soprano is the most prominent voice. Second, the pianist can practice the voices in pairs. Play the soprano and the bass line together, and then play the middle voices together. The third and final step is to practice all the voices together as written, being mindful of playing the middle voices at a softer dynamic level than the top melodic line.

Recommended Preparatory Repertoire

J. S. Bach, Sinfonia in A major, BWV 798.



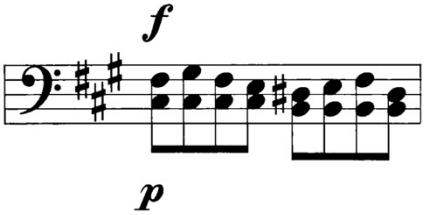
Example 45. J. S. Bach, Sinfonia in A major, BWV 798, mm. 10-12.

In Example 45, there are three distinct voices—the two higher voices in the treble clef (soprano and alto) intertwine in a descending sequence over a steady sixteenth-note figure in the bass clef. This pattern requires the player to analyze the three voices, especially the two higher voices. Focus on holding all the tied notes and bringing out the sequential exchanges between the soprano and alto every half measure. This makes it possible to practice the individual voice while understanding the three different parts when played together.

One of the most effective ways to teach contrapuntal works is to encourage students to recognize each voice by practicing individual voices. Once the pianist can play the individual voices comfortably and expressively, then they can begin playing two voices together. Try playing the bass and soprano or the soprano and alto together, for example. Finally, all three voices should be played as written.

It is worth mentioning that there is a melodic line contained within the top line of the left hand. For instance, in measure 10 of Example 45, the melodic notes in the top line are F♯, G♯, F♯, E, D♯, E, F♯, and D♯. Students need to project this left-hand top line while playing the repeated notes in the lower voice of the left hand slightly softer. I suggest the following practice steps to learn how to project the melodic line embedded within the left-hand passage. First, students should begin by practicing the top left-hand voice alone, using any comfortable fingerings and concentrating on melodic shaping. The second step involves combining the melodic line with the repeated notes in the lower voice. Use both hands to play these two voices at distinct dynamic levels, so that the melodic line is louder than that of the repeated notes. The next step involves playing the left hand as written, voicing the top line louder than the lower line. Because voicing is so challenging, I will discuss it separately in the following paragraph.

One way to practice the left-hand voicing is to play every two sixteenth notes as a harmonic interval. This means that in measure 10, for example, the student can block the F♯ and C♯ together, the G♯ and C♯ together, and so on. To play the top note louder than the bottom note in these blocked intervals, lean the hand in the direction of the top note, thus adding more weight and more volume onto that top note. Once this step is mastered, play the left hand slowly as written, exaggerating the difference in volume between the top and bottom voices. The bottom voice in the left hand requires a light and delicate touch to avoid the repeated notes becoming overpowering in volume (See Example 46).

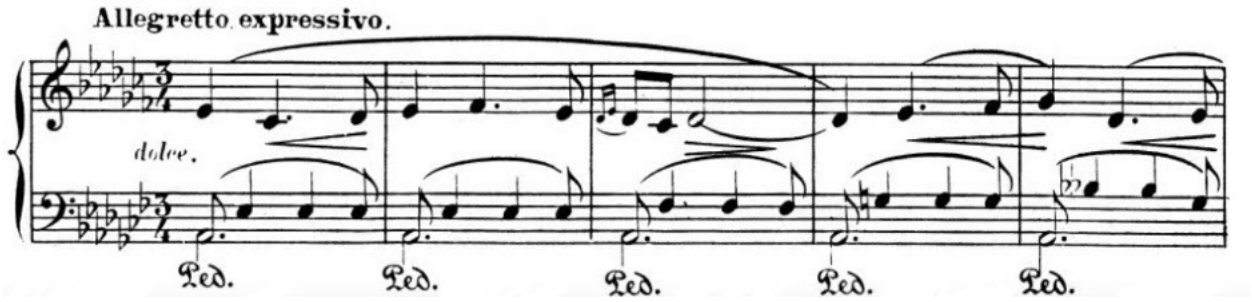


Example 46. J. S. Bach, Sinfonia in A major, BWV 798, m. 10, left-hand blocked interval practice.

Stylistic Elements

a. *Fandango*

The elements of the primary theme from measures 1-54 of "Evocacíon" suggest the rhythm and meter of *fandano*. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica article, "*Fandango* begins slowly, and the speed gradually increases. Occasionally there is a sudden pause in the music, and the dancers stand rigid until the music resumes."[30] "Evocación" shares the similarity with the beginning of the *fandango* dance with its slow tempo, rather free rhythm, and sudden pauses. The triple-metered theme possesses an off-beat characteristic, with the dotted-quarter note on beat 2, followed by an eighth note, undermining the downbeat.



Example 47. Albéniz, "Evocación" from *Iberia*, Book 1, mm. 1-5.

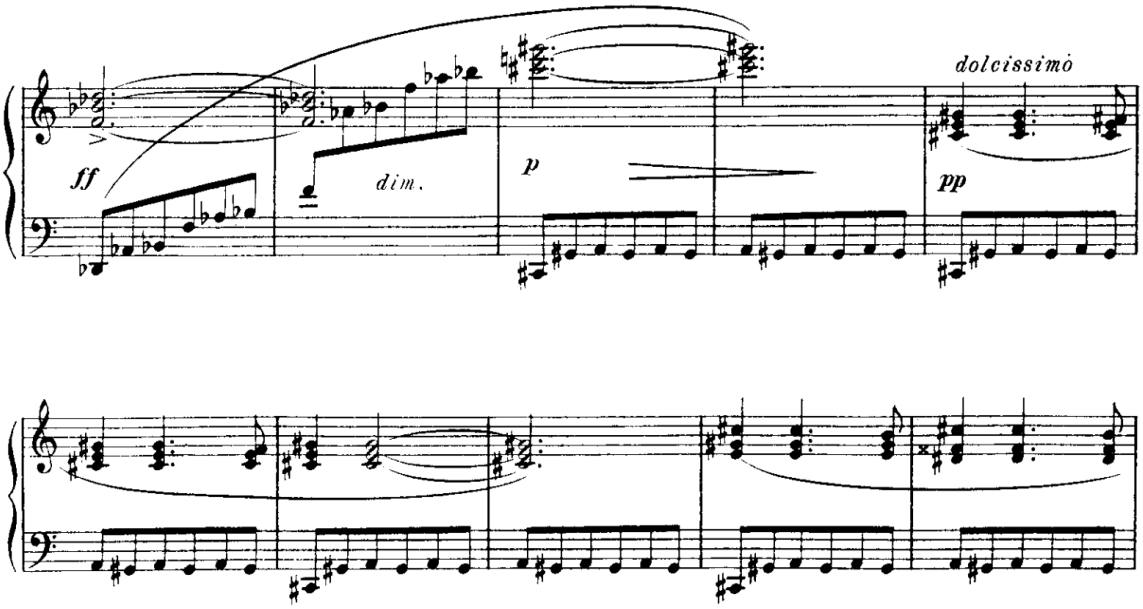
Given the folksong-like melodic line, students can practice singing the melody to discover and internalize the phrasing. In this example, the downbeat in measure 1 should be played softly, while the dotted quarter note on beat 2 can be stressed and played almost as an accent. The student should feel the beginning of the next phrase starting on beat 2 in measure 4.

[30] Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Fandango." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, February 8, 2016. https://www.britannica.com/art/fandango.

Recommended Preparatory Repertoire

Joaquín Turina, "Paseo" from *Cuentos de España*, Op. 47, No. 5

The Spanish composer Turina's piano work, "Paseo," Op. 47, No. 5, is a *fandango* with a lyrical melody that uses a similar rhythmic pattern to that of "Evocación." The similarity is especially noticeable in the middle section, which develops in C♯ minor starting at measure 35. The melody emphasizes the second beat and long tied notes.



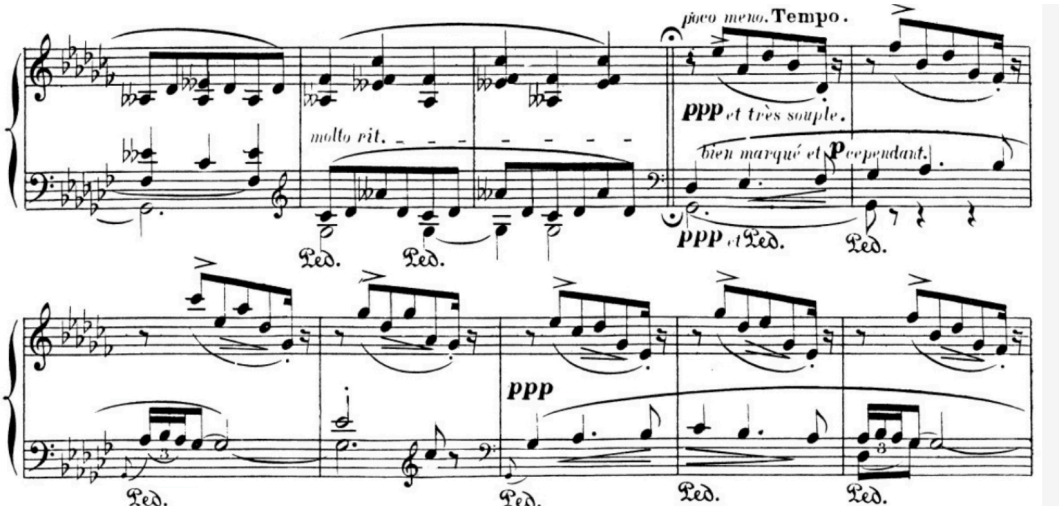
Example 48. Turina, "Paseo" from *Cuentos de España*, Op. 47, No. 5, mm. 31-40.

Focusing on shaping the phrase in measure 35, the second C♯ minor triad should be played slightly delayed with a more subtle accent to match the stylistically freer rhythmic characteristic of the *fandango*. The melodic line found in the top notes of the right hand should be projected when playing measures 35-40. This requires students to emphasize the top melodic notes of the chord while playing the lower two notes softer. Furthermore, since the tempo of the *fandango* usually starts slowly and then gradually increases, I suggest absorbing this trait of the *fandango* into the left-hand accompaniment starting in measure 35. For example, slightly extend

the duration of the first two left-hand eighth notes and then gradually speed up from the second beat of measure 35 and maintain the steady eighth notes until the end of measure 36.

b. *Jota Navarra*

Starting in measure 54 of "Evocación," the secondary theme suggests elements from the *jota*. A typical *jota* is a lively triple-meter dance with a strong beat that is emphasized in each measure and also a triplet figure that appears regularly. The second theme here in the major mode shares a similar rhythmic pattern to that of the melody found at the beginning of the piece. The slow tempo and the expressive nature of the secondary theme refer to the *jota navarra*, a quieter version of *jota*.



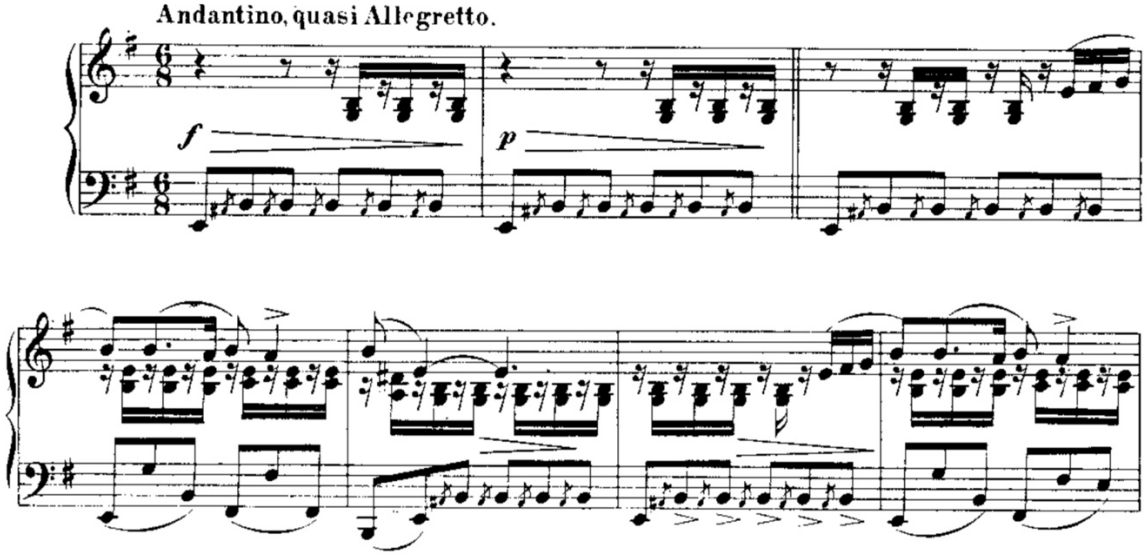
Example 49. Albéniz, "Evocación" from *Iberia*, Book 1, mm. 51-60.

Because of the singing quality of the left-hand melody, it is necessary to highlight the shaping of the phrase, while also pursuing a certain degree of rhythmic freedom to avoid making the melody sound too metronomic. The accompaniment in the right-hand should remain light, imitating the sound of plucking the guitar.

Recommended Preparatory Repertoire

Enrique Granados, "Andaluza (Playera)" from *Spanish Dances*, Op. 5, No. 5

The sources that I consulted on whether or not Granados wrote "Andaluza" based on the style of *jota* are unclear. In my opinion, "Andaluza" resembles the style of *jota*. It shares similar characteristics with *jota*, such as a lively triple meter and dotted rhythms. As shown in the example below, the melodic line emphasizes the second beat in measures 4, 5, and 7, and a recurring three-note figure E, F♯, and G somewhat resemble the triplet figure in a *jota*.



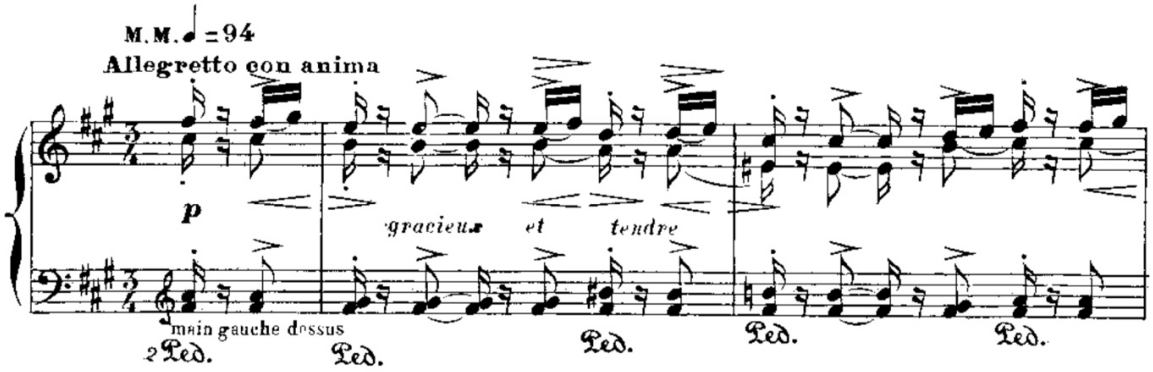
Example 50. Granados, "Andaluza (Playera)" from *Spanish Dances*, Op. 5, No. 5, mm. 1-7.

Students can start by playing the melody at measure 3, focusing on stressing the dotted-eighth notes and the accented notes on beat 2 in measures 4 and 7. For a freer effect, we might incorporate some delays in the rhythm. For example, in measure 4, rather than playing everything strictly in tempo, hold the first B in the right hand slightly longer for the delayed effect. By doing so, the music possesses a more laid-back and freer characteristic. Of course, the accompanimental texture should follow the timing of the melody accordingly.

Iberia, Book 2, No. 6, "Triana"

Despite its advanced level of difficulty, "Triana" continues to be one of the most popular and most frequently performed works from *Iberia*. Its name derives from the neighborhood in Seville, full of food stalls and venues presenting live flamenco music. Albéniz's writing in "Triana" portrays the strumming of flamenco guitars, the sounds of castanets, and the rhythmic materials involved in the traditional flamenco dance, including the stomping and clapping of the dancer and the sound of the tambourine. All this results in a fascinating and virtuosic composition.

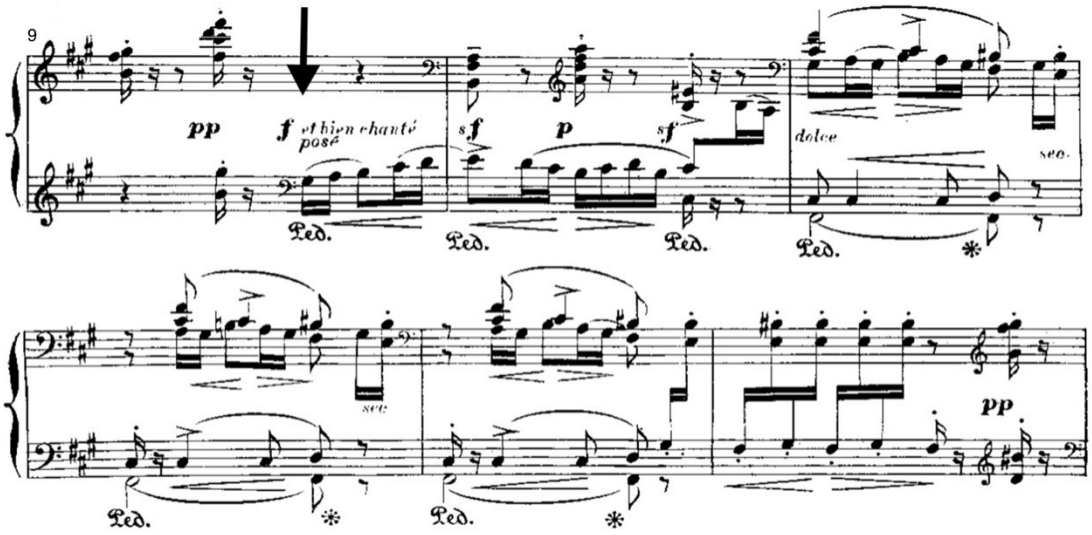
Paul Mast specifies in his dissertation, "Style and Structure in *Iberia* by Isaac Albéniz," that the formal structure of "Triana" is based on the *sonata-allegro* form with a certain degree of liberty. [31] Although written in triple meter, the principle theme of "Triana" contains many accents and syncopations that create the sensation of hemiola, thus falling into the category of *paso-doble* (two-step). [32]



Example 51. Albéniz, "Triana" from *Iberia*, Book 2, mm. 1-2.

[31] Mast, "Style and Structure", 273.
[32] Clark, "Portrait of a Romantic", 234.

The secondary theme, first appearing in measure 9 in the bass staff, is a lyrical song-like melody moving mostly in a stepwise fashion. The development of "Triana" contains a brilliant virtuosic section that demands advanced technical skills from the pianist. The restatement of the secondary theme begins in measure 102, followed by a short coda, with a final appearance of the secondary theme that concludes the piece. Albéniz used repetitive rhythmic patterns that demonstrate the stomping of the dancer or the clicking of castanets, both of which are characteristics of the flamenco dance. These repetitive rhythmic patterns can be seen at the end of measure 13 through measure 14.



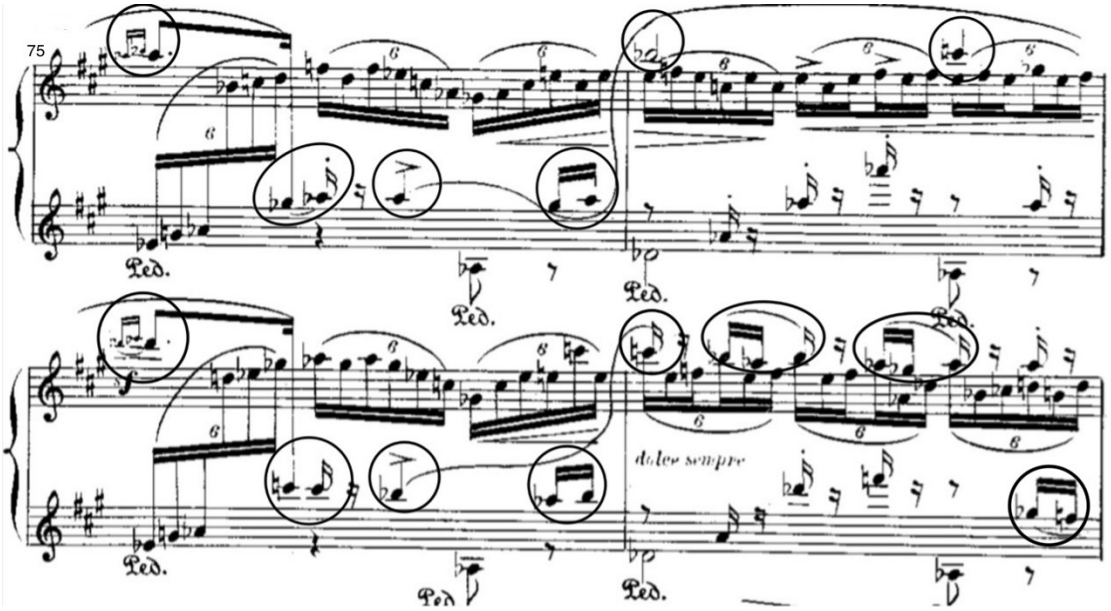
Example 52. Albéniz, "Triana" from *Iberia*, Book 2, mm. 9-14, secondary theme.

Technical Elements

a. *Melodic Alternation Between Hands*

The exchange of the melodic line between the hands can be challenging because not only does this exchange need to be executed seamlessly as if played in one hand, but also care must be taken to deliver the dense textures of the flourishes hidden softly underneath the melody.

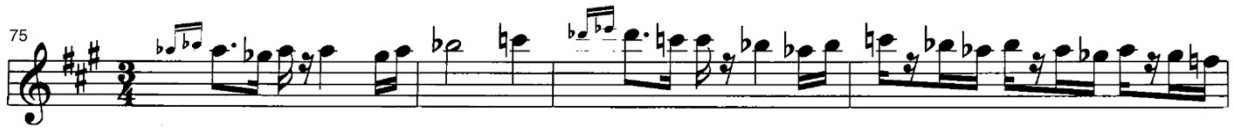
The passage that begins at measure 75 (Ex. 53) is challenging because of its busy texture and fast runs. And the melody in this passage must be projected smoothly with appropriate phrasing and shaping as it passes between the hands.



Example 53. Albéniz, "Triana" from *Iberia*, Book 2, mm. 75-78, melody alternates between the hands.

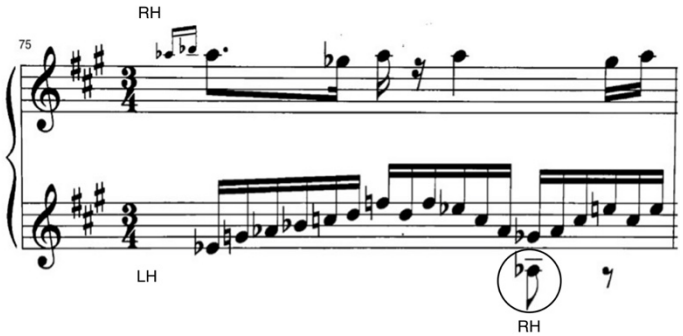
Because the hands are very intertwined in this passage in Example 53, as the melody alternates between the hands, I recommend practicing each voice separately at first. Students must begin by identifying the melody in the score, noting that the melodic line is distributed between the hands. Circling the melodic notes would help the student to readily identify the line. Once the melodic line is clearly notated in the score, the student can focus on playing the melody as it alternates between the hands. Second, redistribution of fingerings for both hands can be very helpful. In other words, we do not need to follow the hand distribution implied by the score. For example, starting in measure 75, some of the melodic notes are written in the lower treble clef, which might seem like a suggestion to use the left hand. However, because all the melodic notes

are within the scope of A♭5 to D♭6, it is much easier to play the melody using the right hand alone, as shown in the example below.



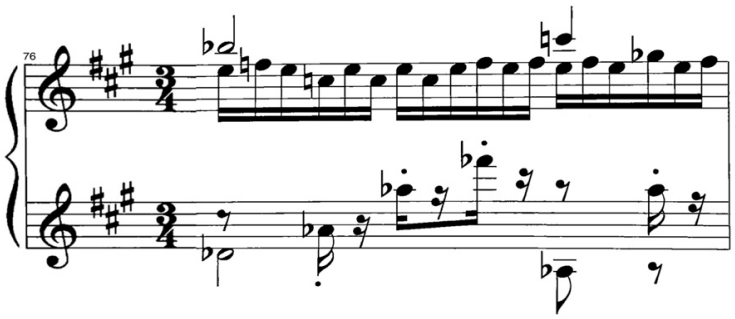
Example 54. Albéniz, "Triana" from *Iberia*, Book 2, mm. 75-78, melody redistributed in the right hand.

Third, after the pianist becomes familiar with the melodic line and has mastered the suggested hand redistributions, I suggest adding another voice in addition to the melody. For example, in measure 75, the left hand can play the sextuplet runs while the right-hand plays the melody and the A♭3 by crossing over the left hand. See the example below.



Example 55. Albéniz, "Triana" from *Iberia*, Book 2, m. 75, right-hand melody with left-hand sextuplets.

Then, in measure 76, the right hand continues to play the melody while adding the sextuplets, and the left hand plays the single notes crossing over the right hand. Practicing the slow repetition of this choreography is a must to execute the flourishes and lyrical melody brilliantly in the performance tempo.



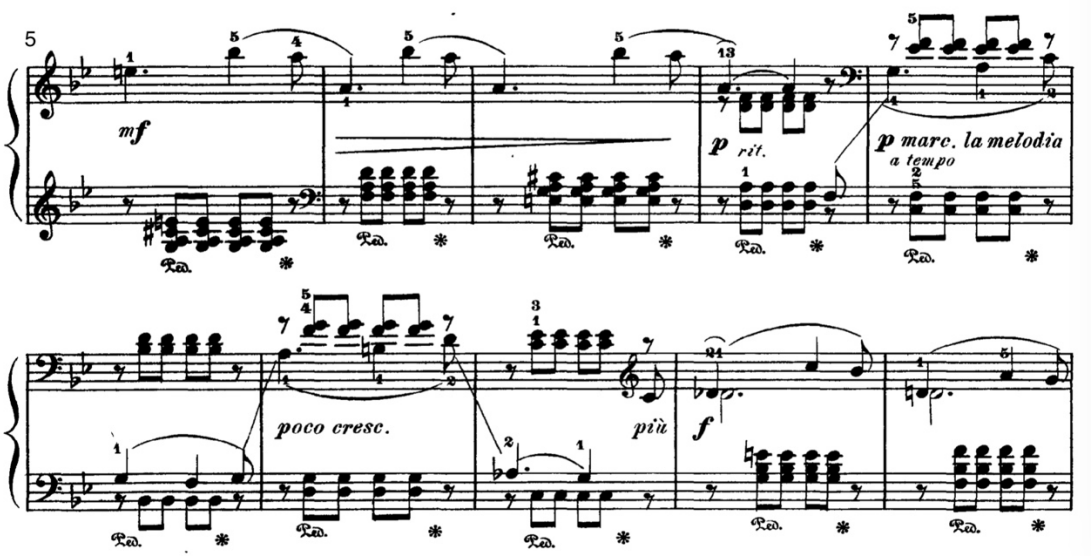
Example 56. Albéniz, “Triana” from *Iberia*, Book 2, m. 76, right-hand and left-hand practice.

After the pianist can play all the notes accurately, the last step is mastering the balance between the melody and accompaniment. Due to the difficult nature of this passage, with its busy sextuplet runs and many hand crossings, it could be challenging to hear the melody if the voices aren’t balanced properly. The fingers that play the melodic notes need more weight for a stronger touch, while the sextuplets and the cross-hand notes need a lighter touch. This requires several repetitions until the distribution of the weights on the keys for the different voices becomes automatic.

Recommended Preparatory Repertoire

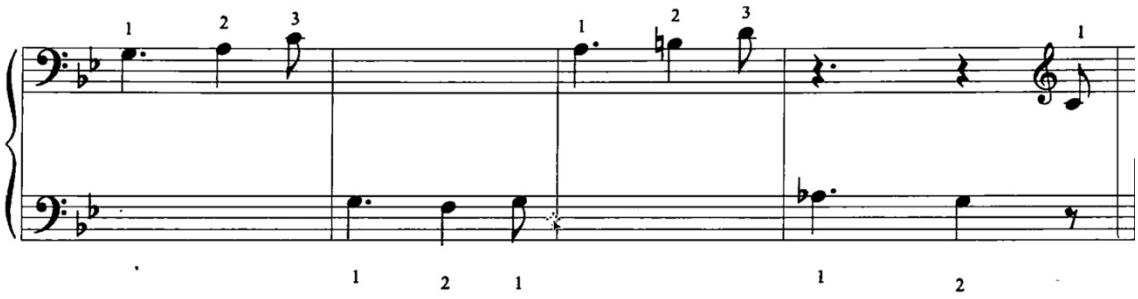
Tchaikovsky, “April: Snowdrop” from *The Seasons,* Op. 37a, No. 4

Compared to “Triana,” the exchange of the melody distributed between both hands in Tchaikovsky’s “April: Snowdrop” occurs on a much smaller scale, making this an excellent choice for introducing this skill to pianists. In the example below, notice how the melody alternates between the hands one measure at a time. Starting in measure 8, the diagonal line in the score serves as a visual aid to help the performer direct their focus to the notes in the melodic line.



Example 57. Tchaikovsky, "April: Snowdrop" from *The Seasons,* Op. 37a, No. 4, mm. 5-14.

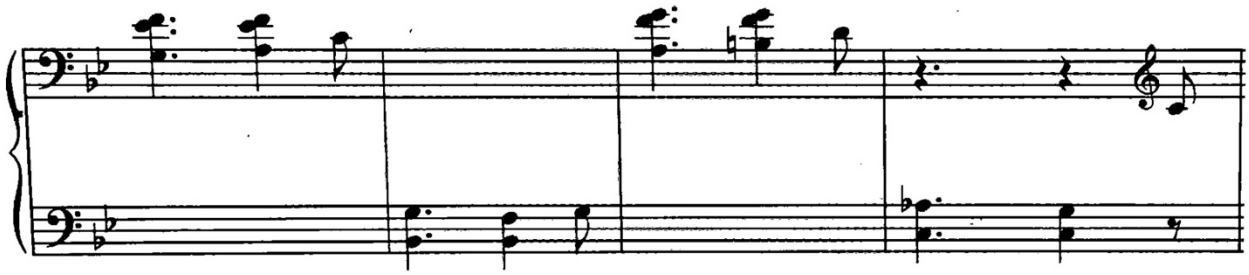
To practice this passage, begin by playing the melodic line by itself with the right or left hand, listening to the continuity in the phrasing. This can be followed by playing the melodic line using both hands as indicated in the score. See Example 58 for my fingering suggestions for the melodic line.



Example 58. Tchaikovsky, "April: Snowdrop," from *The* Seasons, Op. 37a, No. 4, mm. 9-12, fingering suggestions for melody.

It is important to play this melody *legato*, listening carefully to avoid accents when transferring the melodic notes between the hands. Because each of these measures begins with the thumb, play the thumb carefully to avoid accenting the downbeats. Practice matching the

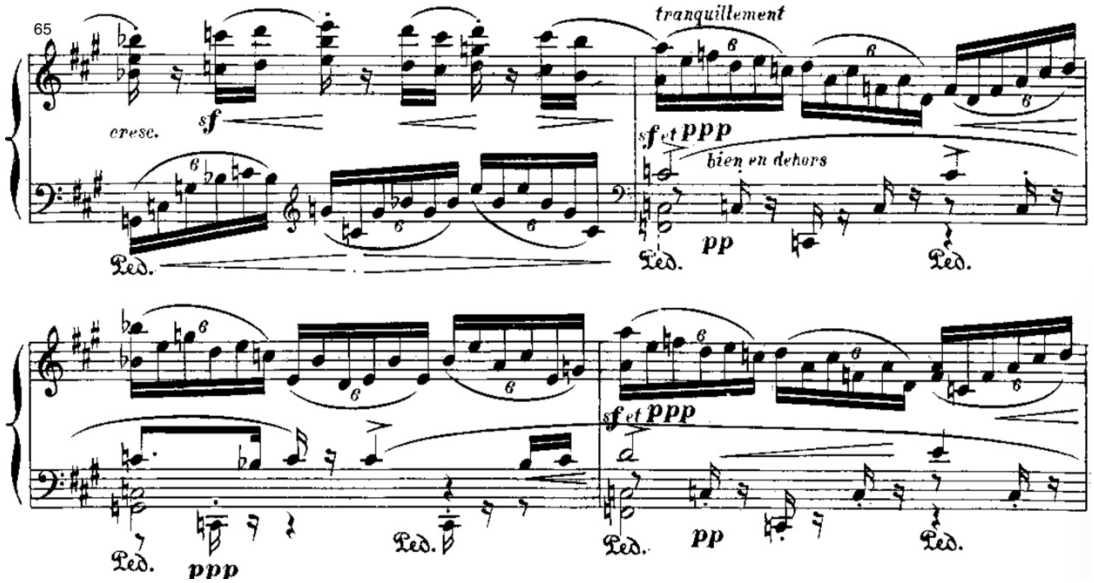
sound and tone quality of the last note of one measure to the first note of the next measure. Before playing everything as written, play the melody and accompaniment as blocked chords to practice voicing the melody and transferring the melodic notes smoothly between the hands. The melody should be projected clearly when practicing the blocked pattern while the accompaniment notes remain soft. The challenge is to match the tone quality of the melody notes while also balancing the melody and the accompaniment notes.



Example 59. Tchaikovsky, "April: Snowdrop" from *The Seasons,* Op. 37a, No. 4, mm. 9-12, blocking practice.

b. *Fast Flourishes*

Fast virtuosic flourishes occur throughout "Triana" and present one of the major technical challenges of this composition. These passages, consisting of arpeggios, broken chords, and simple accompanimental textures with repeated notes, conjure up the *flamenco* guitar tradition.



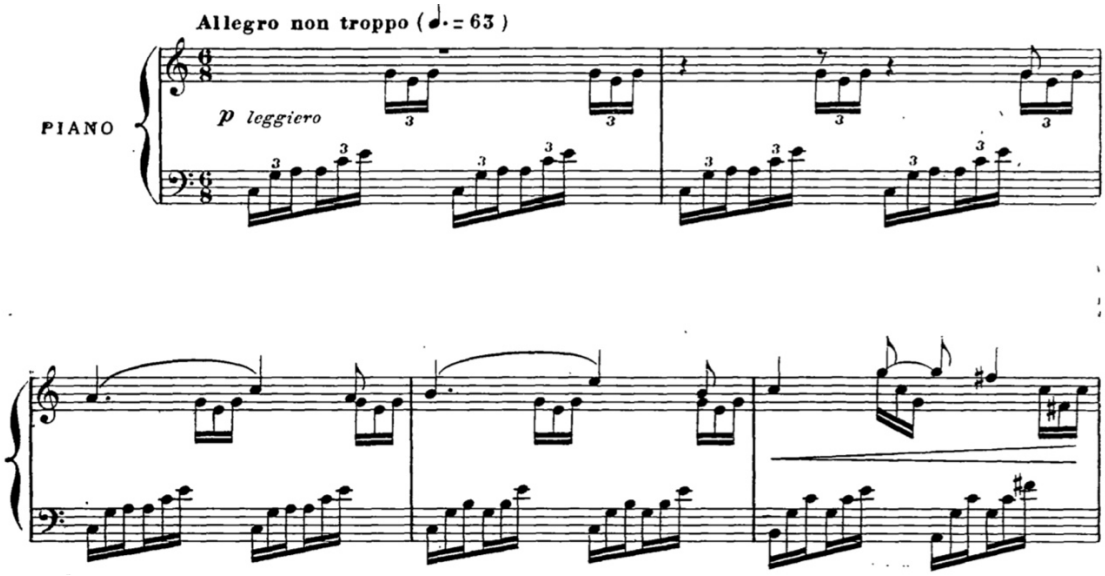
Example 60. Albéniz, "Triana" from *Iberia*, Book 2, mm. 65-68.

The passage shown in Example 60 is an excellent example of these fast virtuosic flourishes. Starting in measure 66, there are three main lines of material: the fast sextuplet accompaniment in the right hand; the melodic line in the top voice of the left hand; and the bass harmony with occasional extra notes in the bottom of the left hand. Each of these lines must be played using different touches at different volumes. The fast flourishes in the right hand require a gentle and airy articulation with a *leggiero* touch – the fingers will only be skimming the top of the keys. The main melodic line in the tenor voice must be played in a much weightier fashion so that the arm weight is behind every melodic note. The remaining notes in the left hand should be played lightly. Practice these voices separately at first to isolate the different gestures needed to create the various sound levels.

Recommended Preparatory Repertoire

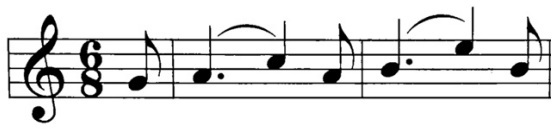
Gabriel Fauré, "Allegresse" from *8 Pièces Brèves*, Op. 84, No. 7

Gabriel Fauré's "Allegresse" is a charming piece with florid passages that require a gentle touch and flexible fingerings for accompanimental textures moving around a sustained melodic line. The *leggiero* accompaniment patterns combined with both the accompaniment and melody in the right hand make this an excellent preparatory piece for "Triana."



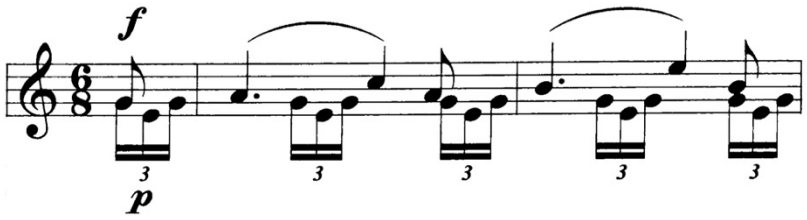
Example 61. Fauré, "Allegresse" from *8 Pièces Brèves*, Op. 84, No. 7, mm. 1-5.

The accompanimental texture consists of broken chords distributed between the hands. In much of the piece, the right hand plays both the accompaniment material and the melodic line. Therefore, the voicing of the melodic line in the right hand is critical in performance. Pianists might begin by practicing the right-hand melody alone. See Example 62.



Example 62. Fauré, "Allegresse" from *8 Pièces Brèves*, Op. 84, No. 7, mm. 3-4, right-hand melodic line.

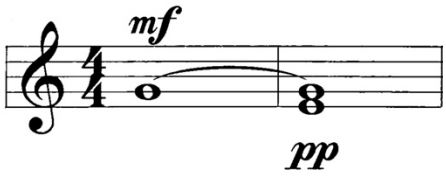
The next step involves playing the right-hand melodic notes along with the right-hand accompanimental material while exaggerating the dynamics – play the melody *forte* and the accompaniment *piano*.



Example 63. Fauré, "Allegresse" from *8 Pièces Brèves*, Op. 84, No. 7, mm. 3-4, melody and accompaniment in the right hand.

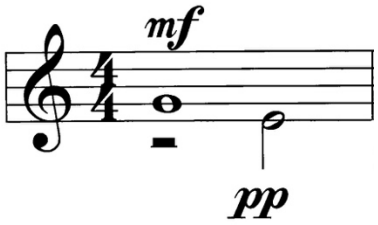
The first right-hand G needs to be played with weight in the finger to project the melodic line. Students can experiment by dropping into the key to add weight for the desired sound. On the next note, E will need to be several dynamic levels softer than the first G and played with a light and delicate touch. The right hand must relax and release the tension and weight after playing the G in order to play the E lightly.

I suggest practicing the opening of the passage using the following steps. For practice step 1, change the time signature to 4/4 and focus on the first two notes in the passage, G and E. Play the G as a whole note with weight and use beats 2, 3, and 4 to relax the hand while holding down the G. In the following measure, play the E softly on the downbeat, still holding the G (See Ex. 64).



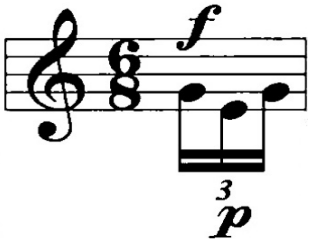
Example 64. Practice step 1.

For practice step 2, only one measure is now needed. Play the G with a full sound on the downbeat. Use the second beat to relax and remove any tension in the hand or arm. Play the E softly on the third beat while still holding the G (See Ex. 65).



Example 65. Practice step 2.

The third practice step requires playing the first three notes as written in the score, with the E and G that follow the first note being played softly and lightly (See Ex. 66).



Example 66. Practice step 3.

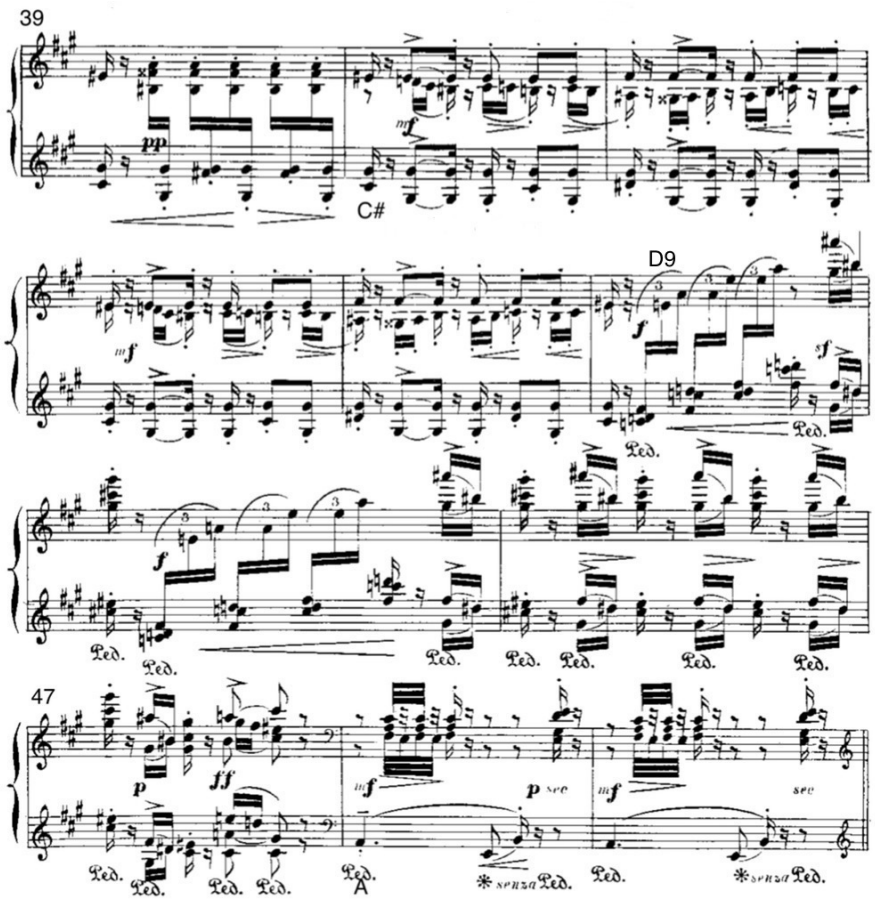
Stylistic Element

a. *Harmonic Language*

During the last fifteen years of his life, Albéniz was an active composer in Paris. He began experimenting with modernistic compositional techniques that expanded the harmonic and

rhythmic context. In *Iberia*, Albéniz combined impressionistic compositional idioms such as a mixture of modes and keys, whole tone scales, chromaticism, and even occasional atonal writing, all of which gave his Spanish music a more modernistic sound.

The example below illustrates the harmonic and Spanish musical elements found in "Triana." There are two harmonic surprises in "Triana," starting in measure 40. The rhythmic melody that starts on D in the middle voice moves in a chromatic pattern, with the accompaniment in the outer voices. After the repetition of the melody, a new rhythmic interjection consisting of groups of triplets occurs in measure 44. There is a sense of harmonic ambiguity for these triplets. The triplets can be analyzed as a D9 chord in measures 44 and 45, including C, D, E, F♯, and A. It can also be interpreted as an augmented 6th chord that resolves to C♯ major. Then in measure 48, the mood suddenly changes to leisurely guitar-like sounds with castanets accompanying in the new key, A major. Combining the Spanish musical elements, such as the Spanish-flavored dance rhythms and interjections of the guitar and castanets, along with the harmonic ambiguity, results in the unique sound of "Triana."



Example 67. Albéniz, "Triana" from *Iberia*, Book 2, mm. 39-49.

Recommended Preparatory Repertoire

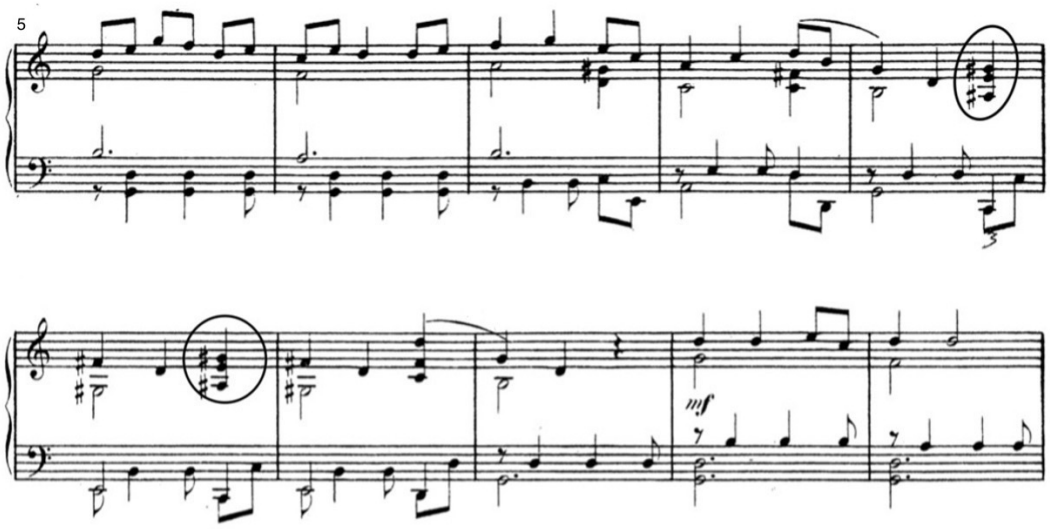
Federico Mompou, "Gitano" from *Impresiones Intimas*, No. 9

The Spanish and Catalonian composer Federico Mompou's "Gitano" (from *Impresiones Intimas*) was inspired by the rhythmic material and rich harmonic content found in Spanish folk music. Because Mompou's "Gitano" is not technically demanding, this work can easily serve as a preparatory piece for pianists to familiarize themselves with the changes of mood and color through the harmonic surprises in a Spanish-flavored piece.

Written in G Mixolydian mode, the theme of "Gitano" presents a simple melody. The left-hand accompaniment recalls guitar accompanimental patterns and gently repeats on the off

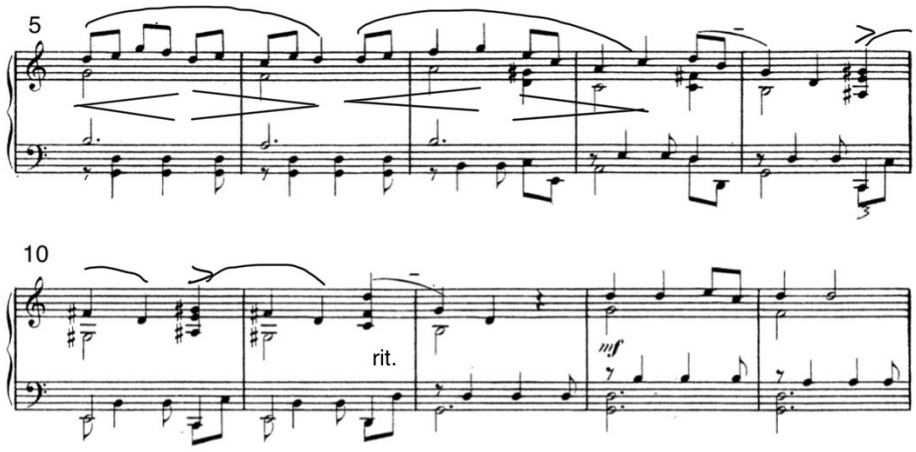
beats creating a sense of syncopation. The harmonic language and rhythmic complications found in “Gitano” are much less challenging than those in “Triana,” making “Gitano” much more approachable for the student to familiarize themselves with off-beat rhythmic patterns. The phrase seems to reach the cadential point in measure 9. However, immediately after the short cadential point, the additional chords (circled in the example below) prolong the cadential point with a sense of dissonance. This passage also gives a sense of suspense in the music.

Some of the right-hand chords might prove challenging for students with smaller hands, requiring special performance strategies. For example, in measure 7, students can quickly roll the right-hand chord that spans a ninth on beat three, being careful to play the top melodic note E clearly. They will also need to use the same approach for the right-hand chords on beat three in measures 8 and 11. For the left-hand accompaniment, use the damper pedal to sustain the first note of each measure, allowing the left hand to move quickly toward the accompaniment material.



Example 68. Mompou, “Gitano” from *Impresiones Intimas*, No. 9, mm. 5-14.

Because “Gitano” is simpler than “Triana” in terms of technical difficulty, students can focus on capturing the nuances of the harmonic progressions and experiment with mood changes. The accompaniment pattern should remain soft, imitating the sound of a gently strummed guitar. There aren’t many dynamic and phrasing indications at the beginning of the piece, requiring the pianist to add phrasing and dynamics to make the piece come alive musically. I suggest adding dynamics that follow the melodic contour. For the repeated chords in measures 9-10, add a subtle accent to stress the tension of the dissonant chord. Then at the end of the phrase, a subtle ritard can be added. See Example 69 for an illustration of the dynamics and phrasing that I am suggesting.



Example 69. Mompou, “Gitano” from *Impresiones Intimas*, No. 9, mm. 5-14, dynamics and phrasing suggestions.

Iberia, Book 3, No. 7, “El Albaicín”

“El Albaicín,” refers to the Gypsy or Romani quarter, a district in Granada, Spain. This piece imitates the sound of Spanish instruments and employs the highly motivic and rhythmic characteristics of Spanish dances. The rhythmic dancelike sections alternate with sections written

in a freer, songlike style.[33] Albéniz's opening motive of "El Albaicín" is based on the *bulerías*, one of the flamenco dances, often up-tempo, with many stresses and accents creating hemiola patterns.[34] Marked *Allegro assai, ma melancholic* (very fast but melancholy), the highly rhythmic introduction simulates the sound of a Spanish guitar that plays softly, radiating a sense of ambiguity and mystery. This long 48-measure introduction intrigues listeners because of its duration and rhythms; moreover, we never hear this section in any later part of the piece. As mentioned before, the *bulerías* is often cheerful and usually takes a fast tempo. It is also considered a difficult Spanish dance because of the many variations of the rhythm and its improvisational nature. These characteristics of *bulerías* can be found in the introduction of "El Albaicín" and will be discussed in detail on page 74 in the Stylistic Elements section.

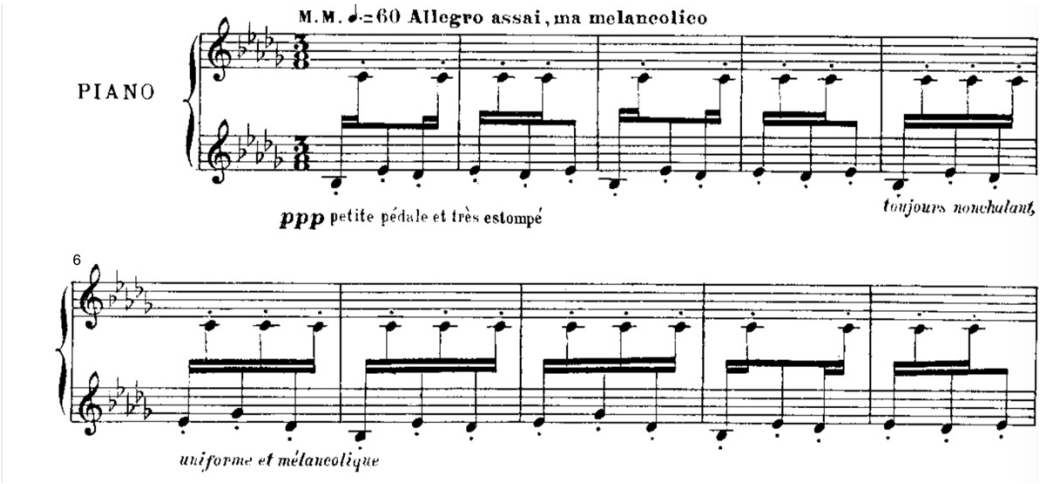
The middle section of "El Albaicín" contains a slow *cante jondo* (meaning deep song) melody that paints a completely different picture from the highly rhythmic *bulerías* section. With its monophonic texture, the melodic line of the *cante jondo* is reminiscent of an ancient chant. The piece ends with extensive alternations between the *bulerías* and *cante jondo*, and the texture and ranges of both are much more expanded.

Technical Elements

a. *Overlapping Hands*

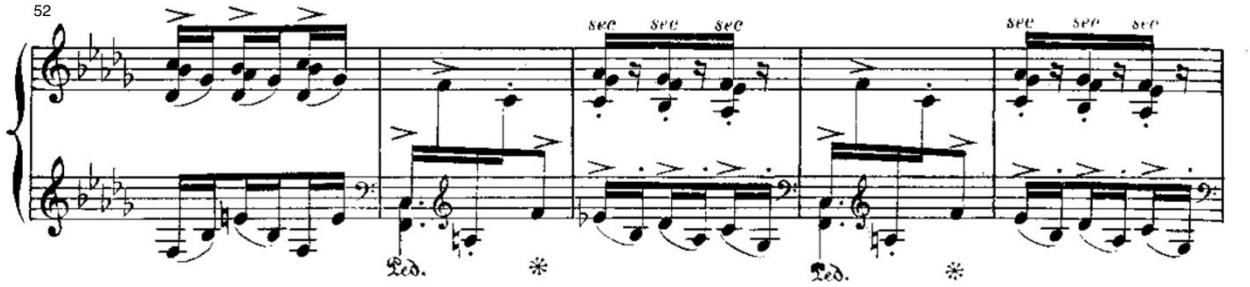
Overlapping hand positions frequently appear throughout "El Albaicín." During the introduction, the motivic contour is tightly coiled within the interval of a minor sixth, from B♭ to G♭. While the melodic line is centered in the left hand, the right hand repeats middle C incessantly, resulting in the need for overlapping hand positions.

[33] Mast, *Style and Structure*, 28
[34] Clark, *Portrait of a Romantic*, 236.



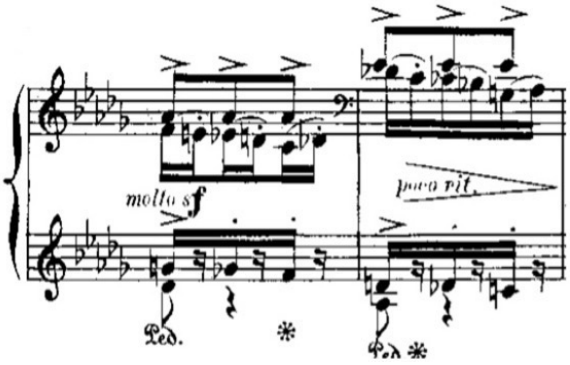
Example 70. Albéniz, "El Albaicín" from *Iberia*, Book 3*,* mm. 1-10.

Another example of overlapping hand positions can be found in measures 52-56, where the notes are arranged in a very compact manner, causing the hands to be positioned one on top of the other.



Example 71. Albéniz, "El Albaicín" from *Iberia*, Book 3, mm. 52-56, overlapping hands.

The highly chromatic passage in measures 62 and 63 forms a significant challenge because of the overlapped hand positions. While the notes are tightly coiled, there is very little to no space between the hands. Additionally, the accents in these measures make this pattern even more challenging to execute while maintaining the crossed hands. The pattern appears later again in different pitch groups.



Example 72. Albéniz, “El Albaicín” from *Iberia*, Book 3, mm. 62-63, overlapping hands.

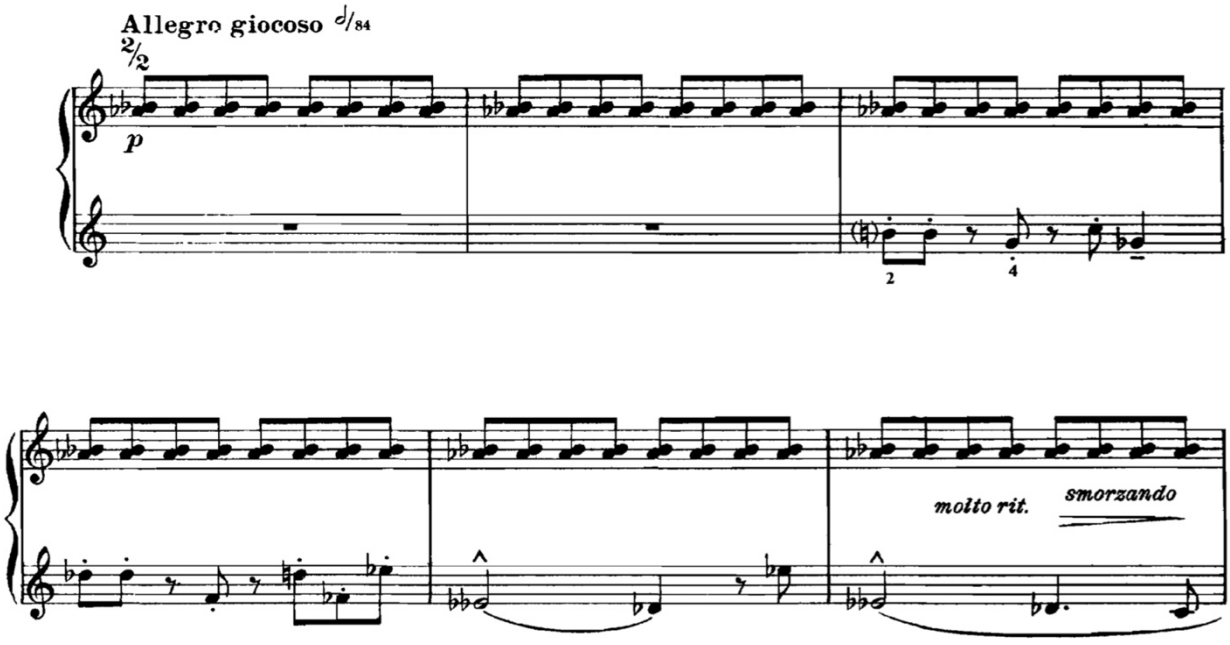
Learning a section with overlapping hand positions can be time-consuming. Therefore, I recommend learning such passages hands separately first. At the beginning of “El Albaicín,” it is much easier to establish effective fingerings and first build familiarity for the left hand. Since all the melodic notes of the introduction revolve around B♭ to G♭ (See Ex. 70), I would suggest that the left hand be lifted up and placed closer to the fallboard of the piano, thus leaving more space for the right hand to join in and repeat the middle C. The pianist must fully utilize the open space, and flexible hand gestures are crucial in such a piece filled with overlapping notes. Therefore, one might find one’s right hand flat on the keyboard with the left wrist and arm lifted. The teacher is responsible for discussing these unusual hand configurations and working with the student to find practical solutions.

For measures 62 and 63 (Ex. 72), I suggest learning the notes hands separately. Once the pianist feels confident with both parts, try positioning the left hand above the right hand. Starting at measure 62, the pianist should raise the left wrist slightly, creating a dome hand shape, thus giving more space for the right hand to maneuver in executing the notes and accents.

Recommended Preparatory Repertoire

Béla Bartók, Bagatelle, Op. 6, No. 2

Similar to Albéniz, Bartók was also inspired by the folk music of his native country, Hungary, as well as the folk music of much of Eastern Europe. As a nationalist and innovative composer, Bartók put his original ideas into the bagatelles in terms of pianistic techniques and sound. His *14 Bagatelles*, Op. 6, were experimental in terms of their atonality. The second bagatelle is a short, toccata-like work, beginning with a two-measure introduction. The overlapping of hand positions starts at measure 3, where the percussive harmonic seconds continue, and the theme appears in the left hand.



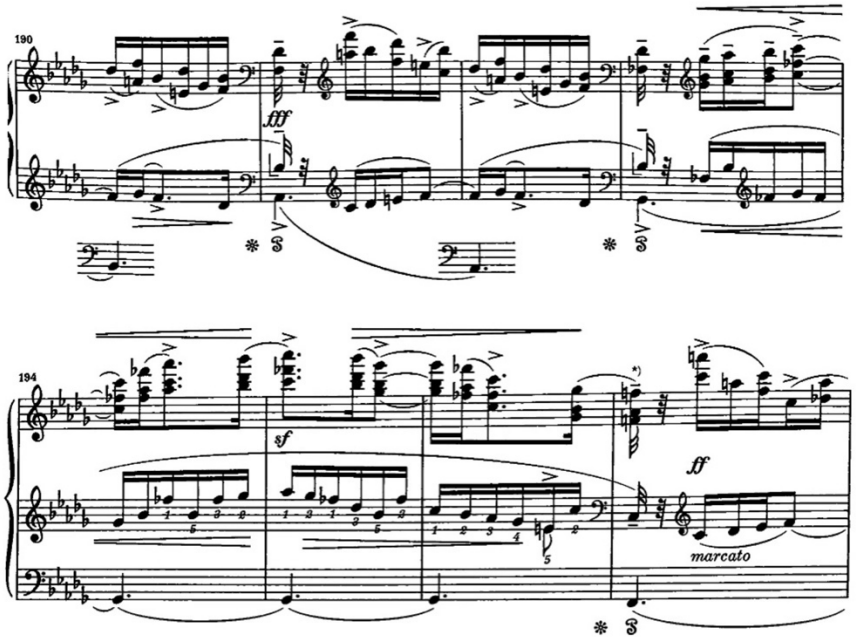
Example 73. Bartók, Bagatelle, Op. 6, No. 2, mm. 1-6.

Begin working on this passage by approaching the two hands separately to get a feeling for the required hand shapes. Place the right-hand fingers on the two black keys. The fingers should be flat and positioned at the end of the two black keys. Because the left hand will

ultimately need to be on top of the right hand starting in measure 3, lift the left wrist slightly and keep the fingers more vertical. Once the student has mastered these separate positions, begin working hands together. Ask the student to play the left hand out loud while resting the right-hand fingers silently on the keys. This step will require the students to position the right-hand fingers towards the end of the black keys, leaving enough space for the left hand to manipulate through the passage. The final step is to play both hands as written. Students can practice minimizing the bouncing motion of the right hand for the repeated notes when playing hands together.

b. *Three-Staff Writing*

In the *cante jondo* (deep song) section of "El Albaicín," there are measures where Albéniz writes for three staves due to the multi-voice nature of the music. The example below illustrates the three-staff writing in "El Albaicín."



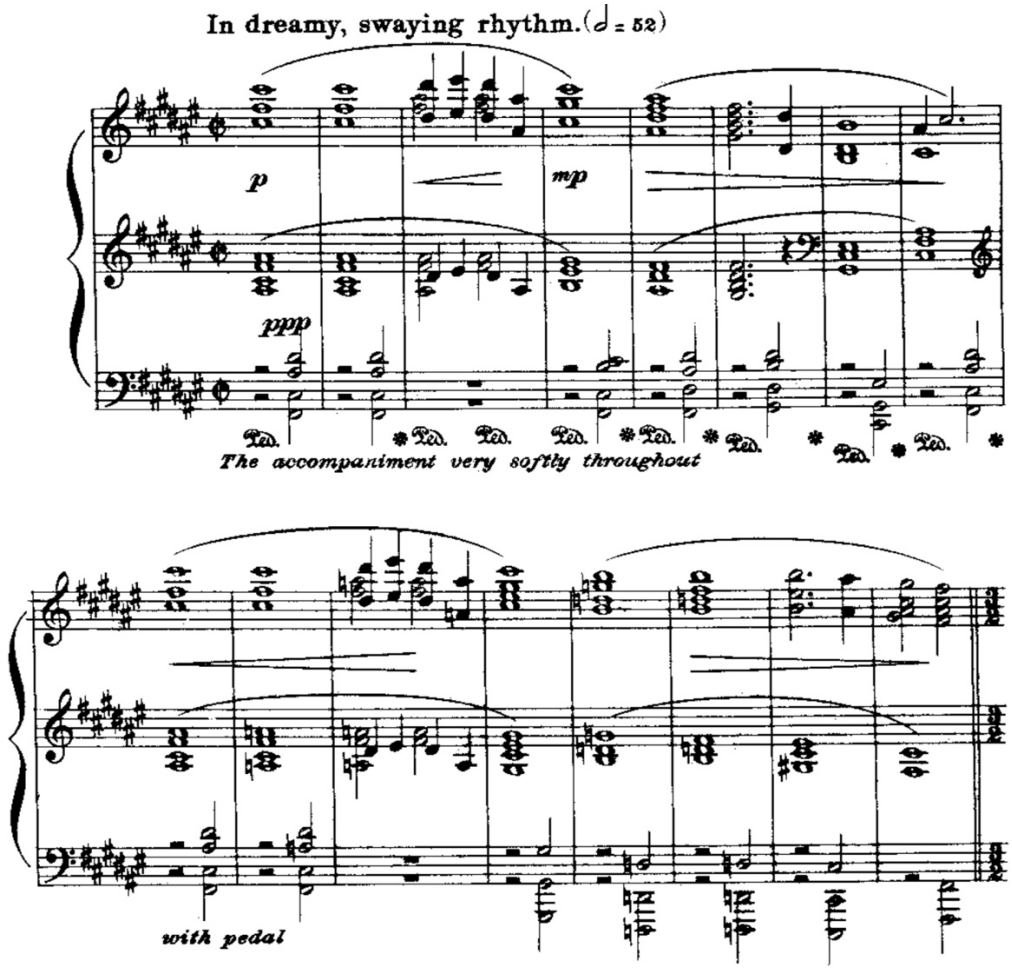
Example 74. Albéniz, "El Albaicín" from *Iberia*, Book 3, mm. 190-197.

Because the pianist must hold the damper pedal for as long as four measures (mm. 193-196), the sound for such phrases may become somewhat blurred. Students who are not accustomed to this rich and harmonious sonority might find the sound effect confusing. Teachers can explain that such pedaling is necessary to sustain the bass pedal tone throughout the entire phrase. Due to the pedaling, it is also important to project the *cante jondo* melody in these measures. The right hand is the undisputed main character as the melody, while the middle staff serves as the filler support for a brilliant and virtuosic sound. When playing the middle staff, the left hand should remain light on the fingertips to avoid a cluster of sounds.

Recommended Preparatory Repertoire

Edward MacDowell, "To a Water Lily," from *Woodland Sketches*, Op. 51, No. 6

MacDowell's "To a Water Lily" is a short, charming piece. It opens with sixteen measures of slow, sustained chords written using three staves. The three staves appear once again toward the end of the piece, where most of this opening section repeats. Because of the slow tempo, repetition of material, and overall brevity of the piece, this is an excellent preparatory repertoire for learning to read a score with three staves.



Example 75. MacDowell, "To a Water Lily" from *Woodland Sketches*, Op. 51, mm. 1-16.

Students might begin by practicing the first two measures. As they move their hands from the upper to the lower chords, practice pivoting the upper body slightly from one direction to the next. Students should become well acquainted with the movement of the arms as this pattern of moving from the high chords to the low chords repeats several times during the theme. The accompaniment should remain soft throughout the exposition of the theme. When moving from one hand position to another, be sure to arrive early at the next hand position to control the key descent and avoid heavy sounds or unwanted accents caused by quick unprepared movements. The arms should have the feeling of floating as they move from the high treble chords to the low

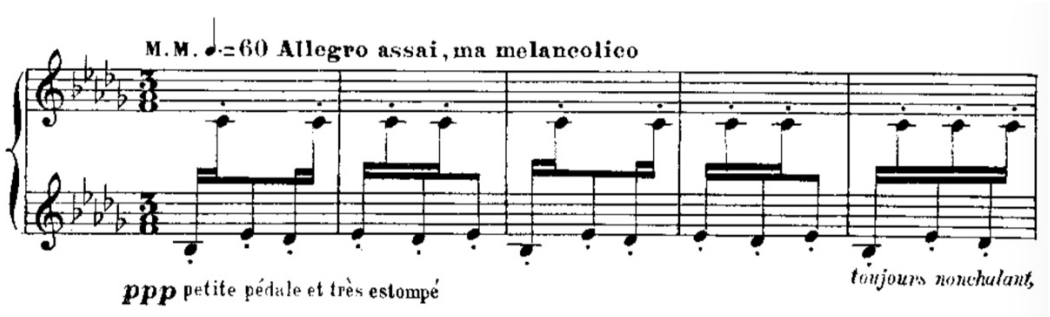
bass chords and back. This feeling of weightlessness in the arms and fingers will help to produce the extremely soft volume called for in the score. A slow controlled descent into the keys is necessary when playing at very soft levels. Additionally, students may have more control and accuracy when their hands are already in the correct position for the accompaniment material.

When learning to read music written in three staves, I recommend that students begin with reading the staves separately. For example, students can practice only the top two staves. Then students can practice the bottom staff. Additionally, practice combining the different staves together, such as the top and bottom staff or the middle and bottom staff. The goal is to ensure that students become comfortable with the visual complexity as well as the physical complexity of the three-staff texture.

Stylistic Elements

a. *Bulerías*

Albéniz brought the intriguing rhythm of *bulerías* (highly rhythmic patterns with emphases and accents) into "El Albaicín," and we find these highly rhythmic patterns in the very opening of this piece. The downbeat in measure one can be perceived as an anacrusis resulting in the second beat sounding like the actual "downbeat" of the measure. Then in measure 2, there is no eighth note on the second beat, and the rhythm appears to be much more stable. Measures 3-4 repeat the same rhythm as the first two measures, forming a 4-bar unit. A recommended preparatory repertoire that targets similar *bulerías* rhythms will be introduced after the discussion of the next stylistic element.



Example 76. Albéniz, "El Albaicín" from *Iberia,* Book 3, mm. 1-5.

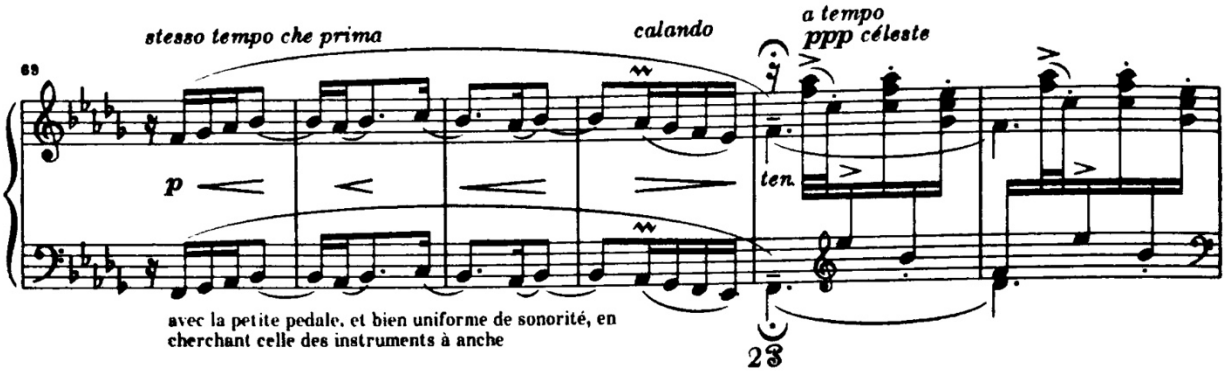
b. *Cante Jondo*

To appropriately interpret and perform the *cante jondo* sections of "El Albaicín" (Ex. 77), it is critical to understand the style of this music. According to Trend in his article, *cante jondo* is a form of music that would "refer to a particular vocal timbre, a deep or profound feeling with which the singer expresses his or her innermost thought, emphasizing the tragic side of life." [35] *Cante jondo* often welcomes audience participation, such as cheers of encouragement. Such characteristics can be found in the *cante jondo* sections of "El Albaicín," where after four bars of *cante jondo* (See Ex. 77, mm. 69-72), a two-measure interruption (See Ex. 77, mm. 73-74) conjures up the sounds of the audience shouting and cheering after the singer finishes a phrase. "Vocal ornamentation is sometimes profuse and complicated, particularly at phrase and cadential endings."[36] In "El Albaicín," this ornamentation appears as mordents that are frequently found at the end of phrases.

Understanding the style of a typical *cante jondo* is crucial to performing such sections accurately. Albéniz's precise indications in the score help the performer to capture the spirit of

[35] J. B. Trend, revised by Israel J. Katz, "Cante Hondo," Grove Music Online, 2001, accesed August 2022, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.04759
[36] Trend, "Cante Hondo."

the deep song. Marked *stesso tempo che prima* (same tempo as before) in measure 69, the four-bar phrase is written with the hands in unison three octaves apart. Additional instructions from the composer appear under the bass clef, also at measure 69: *avec la petite pédale, et bien uniforme de sonorité, en cherchant celle des instruments à anche* (with the *una corda* pedal, uniformity of sound in the manner of reed instruments). This would also point out the significance of playing the melody legato with the help of using the damper pedal and using an overlapped touch as if the phrase is played by a clarinet or saxophone within one breath.



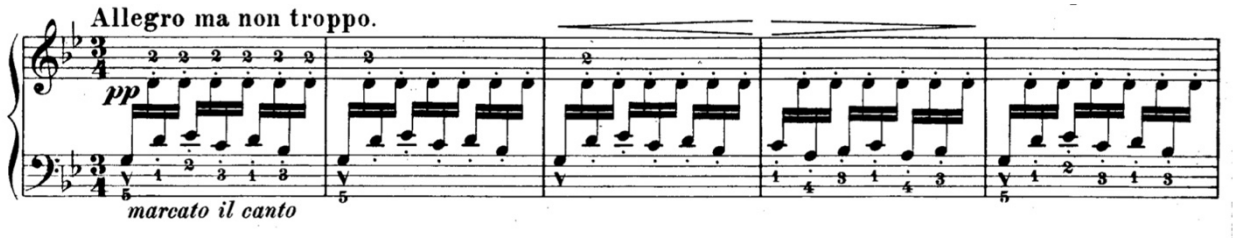
Example 77. Albéniz, "El Albaicín" from *Iberia*, Book 3, mm. 69-74, *cante jondo*.

Recommended Preparatory Repertoire

Albéniz, *"*Prélude" from *Chants d'Espagne*, Op. 232

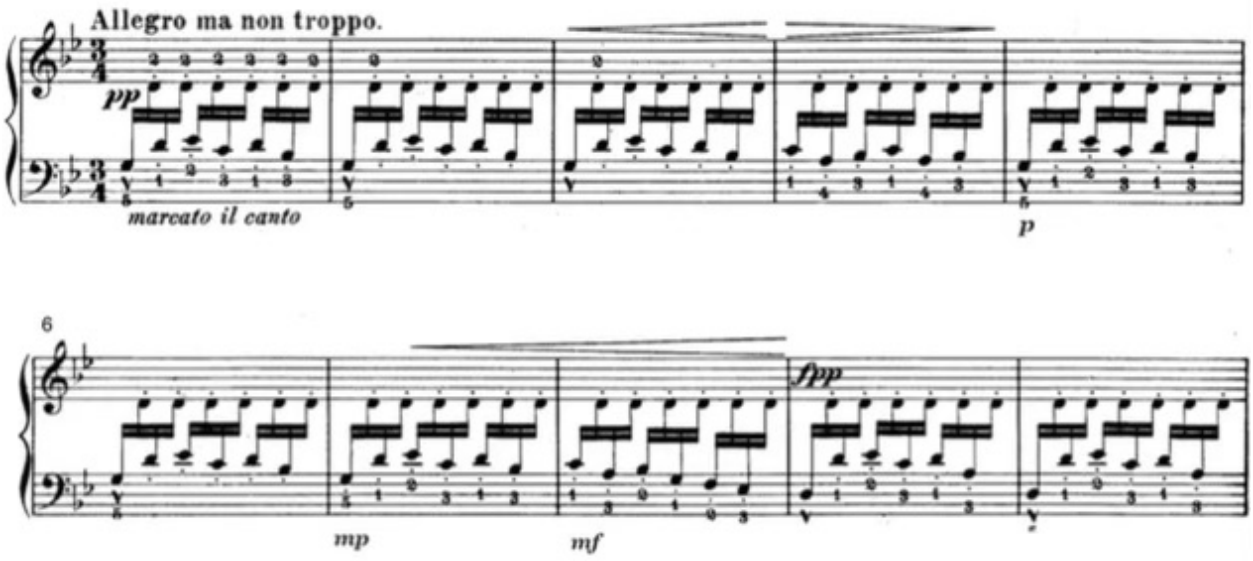
The similarity between "El Albaicín" and "Prélude" from Albéniz's earlier suite *Chants d'Espagne* is remarkable. The earlier number comprises a fast *bulerías* and a "deep song" or *cante jondo* structured simply as a ternary form, without complicated thematic developments or false recapitulations as those heard in "El Albaicín."

The main theme of "Prélude" mimics the sounds of a flamenco guitar. And in this main theme, the pianist encounters overlapping hand positions similar to those found in "El Albaicín."



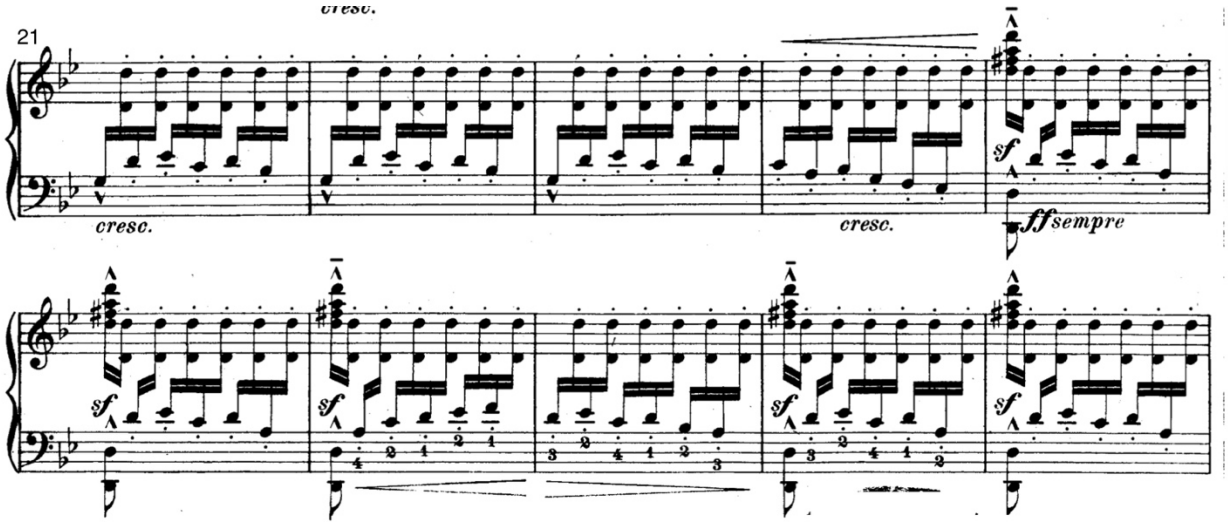
Example 78. Albéniz, "Prélude" from *Chants d'Espagne*, Op. 232, mm. 1-5, main theme.

The introduction of the "Prélude" is highly rhythmic and repetitive. So, to avoid playing this opening in a mechanical manner, I recommend applying different dynamics and phrasing when repeating the same melody. For example, start the piece *pianissimo* as indicated in the score. During the restatement of the same material in measures 5 and 6, play at the louder dynamic level of *piano*. The melodic contour in measures 7-8 differs somewhat from that in measures 3-4. This difference can be highlighted with a more exaggerated *crescendo* starting in measure 7 and culminating on the downbeat of measure 9. (See Ex. 79 for suggested dynamics). This could also help provide sonic variety in the percussive texture.



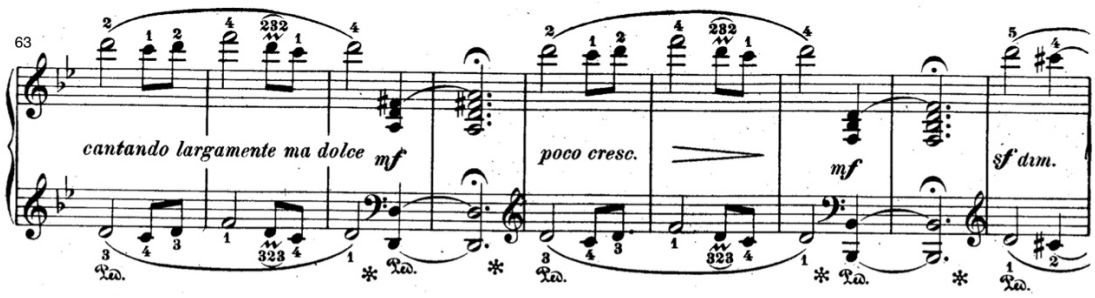
Example 79. Albéniz, "Préude" from *Chants d'Espagne*, Op. 232, mm. 1-10, suggested dynamics.

Big chordal leaps begin at measure 25, and it is necessary to slightly elongate the timing to give extra travel time for both hands to accurately move back and forth. Adding a few tenutos (as indicated in the example below) for the larger chords offers more time for the hands to travel and provides subtle changes in the midst of the repetitive material.



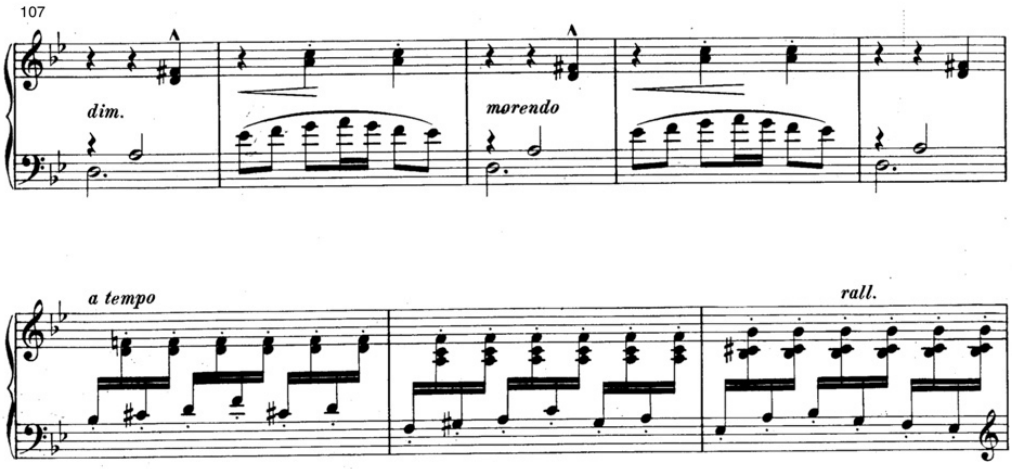
Example 80. Albéniz, "Prélude" from *Chants d'Espagne*, Op. 232, mm. 21-30, chordal leaps.

The *cante jondo* appears for the first time at measure 63 and is presented in unison but doubled at the fifteenth, with a short three-measure phrase and cadential chords interrupting the song at structural points, forming a 4-bar unit. In comparison to the preceding percussive measures, we hear a refreshing interaction between the singing melody and the short chordal interjection.



Example 81. Albéniz, "Prélude" from *Chants d'Espagne*, Op. 232, mm. 63-71, *cante jondo*.

There are two statements of the *cante jondo*. In between the two statements of the slow melody lies a livelier middle section with a stricter rhythm reminiscent of the hammer-like blows within the opening theme.



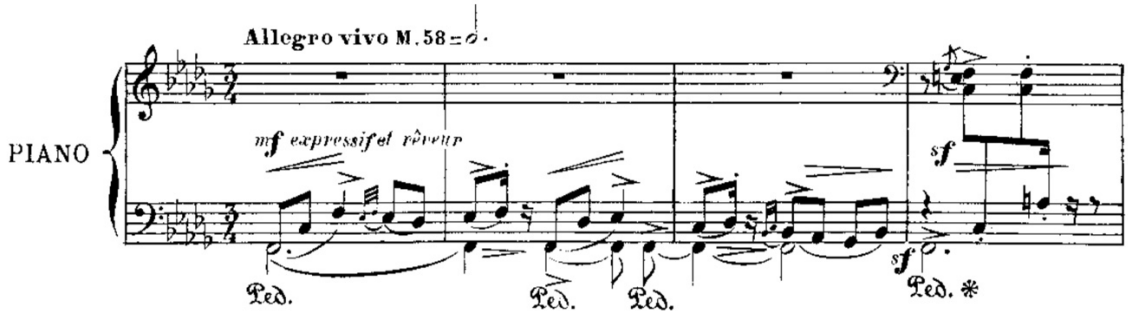
Example 82. Albéniz, "Prélude" from *Chants d'Espagne*, Op. 232, mm. 107-114, livelier middle section.

For the *cante jondo* section (Ex. 81), the main challenge is to express deep emotions with rhythmic freedom. I recommend first singing the melody out loud while incorporating the dynamic and tempo markings in the score. Beginning in measure 63, the pianist should sing the melody with a decent volume, paying special attention to the instructions in the score: *cantando largamente ma dolce* (singing broadly but sweetly). For the second phrase that starts at measure

67, the pianist must follow the indications for the crescendo and decrescendo as indicated. Finally, practice playing while still singing out loud, as the singing will guide the hands with a more organic phrasing.

Iberia, Book 4, No. 10, "Málaga"

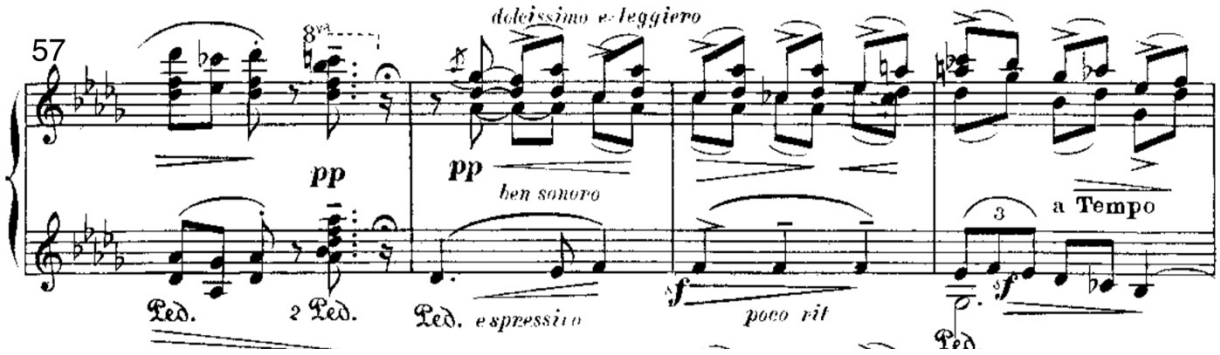
One of the shortest works in the suite, "Málaga," is named after the city located in the south of Spain known for its music. The name "Málaga" is derived from *malagueña,* a Spanish dance similar to *flamenco*. Written in an adaptation of sonata form[37], "Málaga" opens with a highly syncopated theme over a pedal point F. The abundant syncopations and the complex rhythmic patterns rich in Spanish flavor drew my attention to this piece.



Example 83. Albéniz, "Málaga" from *Iberia*, Book 4, mm. 1-4, opening theme.

Contrary to the opening theme, the seconddary theme of "Málaga" contains a lyrical melody that evokes the *jota* (a triple-metered couple dance) with more metrical clarity than the beginning of the piece. Walter Clark observes that "In the context of the entire collection, the *jota* theme takes on the character of a leitmotif, unifying the various numbers through its recurrence."[38] In the example below, the secondary theme starts in measure 58 in the lower staff.

[37] Mast, "Style and Structure", 323.
[38] Clark, *Portrait of a Romantic*, 244.

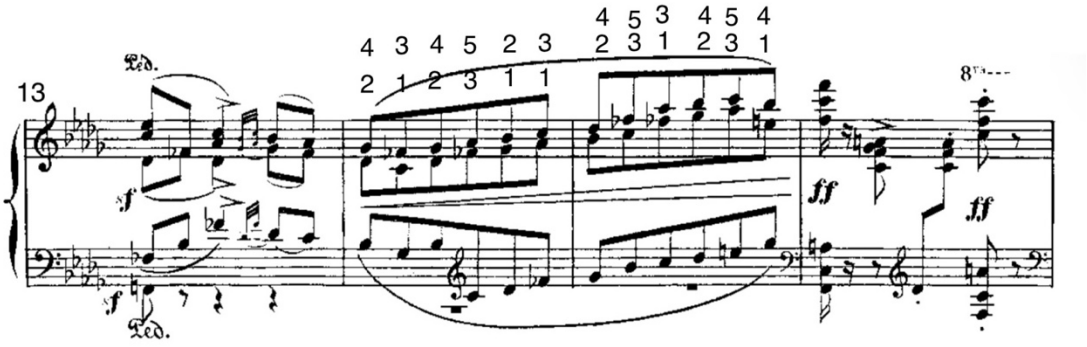


Example 84. Albéniz, "Málaga" from *Iberia*, Book 4, mm. 57-60, secondary theme.

Technical Elements

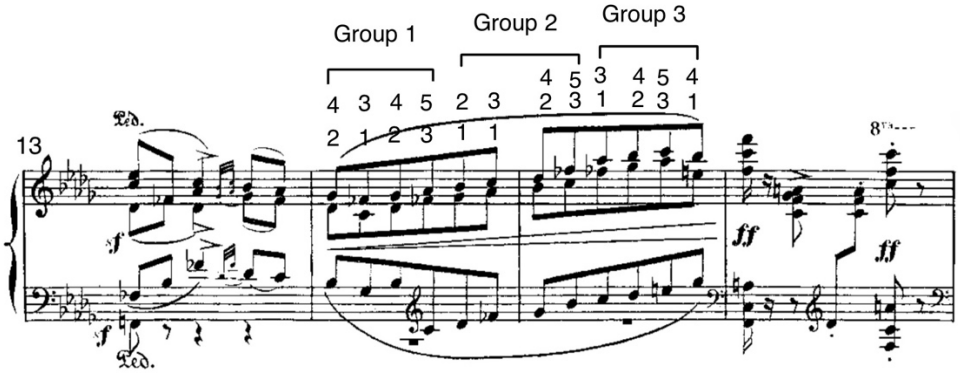
a. *Double Notes*

Many double-note flourishes appear throughout "Málaga," requiring control and excellent coordination of the fingers, wrists, and arms simultaneously. When playing double-note passages, especially fast ones, tension can accumulate quite easily in the wrists, causing difficulty in synchronizing pairs of fingers. For example, in measures 14-15, the right-hand double-note flourish involves a mixture of intervals, including thirds, fourths, and a diminished fifth, which require efficient fingerings.



Example 85. Albéniz, "Málaga" from *Iberia*, Book 4, mm. 13-16, fingering suggestions.

The pianist should first identify good hand positions and fingerings when learning the double-note passage in measures 14-15 of "Málaga" (Ex. 85). Divide these two measures into three different groupings, with four eighth notes in each group. The three groups are indicated with brackets in Example 86.

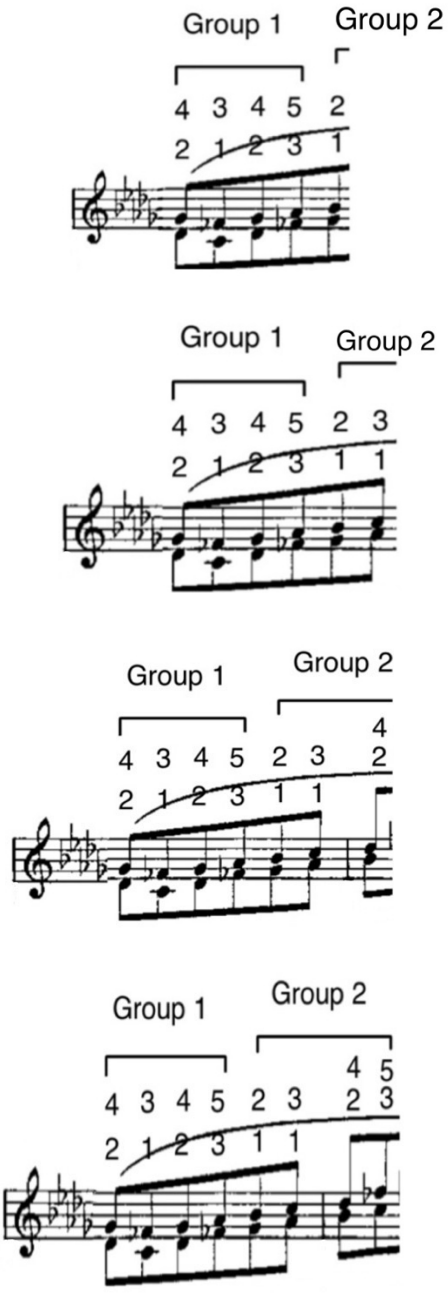


Example 86. Albéniz, "Málaga" from *Iberia*, Book 4, mm. 13-16, hand positions.

After students are familiar with the scope of the hand positions, they can begin to focus on learning to connect the notes from one group to the next. Additive practice moving forward (whereby notes are added one at a time as the pianist moves forward through the phrase) can be a helpful tool in learning to connect the notes from one group to the next. (Note that additive practice can also move backward—the same principle is involved, adding one note at a time, except that one is always moving backward in the score first before then moving forward).

Students can begin by first mastering the notes and fingerings in Group 1. To implement additive practice, play all the notes from Group 1 in a slow, steady tempo followed by the first interval from Group 2. Once this pattern becomes comfortable after several repetitions, play all the notes from Group 1 followed by the first two intervals from Group 2, being mindful to relax the hand, wrist, and fingers after playing the second interval of Group 2. The next step is to again play the notes in Group 1 followed by the first three intervals of Group 2. Each time the student

comes to the last note in the exercise, regardless of which interval of the group they are playing, they need to remember to plan ahead for the next upcoming interval. Finally, the student can play all the notes of Group 1 followed by all of Group 2 (Ex. 87). I also recommend practicing Groups 2 and 3 following the same steps.



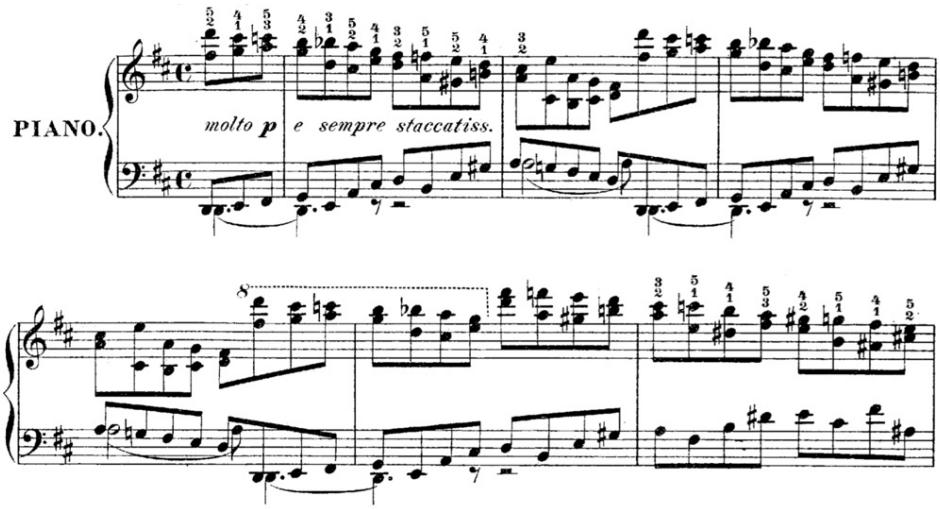
Example 87. Albéniz, "Málaga" from *Iberia*, Book 4, mm. 14-15, Groups 1 to 2 practice steps.

Recommended Preparatory Repertoire

Moritz Moszkowski, Étude in D major, Op. 48, No. 1

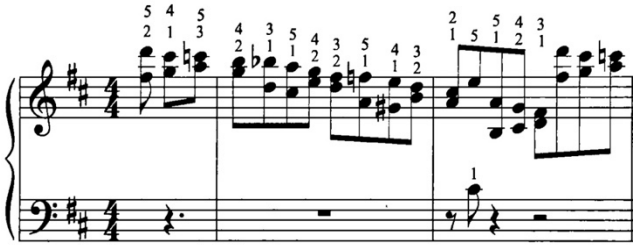
Playing double notes is one of the most difficult and important techniques for pianists to master. There are many double-note exercises for intermediate and advanced pianists written by composers such as Moszkowski, Alkan, Cramer, Kessler, and Döhler, among others. Although Moszkowski's *School of Double Notes*, Op. 64, contains kaleidoscopic patterns for practicing double notes, the pieces in this collection are more suitable for very advanced pianists. For mastering "Málaga," I would suggest one of Moszkowski's earlier works, Étude in D major, Op. 48, No. 1, for its early-advanced spectrum of technical demands.

The étude opens with contrary motion between the hands. In measure 1, double notes appear in the right hand in descending motion while the left hand moves in an ascending single-note pattern combining scalar and broken chord motion. Just as the right-hand double-note passage in "Málaga" contained a mixture of intervals (primarily thirds and fourths), similarly, this right-hand passage in the Moszkowski also contains a mixture of intervals. But there is a much greater variety of intervals in the Moszkowski, including thirds, fourths, fifths, sixths, and even a tenth. There are ample devices in this work for students to continue their work in mastering the technique of playing double notes.



Example 88. Moszkowski, Étude in D major, Op. 48, No. 1, mm. 1-6.

Whether the fingerings shown in Example 89 are the composer's or the editor's is unclear; regardless, I would suggest treating the fingerings in the score as a reference. Select a fingering that allows frequent changes in hand position, and make any changes needed depending on one's hand span. Avoid stretching the fingers exceedingly, which can lead to unnecessary tension, and aim to keep the hand in a more comfortable rounded position as much as possible. Students with smaller hands may not be able to reach the tenths in measures 2 and 4. In these instances, a simple redistribution moving the lower note of the interval (C♯) from the right hand to the left hand solves the problem. See the example below for fingering suggestions.

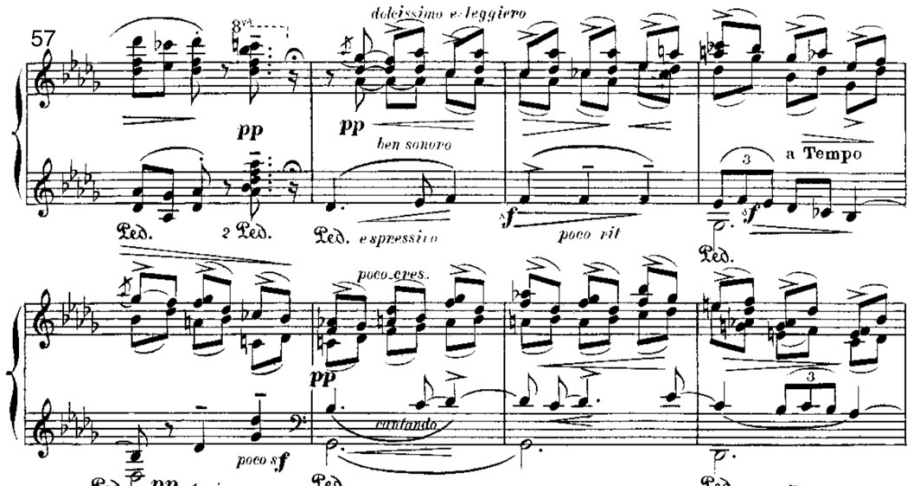


Example 89. Moszkowski, Étude in D major, Op. 48, No. 1, mm. 1-2, fingering suggestions.

Once the fingering is established, I suggest practicing the passage slowly while incorporating the dynamics, phrasing, and expression. This is to avoid making the double-note passage sound merely mechanical. It is crucial to emphasize the musical aspect of the étude rather than simply focusing on the technique. Slow and repeated practice can also help with memorizing the passage. To avoid boredom during these repetitive slow practices, students can study each part individually by playing one voice out loud and miming the other. For a smooth *legato* sound, minimize the motion of wrist rotation, and focus on relaxing the wrists when moving from one hand position to the next.

b. *Two-note Slur*

Two-note slurs occur throughout much of "Málaga." The commonly used technique for playing a two-note slur involves a distribution of arm weight, with the first note in the slur being played more heavily than the second. Beginning in measure 58 of "Málaga," the secondary melodic theme is presented in the left hand while the right-hand accompaniment comprises a long passage of two-note slurs. This accompaniment is challenging because of the frequent changes of hand position, the preponderance of accidentals, and the need to voice the top note of the right-hand slurs. The two-note-slur accompaniment appears throughout this section of "Málaga," in which one must test the right hand's stamina.

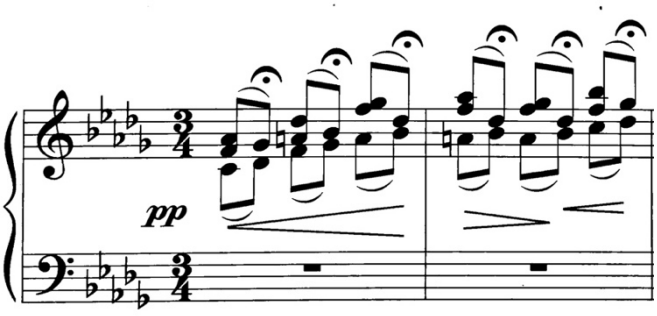


Example 90. Albéniz, "Málaga" from *Iberia*, Book 4, mm. 57-64.

Notice that the first note of all but one of the two-note slurs is marked with an accent. To achieve the sound required by the presence of this accented two-note slur, the pianist needs to have more sound on the first note followed by less sound on the second note. Incorporate a dropping motion on the first note of the slur followed by a lifting motion on the second note. Treat the first note of the slur as a pivotal point, and as the wrist lifts, start the transition to the next hand position. This can also help with voicing the chords of the slur, as well as memorizing the distance between each hand position. Keep in mind that when playing the slurs with a crescendo, we should prioritize the first note of the slur and crescendo into the second note of the slur according to the dynamic level of the first note.

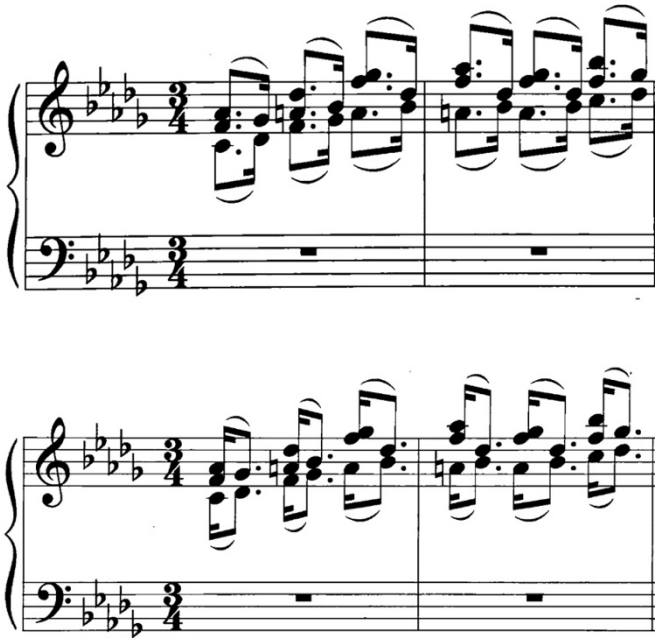
To practice measures 62-63, begin by playing each two-note group quickly. Insert a slight fermata on the second note of each group, thus pausing between the slurs. Move the hand to the position for the next slur and repeat this pattern. In successive repetitions, pay attention to not only the accidentals and accents, but also the overall shape of the phrase. As the notes become

more comfortable, shorten the length of time spent on the fermatas, with the goal being to eliminate the fermatas entirely.



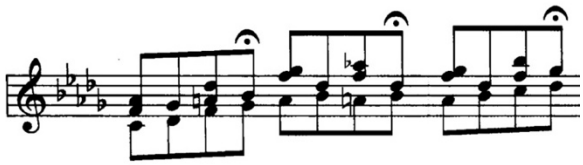
Example 91. Albéniz, "Málaga" from *Iberia*, Book 4, mm. 62-63, two-note slur practice with fermatas.

Different rhythmic groupings can be used to practice this passage. One such exercise would be to play the entire passage in dotted rhythms, both as long-short-long-short and short-long-short-long. When practicing in dotted rhythms, always aim to move as quickly as possible from the "short" note to the "long" note, thus accentuating the difficulty of the exercise.



Example 92. Albéniz, "Málaga" from *Iberia*, Book 4, mm. 62-63, dotted rhythm practice.

Another rhythmic grouping involves four-note units, whereby the pianist stops at the end of every four notes, relaxing the hand and arm while preparing for the next grouping. Of course, other rhythmic groupings are also possible, and the pianist can use their imagination to devise a variety of groupings for practicing such challenging passages.

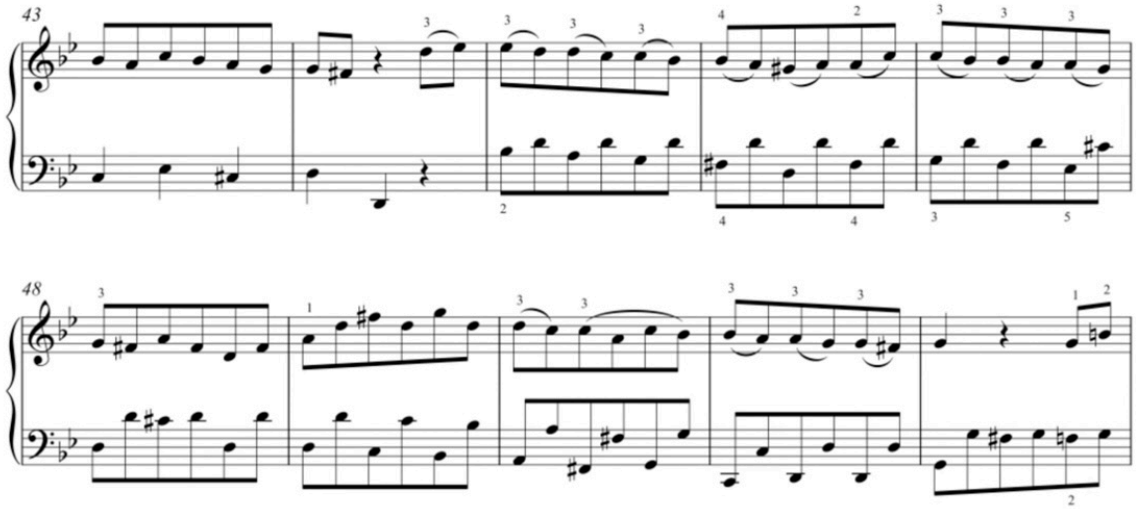


Example 93. Albéniz, "Málaga" from *Iberia*, Book 4, mm. 62-63, four-note groupings.

Recommended Preparatory Repertoire

Beethoven, Bagatelle in G Minor, Op. 119, No. 1

An excellent piece to prepare for Albéniz's "Málaga" is Beethoven's Bagatelle in G Minor. The articulation of the right-hand two-note slurs is primarily concentrated in the second half of the bagatelle. This bagatelle serves as an excellent preparatory piece for students to master the drop and lift motion of the two-note slur.



Example 94. Beethoven, Bagatelle in G Minor, Op. 119, No. 1, mm. 43-52.

Because the two-note-slur passages in the bagatelle are much more approachable than those in "Málaga," the bagatelle allows the student to focus on mastering the motion. Due to the context of the music, the drop-lift motion of the two-note slur should be subtle, and the pianist should avoid unduly accenting the first note of the two-note slur. The simple texture of the bagatelle also allows students to work on shaping the phrase.

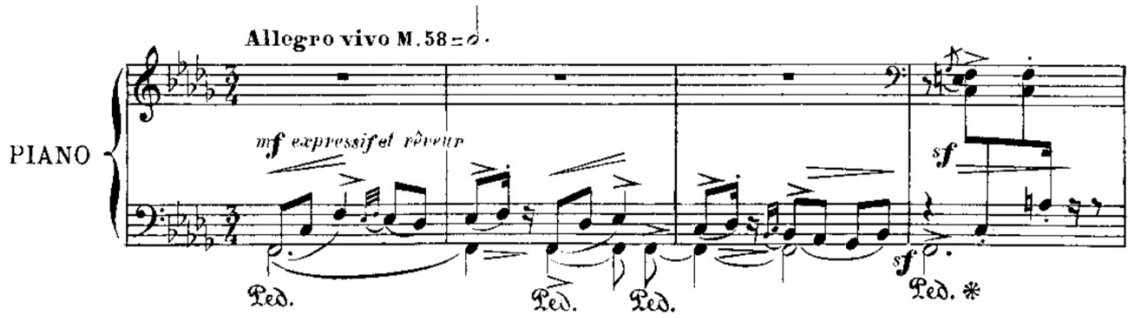
Stylistic Elements

a. *Malagueña*

The rhythmic ambiguity and the minor mode in "Málaga" evoke *malagueña* ("the Andalusian song and dance form, often in minor mode and triple meter"[39]). Malagueña can be danced as well as sung. When danced, "the dancers themselves instinctively syncopate the measures in a thousand ways, striking with their heels an unbelievable number of rhythms."[40]

The metrical ambiguity of the opening theme of "Málaga" fills the music with vitality while also adding layers of complexity in terms of understanding and performing this work. Written in 3/4 meter, the unusual placement of accents contributing to the highly syncopated opening theme of "Málaga" poses a challenge to students who are more accustomed to a conventional triple-metered piece. In measure 1, the downbeat appears to occur on the second beat of the measure, with the first two eighth notes acting as anacrusis. In measure 2, the downbeat is marked with an accent and another accent occurs on the third beat. Measure 3 contains two consecutive accents on the first two beats. Finally in measure 4, the syncopated momentum dissipates, bringing the phrase to an end (See Example 95).

[39] Mast, "Style and Structure", 322.
[40] Carl Van Vechten, *Spain and Music* (New York: Dance Horizons, 1974), 48.

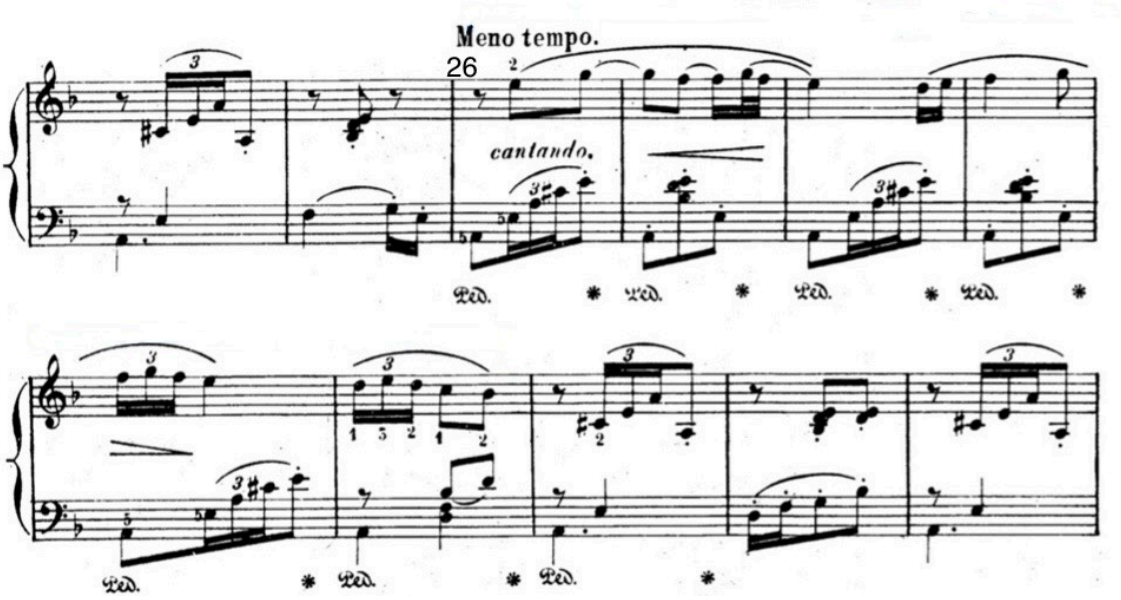


Example 95. Albéniz, "Málaga" from *Iberia*, Book 4, mm. 1-4.

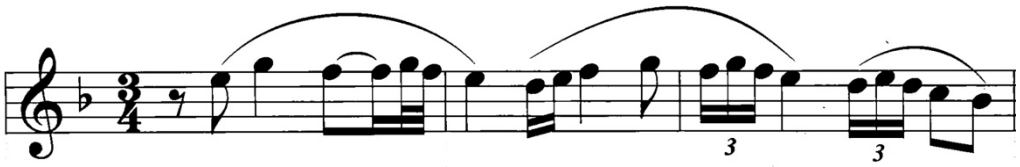
Recommended Preparatory Repertoire

Albéniz, "Rumores de la Caleta (Malagueña)" from *Recuredos de Viaje*, Op. 71, No. 6

An energetic piece full of inviting Spanish dance rhythms and composed in 1887, "Rumores de la Caleta" by Albéniz features a clear dance-rhythm pattern in triple meter that also mimics the plucking of guitars and castanets. As shown in Example 96, a singing melody appears with the marking *cantando* starting in measure 26, which allows more freedom in terms of rhythm and musical expression. Combined with ties and triplets, this six-measure right-hand melody gives the impression of 3/4 meter against six bars of 3/8 accompaniment in the left hand (See Ex. 97).

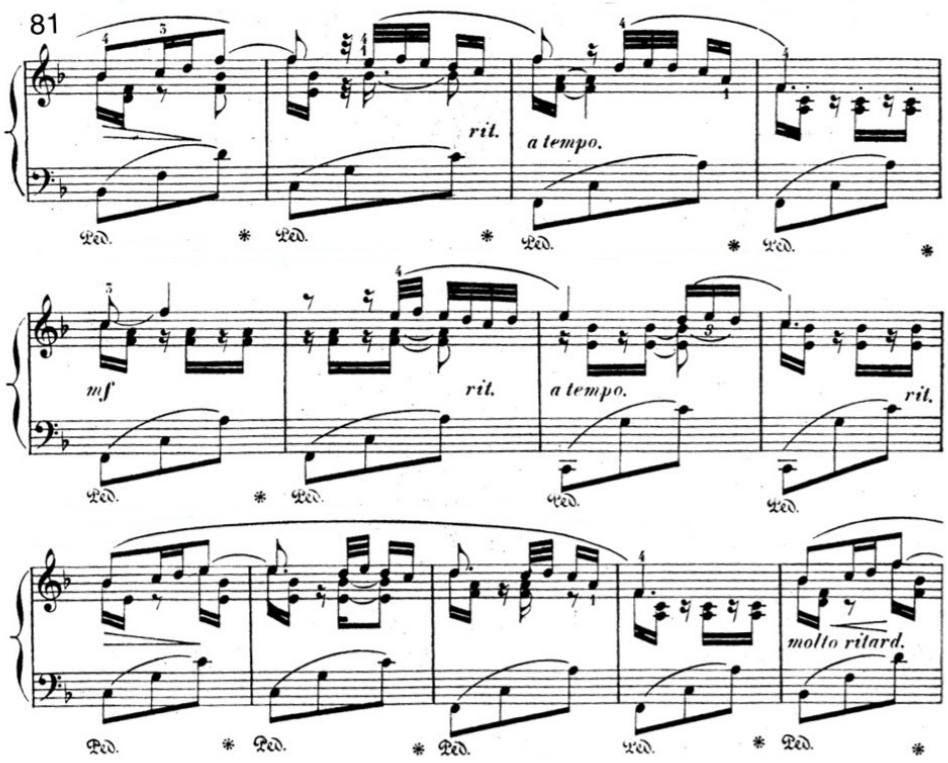


Example 96. Albéniz, “Malagueña” from *Recuredos de Viaje*, Op. 71, No. 6, mm. 24-34.



Example 97. Albéniz, “Malagueña” from *Recuredos de Viaje*, Op. 71, No. 6, mm. 26-31, melody rewritten in 3/4 meter.

The B section of “Malagueña,” shown in Example 98, presents a sinuous melodic line in the right hand. The phrasing is generally in four-measure units, providing a stable framework. However, the metrical content within each unit varies, creating a sense of metrical ambiguity. Furthermore, the guitar-like interjections in the right hand's lower voice appear on the offbeats while the melody plays in the higher voice. The rhythmic challenge here for the pianist is to focus on the right-hand melodic line while the left-hand plays a steady broken-chord pattern. The rhythmic ambiguity in “Malagueña” is not as complicated as in “Málaga,” which makes “Malagueña” more suitable for students unfamiliar with this dance and its musical style.



Example 98. Albéniz, “Malagueña” from *Recuredos de Viaje*, Op. 71, No. 6, mm. 81-93.

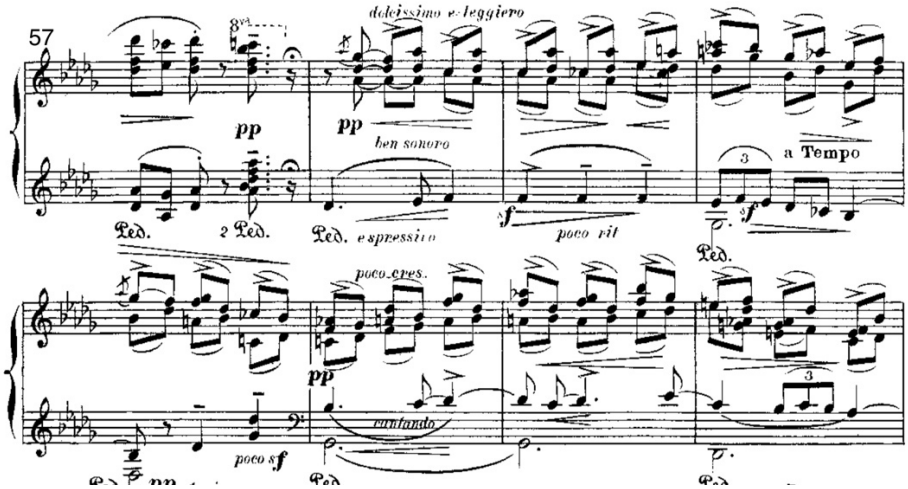
When learning the B section of “Malagueña,” I suggest that the pianist start practicing at measure 81 with the right hand alone because the right hand is required to play both the melody and chordal interjections that constitute an accompaniment voice. This requires the student to project the melodic line while the accompaniment remains softer. The left-hand broken-chord pattern is not problematic rhythmically but does require some shifting of the hand positions to negotiate the larger intervals (as in measures 83-88, for example). When practicing this passage hands together, the phrasing should follow the contour of these melodies, with a subtle *ritardando* prior to the return of the theme in measure 96. There are many tempo markings in

"Malagueña" that help to capture the unpredictable rhythmic diversity of the music, which makes the latter an excellent preparatory piece for eventually performing "Málaga."

b. *Jota Malagueña*

Similar to *flamenco* and its various forms based on the region, the *jota* also varies by region in Spain. Generally, the *jota* is a social dance where couples perform face to face; the dance is in a fast triple meter with a recurring triplet rhythmic pattern. Less lively versions of the *jota*, for example, the *jota navarra* and *jota malagueña,* share similarities with the fast *jota* but have more subtlety and expression.

In the secondary theme of "Málaga," the *jota* theme in the left hand contains a four-bar phrase with the characteristic use of triplets for *jota*. These phrases possess a singing quality with their stepwise motion and must be performed gently and expressively (see Ex. 99). With many recurrences of this theme, identifying the location of the theme and bringing out the style of *jota* is critical for performing "Málaga."



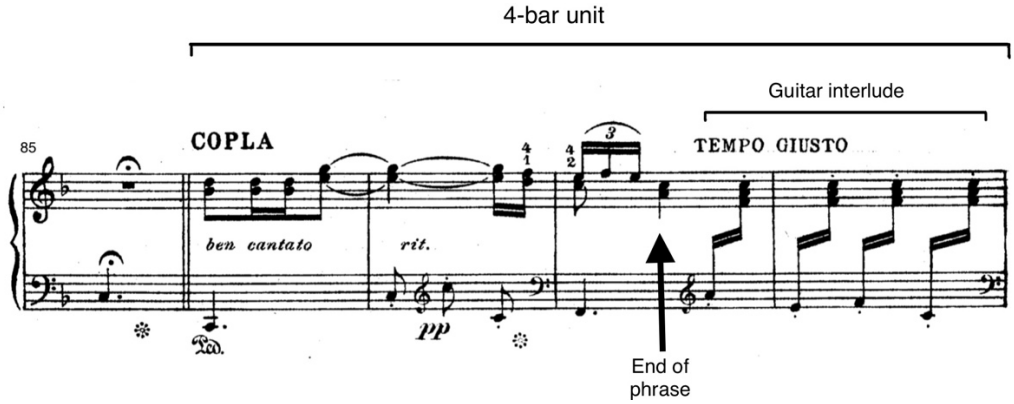
Example 99. Albéniz, "Málaga" from *Iberia*, Book 4, mm. 57-64, *jota* in lower staff.

Recommended Preparatory Repertoire

Albéniz, "Aragón" from *Suite Española*, Op. 47, No. 6

"Aragón," from *Suite Española*, Op. 47, is subtitled "Fantasía" and is completely written in the style of the *jota*. The lively main theme is a conventional *jota*, painting a picture of dancers expressing joy and happiness through the dance in their traditional costumes.

After a number of modulations of the theme, we hear a slower *copla* (song) in the middle section. The characteristics of the *copla* theme here align with the *jota malagueña* of "Málaga" and the *jota navarra* we encountered in "Evocación." The phrasing of the *jota* themes of "Málaga" (mm. 58-61, Ex. 99) and the slow *copla* section starting at measure 86 of "Aragón" are almost identical. Both are written in a four-bar unit (mm. 86-89, see Example 100 below), and the end of each phrase is reached with the triplets – the exact placement of the triplets that we've seen in "Málaga" – in the third measure of the four-bar unit, followed by a one-measure guitar interlude.



Example 100. Albéniz, "Aragón" from *Suite Española*, Op. 47, mm. 85-89, 4-bar unit.

The pianist should practice playing and singing the melody first to get a sense of the character of the melody excluding the guitar interjections. Both hands will require some leaping back and forth in this section, so practice securing the leaping motion and the measurement of

the jumps by quickly moving toward the next note, arriving to the center of that key but without playing the key out loud. The aim is to accurately measure the distance involved across the keyboard. Once the pianist can leap the distance accurately, then play as written. To sustain the *jota* theme, strictly follow the pedal markings in the score and play with expression and dynamics.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

Considered Albéniz's crowning achievement, the technical and musical mastery of *Iberia* may seem impossible for younger students to study. With this document, I hope to provide practice and performance strategies that disassemble the major challenges that students might encounter when learning *Iberia*. These strategies can be developed into practical exercises that will help the students conquer the difficulties. In other words, I hope to introduce *Iberia* to younger pianists even if they are not "ready."

In this dissertation, I have discussed the pianistic techniques and the influence of Spanish music in Albéniz's *Iberia*. I have mentioned all twelve pieces from *Iberia* briefly and have presented common pianistic techniques found throughout the suite. Four pieces from *Iberia* were selected for detailed pedagogical analysis: "Evocación" from Book 1; "Triana" from Book 2; "El Albaicín" from Book 3; and "Málaga" from Book 4. In this pedagogical analysis, the technical and musical elements of each of these four pieces were explored and explained. Furthermore, preparatory repertoire directly related to these topics was suggested for each of the four pieces from *Iberia*. For each pedagogical issue, I have included both teaching suggestions and practice strategies for students; also included are many step by step practice guides with musical examples. With these pedagogical analyses, I have sought to focus on techniques, performance issues, practice strategies, and historical background.

This discussion of the technical and pianistic issues of *Iberia* may remind us of the music of Romantic composers such as Chopin and Liszt. In fact, many of the technical challenges in *Iberia* resemble the virtuosity of Liszt's piano works. When encountering these technical challenges, we can relate such pianistic techniques and challenges with the expectation of Liszt's

piano works and utilize pedagogical approaches that are similar to Late-Romantic piano techniques. These Late-Romantic pianistic features arguably demonstrate that Albéniz learned from his predecessors and used similar techniques to express the virtuosity of Spanish music.

Although the virtuosic pianistic features of *Iberia* are rooted in the Late-Romatic period, the suite shares numerous characteristics with that of the impressionistic compositional style, which some believe gives it a more universal vision of Spanish music. Albéniz spent his last years in Paris, and while there, he met and became acquainted with several French composers, including Gabriel Fauré, Paul Dukas, and Amédée-Ernest Chausson. Albéniz absorbed many of their impressionistic compositional ideas, such as chromaticism, the mixture of keys and modes, whole-tone scale, extensive thematic transformations, and experiments with large-scale musical structures, and he incorporated their compositional techniques into his writing. Composed in the last years of Albéniz's life, *Iberia* indicates his growth in compositional techniques and style. He integrated the modernistic harmonic language from the impressionistic composers with the Late-Romantic virtuosic style and added Spanish musical elements into *Iberia*, thus distinguishing this masterpiece from his earlier character pieces.

Another aspect of *Iberia* that needs to be mentioned here is the visual density of the sheet music. Many students might feel overwhelmed by just looking at the score with the innumerable details on the page. It is almost certain that each piece in *Iberia* contains passages that require redistribution of notes. In my document, I gave several redistribution examples. I discuss and explain the necessity of redistributions in certain passages of a piece. Moreover, I presented musical examples with notes redistributed to visually explain the topic. I hope the strategies discussed in this dissertation can somewhat relieve the stress from learning the extremely "dense" score of *Iberia*.

Certainly, the idea of identifying the challenging technical and stylistic elements is not limited to those mentioned in this dissertation. The same goes for the preparatory repertoire. I have included 16 preparation pieces in this document. These pedagogical selections range from late-intermediate to the advanced level. Some of the pedagogical pieces included in this document will be new to many of the readers, thus giving teachers and students opportunities to expand their repertoire. For students who are interested in expanding their stylistic boundaries by learning more Spanish piano music, they can turn to Spanish composers such as Manuel de Falla, Federico Mompou, Enrique Granados, and Joaquín Turina. All of these composers wrote excellent pedagogical repertoire, and readers are encouraged to investigate the output of piano music by these composers. Albéniz's earlier piano compositions also contain many Spanish musical idioms but are less difficult technically and can serve as excellent preparatory repertoire for *Iberia*.

Many modern listeners recognize and appreciate *Iberia*'s artistic merit, whereas Albéniz brought Spanish music more prominently onto the Western European stage through his unique musical style. Today we might also encourage pianists to study this masterpiece, diving deep into its pianistic and performance issues to continue celebrating Albéniz's musical legacy.

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