ISAAC ALBÉNIZ

By EDGAR ISTEL

The history of mankind, as Goethe once remarked, resembles a great fugue, in which the voices of the peoples, entering only one after another, are heard gradually, in order later—one may add—to furnish that "concert," not always altogether harmonious, which we regard as the historic event. Goethe's comparison applies also to that small section of world history which concerns itself with the development of music; there too, now one, now another nation supplies the "theme," only, not long after, to sink from the rôle of dux to that of comes. It is only at a late date that Spain's voice makes its entrance in this gigantic fugue, much later than all other nations, and, if the voice of Spain be audible at all, it is largely owing to Isaac Albéniz.

Before this the name Albéniz—one rather infrequent—had earned esteem in the Spanish world of music, yet its bearer remained totally unknown outside Spain itself. Thus we have Mateo Antonio Perez de Albéniz in the first third of the nineteenth century, who in 1802 published his Instrucción metódica para enseñar a cantar y toñer la música moderna y antigua, and was one of the first to oppose the Italian musical invasion of Spain. A second Albéniz, Don Pedro Albéniz y Basanta (b. 1795 in Logrono; d. 1855, in Madrid), son of an excellent church musician—also named Pedro (b. 1755 in Biscaya; d. 1821, in San Sebastien), was a pupil of Herz, Kalkbrenner, Thalberg and Fétis in Paris, and made a name for himself with his text-book Método completo de piano del Conservatorio de Música, with which he introduced piano playing, in the modern sense of the word, in Spain. Yet all these predecessors, identical in name with Isaac Albéniz, but none of them related to him, were cast into the shade by the advent of a man whom one may quite appropriately term "the Spanish Liszt," and whose name was to be the first among those of Spanish composers to achieve world-wide fame.

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Albéniz and Enrique Arbós.
(From a rare photograph taken at Brussels in 1892; by courtesy of Señor Arbós.)
Isaac Manuel Francisco. Henri Collet, in his comprehensive study “Granados and Albéniz,” points out that because of his praenomen Isaac, Albéniz was inclined to believe himself of Jewish descent; yet Enrique Arbos, the famous Spanish violinist and conductor, who lived for years with Albéniz under the same roof and knew him like none other, assures me that this is out of the question. At the same time Albéniz, though a Catalan born, and for all that later he wrote the tone-poem “Catalonia” in honor of his native land, did not consider himself a Catalan and never spoke the language, asserting with much racial pride: “I am a Moor.” This Moorish, that is to say Arabic descent, is not contradicted by his music, and hence no more appropriate site could have been selected for his memorial than that spot which to this day testifies to the lofty culture of the Arabs in Spain, the Alhambra, whose fame in America in more recent times, it is true, is largely due to Washington Irving’s wonderful tales.

Nevertheless, for all that this Arabic blood may dominate in Albéniz’s veins, he knew how to amalgamate the Moorish element with the ancient Iberian and Latin racial factors, and thus there came into being that indefinable something which for the first time confronts us as a “Spanish” tonal art in the history of music.

Albéniz’s entire career resembles a romance of adventure, and its very beginning is in keeping therewith. As in the case of Gustav Mahler his musical instinct, when a quite small child in Barcelona, was awakened by the signals of the military, so that his sister was able to teach the boy the elements of piano playing when he was but a year old, and at the age of four he was already able to give a concert in public, at which he improvised. This seemed so incredible to the audience that it thought itself the victim of a deception and suspected a pianist behind the scenes, one who actually played what the child was pretending to play.

Albéniz’s father—who as Albéniz later put it was “a little mad” (un poquito loco), now tortured the unfortunate lad, whom he wished to turn into a revenue-producing infant prodigy, with piano study (coincident with utter neglect of all other education) so that at the age of six he was ready for further development under Marmontel in Paris. An attempt to have him entered at the Conservatoire failed because, although Albéniz played the piano admirably, when he had finished his high spirits led him to smash a window-pane with a ball, to the horror of the professors, and his entrance was deferred for two years on the score of immaturity. So Isaac had to return to Spain, where he concertized uninterruptedly for the next three years, yet not as we might
suppose this would be done to-day, but in a decidedly singular manner. The fact was that young Albéniz, so Arbos tells us, had acquired extraordinary facility playing on a covered keyboard, with his back to the piano (which means with a diametrically opposite position of the hands), and in later years would do so in a friend's home as a joke. Thanks to this vaudeville trick he attracted a tremendous amount of attention, the more so as he always appeared dressed as a musketeer, with a rapier at his side. Thus costumed and drilled by his father, who was an enthusiastic Mason, he would salute the public with the Masonic sign, though (according to Arbos) he never became a Mason himself.

It was thus that Albéniz reached the age of eight, when the family shifted its abode to Madrid, where Isaac entered the Conservatory. Spurred on by Jules Verne's novels of adventure and no doubt surfeited with his father's tyranny, young Isaac ran away from home in his musketeer costume, sneaking aboard a train as a "dead-head" passenger, minus ticket and money. A lucky chance put him in the way of the mayor of Escorial, who bought him a ticket for that station, had him play in the Escorial Casino, and thus secured some money for him. He took the lad together with his earnings to the station to send him back to his parents on the train for Madrid, but the young rascal got off at the next stop and boarded a train going in the opposite direction. He managed to give concerts in other cities and already had accumulated a nice little sum in cash, with which he thought to return home when, between Zamora and Toro—travelling in Spain at that time was unsafe—he fell a victim to brigands who surprised the mail coach. Albéniz lost all his money, but the noble-minded robbers let him keep something he prized more than money—an album in which his distinguished patrons, the higher clergy and freemasons, had inscribed their autographs, and which he used as a reference in securing his concert engagements. Since he did not want to return home penniless, he determined to keep on giving concerts while he made a vagabond tour of the Peninsula.

In this manner Albéniz had attained the age of twelve when, in Cadiz, the governor had him arrested with the intention of having him forcibly returned to his parents. The young man, however, was clever enough to escape the threatened danger by taking refuge on a ship lying in the harbor, bound for Porto Rico. As was to be expected, so Arbos told me, Albéniz once more had neglected to provide himself with a ticket, and remained in hiding as a stowaway until the vessel had cleared port. His hopes of paying his passage by piano playing were not entirely vain, since
the passengers took up a collection for the talented boy; but unfortunately the money did not suffice to cover the entire trip, and so Albéniz was put ashore at Buenos Aires. Here, in the beginning, he knew hunger and wretchedness at first hand until, finally, a Spaniard who heard him playing in a café aided him to arrange a concert tour of South America. From that moment on his fortune was made. When, a year later, he sailed from Buenos Aires to Cuba (at that time still a Spanish colony) he already carried with him some 10,000 francs, then quite a respectable amount of money. A strange surprise awaited him in Cuba; at the conclusion of a concert in Santiago he was arrested by the police, and carried to Havana, where his father was established as comptroller of taxes. His father, however, did not abuse his authority, and agreed to allow Isaac to continue his travels about the world. He made first for New York, where he fared so badly that he was obliged to hire out as a stevedore on the docks; yet eventually—thanks to his vaudeville tricks—he succeeded in playing with success over the entire North American continent as far as San Francisco. Thence he returned to Europe; and after appearing in Liverpool and London went to Leipsic, his mind made up to perfect his technique, especially in the branch of composition, under Jadassohn and Reinecke, at the then famous Conservatory, a notable resolve for a boy of fourteen to make.

After nine months of serious study Albéniz, his money spent, was compelled, in 1875, to return to Spain, where he at first attempted to continue his studies. But soon his love for adventure gained the upper hand, and he went to America as an accompanist pianist. Again returning to his native land, he succeeded in arousing the interest of a politically influential as well as musically important personality, and as a result his life was to develop its decisive orientation away from adventure and in the direction of serious art.

The personality in question was Count Guillermo Morphy, of Scotch descent, but the son of a Spanish mother (born Feb. 29, 1836, in Madrid, where he died Aug. 28, 1899) who, after the deposition of the Spanish Queen Isabella, had followed her into exile in Paris, and from the year 1871 on had been entrusted with the education of Prince Alfonso—father of the present king regnant, Alfonso XIII—in Vienna. When the latter ascended the throne in 1875, Count Morphy returned to Madrid as his private secretary. A pupil of the great musicologist F. A. Gevaert in Brussels, his teacher had drawn Morphy's attention to the treasures of ancient Spanish lute-music which had been allowed to lie
fallow, in consequence of which the Count made that famous collection which appeared after his death with an Introduction by Gevaert, and which exerted a well-nigh epochal influence in its particular field. Count Morphy, the patron of all Spanish musicians who seemed to him to be of any consequence, and who, for example, was also the “discoverer” of Tomas Bretón, presented young Albéniz to the king and secured for him a pension which would enable him to perfect his education in Brussels. At the same time the young violinist Enrique Fernandez Arbos, my dear friend, to whom I am indebted for so many details with regard to Albéniz, and whose orchestrations of Albéniz’s principal works more than anything else have caused them to become known, was granted a pension by the Infanta Isabella. So these two young geniuses, whose exuberant natures made them mutually so sympathetic one to the other, met in Brussels, and Albéniz became a member of the household directed by Arbos’ mother. Thus Albéniz and Arbos grew to be inseparable friends and companions-in-art, and the pictures reproduced with this article, a unique possession of Arbos’, shows them in Brussels, at work. Yet their adolescent temperamentality—Arbos to this day delights in a joke—led them to indulge in mad, youthful pranks which one must hear Arbos himself recount with all a Spaniard’s lively mimicry, in order to do justice to their genuine humor. Hence I shall make no attempt here to retell any of these anecdotes which, in part, could only be narrated verbally in a circle of good friends, and which, nevertheless, are among the most amusing musicians’ tales known to me.

This happy, carefree, day-to-day existence of Albéniz was suddenly disrupted by a tragic happening which nearly resulted in his losing his life; yet fortunately did no more than serve as a species of Mene tekel of warning, inscribed by a phantom hand, to direct him into the right path. Albéniz, so Arbos told me, had withdrawn from the home they shared together and, young and inexperienced, had gotten into bad company, introduced thereto by a youthful South American. As a result he totally neglected his studies, was never at home, and when Arbos went to see him he would find Albéniz’s piano covered with a thick layer of dust, in which Arbos was wont to write his name to show he had called, since he never seemed able to encounter his friend.

One day, however, Albéniz, turning up at Arbos’ home in a state of maniacal excitement, showed his terrified friend a letter which revealed that Albéniz and the young South American had entered into a compact to enjoy themselves as long as their money
held out, and then to commit suicide together. Albéniz’s friend had written him that he thought it best to carry out the last part of the programme himself, and to abandon Albéniz to his artistic future. Terrified friends hastened with Albéniz to the police and, in fact, the corpse of the wretched youth was discovered that same day in the Bois de Cambre—he had shot himself!

Shaken by this occurrence, and moved by his friends’ representations, Albéniz now began to toil in earnest. He had but a month left before the examination, the dreaded concours. Yet with the same ardor he had devoted to his loafing, Albéniz now took up his practising. He achieved the impossible, for in the course of the few days left him he brought his performance to such a level that he was awarded quite an exceptional first prize amid a tremendous ovation. His two friends at the same time were awarded prizes in their own branches: Arbos, Vieuxtemps’ pupil, in violin playing; and Daniel, Gevaerts’ pupil, in composition. Then, for a few years, their paths led in different directions: Arbos followed Joachim to Berlin; and Albéniz made up his mind—it was in the year 1878—to complete his studies with the greatest living master of the piano, Franz Liszt.

Unfortunately, with regard to Albéniz’s studies with Liszt, we know only what little Albéniz himself has set down. On August 15, he notes, he paid Liszt his first visit. “I shall study. He will receive me again early to-morrow morning.” And again:

I have visited Liszt. He received me in the most amiable manner. I played two of my Études and a Hungarian Rhapsody. To all appearances he was much pleased with me, especially when I improvised a complete dance on a Hungarian theme which he gave me. He asked me all sorts of questions about Spain, my parents, my religious opinions and, finally, about music in general. I told him quite frankly and decidedly that I gave no thought to any of these things, which seemed to please him. I am to return the day after to-morrow. Books which I must buy: the works of Zola and Turgenieff.

And that is all. Albéniz was also with Liszt in Weimar and in Rome, but in this connection further details of his activities are lacking until, in the year 1880, he resumed his concert playing in Cuba, Mexico and the Argentine, and also in Spain. It is from the moment that Liszt had given him his final consecration in the pianistic art that we may date his true career as an artist and as a virtuoso, a career destined—until what time he, like his master, devoted himself principally to composition—to lead him to the greatest successes. One of the very oldest of his newspaper criticisms extant, hailing from Santiago de Cuba—the same city in which
he once had been arrested—praises him for his “exquisite delicacy of tone, the good taste of his expression, his temperament and power, as well as an extraordinary finger facility, combined with an elegant and sympathetic stage appearance.” His repertoire at this time comprised chiefly German classic and romantic music: Bach and Handel; Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven; Schubert, Schumann, Weber and Mendelssohn. Together with it he played older music, such as that of Scarlatti, Rameau and Couperin; and more recent compositions by Chopin, Moscheles, Ries, Dussek, Rubinstein, Heller, Grieg, Mayer, Liszt and Brassin. Spain was represented by two Caprices of his patron Morphy, a “Funeral March” by Bretón and—last but not least—fifty of his own compositions.

The first composition by Albéniz to appear in print was a “Heroic March” for piano, to-day totally forgotten. Succeeding works, still obtainable, found greater favor: a “Pavane” and “Six Little Waltzes.” Albéniz’s first publisher, Romero, had come to an agreement with him, according to which Albéniz let him have all the pieces he wrote at the price of one duro (five pesetas, about 75 cents) payment in full, per engraved page of music. Albéniz exploited this agreement—which at first glance seems so greatly in favor of the publisher and later, no doubt, actually was so (according to Arbos)—by devoting his nights to an unprecedented musical productivity, despite the fact that he gave piano lessons all day long; so that at last his publisher had to beg him to restrain his rain of manuscripts.

When to-day we glance at these numerous mazurkas, cotillons, romances, suites, waltzes, barcaroles, études, sonatas and others more, pieces written in the style then the fashion in the salons, we must admit that they do not give off the faintest whiff of the later Albéniz whom we love and cherish. Like the time of which it is a product, this music, all of it so unmistakably marked with the stamp of improvisation and idle virtuosity, has sounded out. It is music to which Albéniz later attached not the slightest importance, and which he was accustomed to term petites saletés. It was music of which he never made a list and, in fact, its titles, in most cases, had totally escaped him. How many of them were there, of these salon pieces, all dedicated to some lovely pupil, some Isabel, Casilda, Aurora, Sofia, Christina, Maria, or whatever

1All works whose publishers are not specifically mentioned in this study, have been issued by the “Union Musical Española,” Madrid. I take this opportunity of acknowledging the courtesy of this firm, as well as that of the Paris and London publishers of Albéniz’s works, in placing them at my disposal.
they all may have been called? Nobody knows, but since the individual works provided with opus numbers attain a total of 200, it is possible to form an idea of what Albeniz turned out in this style—at the rate of five pesetas the engraved page.

Chopin, Schumann, Liszt and Weber were the gods of the piano whom Albeniz took for a model without ever reaching their attainment; he had not as yet discovered his individual personality, his Hispanicism, and on only one occasion, in the pretty "Minueto," No. 3 of his "Suite ancienne," the rhythm of the Seguidilla glimmers through from afar, and lends the little composition a certain quality of personal charm.

All other productions of this first period of creative activity, which extends to the year 1883, are to-day worth no more than any other waste paper.

Albeniz himself realized how much still was lacking to make him really and truly a composer and, therefore, the same year, in 1883, began to study with Felipe Pedrell, the archmaster of the Spanish school of composition, in Barcelona. With regard to these lessons, which were rather in the nature of conversations, or even of comradely meetings, Pedrell wrote illuminatingly in the "Vanguardia" of May, 1909. Albeniz, who despite his studies in Leipsic, had remained very much a musical child of nature, found it difficult, for instance, to accustom himself to writing the note B double flat which on the piano is identical with A, as a B double flat; he did not realize that the violins could not play below the G, and so quite unconcernedly would set down the still lower F, etc. "I noticed," said Pedrell, "that when we discussed these technical problems and others more difficult still, that much grieved, he would withdraw within himself; and when I realized that he did not understand arid regulations, I determined in the future never again to talk to him about rules, chords, resolutions and other technical hieroglyphics; but to dwell on a fine and cultivated taste, merely seeing to it that so extraordinary an

\[\text{Tempo di Minueto}\]

dolce etc.

\[\text{poor rit. etc.}\]

1See my "Felipe Pedrell," The Musical Quarterly, April, 1925.
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intelligence was correctly guided. And thus, since quite indirectly and unconsciously he had a solid training, due to the magnificent literature of the piano, I was finally able to say to him, to stimulate his imagination: 'To the devil with all the rules! Fling them into the fire, all these treatises on harmony, counterpoint and composition, these theories of instrumentation and what not, which were not written for you, and which in the end will only paralyze your natural genius.'

Albéniz, so Pedrell affirms, could sense music only through the medium of the piano keyboard, not "boxed up" in speculative theories. Of concentration, that listening to the music which sounds within one, he knew nothing. "His lofty and extraordinary intuition might be compared to a wine-skin, holding a fragrant vintage gilded by a Mediterranean sun. From it Albéniz filled his goblet until it brimmed; he handled it with the generosity of a wasteful child, and one was overcome and intoxicated by this fulness and fragrance and light."

The year 1883 is the great turning-point in Albéniz's career. He married, and with his marriage began a complete revolution in his life and in his art. Arbos says with regard to it: "Albéniz's life and character offer two great divisions: that of Albéniz, the Bohemian, and that of Albéniz, the Benedict. Those who knew and loved him in Paris, and were acquainted with his peaceful family life, dedicated only to music and to his own family, could not conceive of the existence he had led during his childhood and youth." Rosina Jordana, offspring of a musical family in the French Pyrenees, one of his pupils, and whom he had known but a few months, was his chosen, and any who may have had a chance to see this kindly old lady in her home, adorned with Albéniz's rich and well-selected library, will even yet be able to understand his preference. The writer of the present article complies with a pleasant duty in here expressing his warm thanks for the information, manuscripts and pictures she was amiable enough to let him have. Albéniz had three children, a son, Alfonso (born 1885); and two daughters, Enriqueta (born 1889), and his favorite daughter Laura (born 1890), highly gifted as a painter, whom he always took pleasure in accompanying at the piano when she danced. Laura, who aside from Spanish and Catalan, also speaks and writes French, German, English and Italian, relieved her father of the burden of correspondence and became his secretary.

No sooner had Albéniz married and settled down in Barcelona, than he hit upon the unfortunate idea of bettering his fortune by speculation on the stock exchange, and as a result not only lost
his money but also was plunged into debt. He was obliged to flee to the Pyrenees, but after he had given a few concerts, once more found himself on his feet. Yet he had taken a dislike to Barcelona, and now returned again to Madrid, where he was known as "the Spanish Rubinstein," and gave numerous concerts. Already, at that time, he was generally spoken of by critics as a specifically meridional artist, who had at last shown forth that it was possible to play serious music even in Spain. At this time Scarlatti and Chopin were denominated his favorite composers, and one paper prophetically declared: "When in the end the composer Albéniz stands on a plane with the pianist—and unquestionably, given his tireless industry, this eventually will be the case—then Albéniz will be a figure of the first rank in the world of music."

In Paris and in London, too, he had begun to attract attention. The firm of Érard, the piano manufacturers, engaged him in 1889, he playing only his own compositions; and the meticulous rhythm in his works was especially praised. Then he also played in London, and in a series of English cities, with such pronounced success that he was compelled to add a tournée through Germany and Austro-Hungary to his English tour. Following this he played concerts in London and Brussels (1892), and during the same year in Berlin, where he was compared to his compatriot Sarasate, and hailed as a remarkable pianist and one of high standing. Finally, after a longer stay in London, Albéniz—yielding to his wife's pleadings—decided to establish himself permanently in Paris. That was in 1893, and this decade comprises a new period of Albéniz's creative activity, a period which, for the first time, was to reveal his individual personality.

Wherein does this individuality consist? It is hard to define for those who hesitate to dissect the flower instead of exalting themselves with its perfume. It is only to be felt, not matter-of-factly analyzed, this indefinable something which evaporates between our fingers when we attempt to seize it.

It is necessary to bear two facts in mind if one wishes to understand Albéniz: according to his own confession, he was racially a Moor; and his art was and remained to the very last an art of pianistic improvisation. These two facts are the true keys to his creation without, however, "explaining" it in the usual acceptance of the word. Yet is such an explanation necessary?

The improvisational element, fortified by Albéniz's autodidactic development, is made manifest practically throughout by the fact that his originally often genial, in any event unusually
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Charming, fancies are never fully worked out in the sense of the higher type of art music; and that an unorganic coadjacence results in place of an organic consequent development. Themes, for example, are not thematically built up, but carried on by transposition to other keys, etc., a procedure which tires in the long run, and often produces a naïve rather than a folkwise impression. In general Albéniz's relations with folkwise art are quite special in character; he has borrowed from it only rhythmic and harmonic peculiarities and scarcely any melodic ones, or these last only in that, so to say, he employs certain intervals of *fioriture* cherished in Arab and Gipsy music, without directly making use of Spanish, Gipsy or Arabic folk-motives. In this respect, were the comparison entirely justified, one might call him the Spanish Chopin. Albéniz's procedure has both its advantage and disadvantage. The advantage is that his art, for all it is closely affiliated with the Hispanic-Arabic cultural cycle, remains one purely personal, belonging to him alone. The disadvantage—from the point of view of the neo-Spanish school of composers—is that Albéniz has inculcated an erroneous idea of Spanish music outside of Spain, the idea that "natural" Spanish music is that of the folk-tunes, and that a genuine Spanish musical art is conceivable only as proceeding out of them. I believe the truth lies somewhere in the middle of the road. That Albéniz towered high above his followers, for instance Manuel de Falla,¹ seems to me beyond dispute; and I also find the manner in which Albéniz makes use of folkwise rhythms and intervals far more attractive than de Falla's alleged "naturalistic" Spanish music, which so often leads directly to monotony.

In order to clarify these statements it is necessary to have recourse to actual musical examples, which I shall choose from among Albéniz's most characteristic works, fruit of his most original creative period. Later, when Albéniz once more devoted himself to a serious study of composition in Paris, it is true that he looked down on these works to some extent; yet he did not deny that there was "something" in these products of the inexhaustible imagination of his best years, which afterward, when he wrote his works in a manner somewhat too florid, too elaborate (evidently to show how much he had learned!) he covered up with counterpoint. It is going altogether too far, however, nowadays, as Turina once did in the "Revista Musical" (Bilbao, 1911), to allow the great, uniquely genuine Albéniz to begin with

the opera “Pepita Jimenez”—a failure—and on this assumption deny that his earlier works had any value, because they display a lack of academic facility. One should carefully distinguish between the decidedly empty compositions of the days of his vagabond virtuosity, which I already have described, and, let us say, the works of the first decade of his married life, up to the time he established himself in Paris, when Albeniz could quietly extend his powerful talent for composition, and create those works which to this day remain the most popular he wrote. Yet here, too, we must sift the chaff from the wheat; here, too, we at times find precious pearls in collections of frivolities, hidden away, perhaps, for extraneous reasons. Yet his best—and it is only according to it that we will judge him—stands the test of comparison with genuine masterworks of pianistic miniature; and when a composer like Albeniz is great in detail, he has a legitimate claim to be acknowledged as a master, for all that, on occasion, some talented conservatory graduate might outdo him with regard to technical skill. Yet that which the delicate shoots ripened in the hot-house of our own pedagogic “forcing plants” lack—the vitality of nature unrestrained—that Albeniz possesses in the highest degree. And it is for this reason that his unpretentious little creations will continue to live when nothing will remain of so much of the artificial art-music of our own day.

Out of the multitude of works belonging to this period—opus numbers are meaningless, and it is no longer possible to establish with certainty the exact date of writing—I have chosen the “Chants d’Espagne,” which appeared as Op. 232, a collection of five characteristic pieces, whose titles in themselves show that they are supposed to sing the south of Spain, Andalusia, the paradise of the Moors: Prélude, Orientale, Sous le Palmier, Cordoba, Seguidillas.

The beginning of the “Prélude” already sets us down in the midst of the world of the Gipsies, whose scale Albeniz uses by preference, with a technique which he caught from the guitar. As a matter of fact, Andres Segovia, whom one may without exaggeration call the Paganini of the guitar, has transposed this composition for his instrument as it stands.
And then we have a melodic theme whose *fioriture* and augmented seconds point directly to Arabic music:

Nor does the following development, which appears in a similar variant in "Carmen," deny its Oriental origin:

Hence the second piece is at once entitled "Orientale." After four measures of an introduction, Adagio, the first theme begins in Gipsy fashion:
In the parallel major key there appears a fine secondary theme:

The third number, "Under the Palm," a tango, also belongs to the Gipsy tribe:

Here, too, the diminished octave, which arises at the beginning of the second measure, between the melody and the medial voice, is especially characteristic.
The most beautiful composition in the collection and the one most characteristic of Albéniz's gift, is the fourth, "Cordoba." Here Albéniz's Moorish soul rises in an affecting song to the holy city of Islam, "the Mecca of the West," as it once was called, the radiant focal point of perfected Arabic culture:

"In the silence of night, interrupted by the aromatic respiration of the jasmines, the guzlas (Oriental stringed instruments) dream as they accompany the serenades, and carry through the air glowing melodies, tones as sweet as the sound of the palms when they sway in paradise heights."

The "Seguidillas" supplies a charming final number for the cycle:
In this collection of "Chants d’Espagne" we have, so to say, all the individual characteristics of Albéniz’s tonal speech during his most fruitful period of creation in a species of bacterial culture. Other collections complete the picture without adding any new essential traits.

Most nearly akin to the "Chants d’Espagne" is the "Suite Espagnole" in eight movements, in which—an indication of Albéniz’s carelessness in such matters—two movements are identical, note for note, with movements in the "Chants d’Espagne," while a third movement (the capricho "Cuba") shares its beginning with "Under the Palm." The other movements are entitled: "Granada," "Cataluña," "Sevilla," "Cadiz," "Asturias," "Aragon," and "Castilla." "Asturias" is the "Prélude" of the "Chants d’Espagne"; "Castilla" the final movement ("Seguidillas") of the collection aforementioned.

Hence the only new numbers are: "Granada," "Cataluña," "Sevilla," "Cadiz," and "Aragon." (It reappears as the "Aragonaise" in the group of ten "Oeuvres pour piano" published by Leduc, Paris.) The least characteristic of them is "Cataluña," a Sardana lacking in originality; and "Aragon," too, seems to me somewhat conventional. Very charming, and genuine Albéniz, on the other hand, are "Granada," "Sevilla," and "Cadiz," among which the last-named piece, in particular—which has also been published separately as "Serenade," Op. 108—has become famous.

Allegretto ma non troppo

While the two collections mentioned, like so many other among the Master’s compositions, bear the names of Spanish cities or provinces, the collection "Espagne," Op. 165 (Max Eschig, Paris), which falls into the same category as the others, is more a suite of dances. It begins with a "Prélude," upon which follow "Tango," "Malagueña," "Serenata," "Capricho Catalán," and "Zortzico." They are very euphonious, attractive album-leaves among which I would, in particular, call special attention to the original "Malagueña":

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Allegretto ma non troppo} & \\
\text{\footnotesize \text{\textcopyright \text{\textcopyright}}}
\end{align*}
\]
Isaac Albéniz

The "Zortzico," as well—under which name a very popular Basque national dance is known—written in the less usual 5/8 time, also deserves notice:

Not so mature in musical workmanship, and less locally characterized is the collection of "Seis Danzas Españolas," dances unprovided with any specific intitulation. The continually recurring tango rhythm in this collection makes a somewhat monotonous impression. A brilliant virtuoso grouping of a rather external type is offered by the "Rapsodia española" (a companion number, the "Rapsodia Cubana," is mediocre) and I adduce the beginning of the "Jota original," a little movement, initiated from the Aragonese national dance, as a sample.
The remaining collections are very unequal and evidently have been put together of older pieces dating from the composer’s virtuoso days, so that in every case only a few individual numbers are characteristic of Albéniz’s individuality. Thus in the collection of seven pieces called “Recuerdos de viaje” (Travel Reminiscences), aside from the pretty “Bolero,” we find that only number 6, a Malagueña entitled “Humores de la Caleta,” is of any importance. Its first theme is as follows:

In the album “Piezas características,” which contains twelve numbers, only one, the last, is a first-class composition. Entitled “Terra bermeja,” it is a thoroughly guitaristic work, which Andres Segovia has accordingly included in his repertory. The fine melodic theme begins:

In addition No. 7, “Zambra,” a Gipsy dance, which begins:

is worthy of mention. It is worth comparing with another separately published composition, the “Zambra granadina,” which is even more Gipsyish in character:
These are the compositions which, it is true, do not as yet attain the technical complexity and external perfection of Albéniz's later works, yet which reveal his great and original talent for the Oriental miniature more clearly and more purely than many a more pretentious composition which came into being during Albéniz's Paris period, during which the composer yielded to the temptation of overstepping the bounds of the talent with which nature had endowed him.

Thus far we have become acquainted with Albéniz only in the field which was peculiarly his own, that of piano composition, and it is now time to consider the attempts which he made to write for the stage. His first work, a zarzuela—a species of light or comic opera with spoken dialogue—was called "Cuanto mas viejo" (The Older One Is). It "flopped" at the very first performance in Bilbao, and hence should have served as a warning. But Albéniz, whose optimism was indestructible, always underestimated the difficulties of writing for the stage and continued to devote himself to it. And, in fact, he was luckier with another zarzuela, "Catalanes de Gracia," in Madrid. He already had in mind writing an opera in Spanish, after the tragedy "Mar y Ciel," by the famous Catalan poet, Angel Guimera (on whose "Tierra baja" d'Albert's "Tiefland" is based), when he discovered that he could make more money setting English texts. In consequence he composed only one other zarzuela to a Spanish text, "San Antonio de la Florida" (the title is the name of the little church in Madrid which Goya has adorned with frescoes), a little one-act score which is very amiable though not very effective theatrically. The composer's inventive freshness reveals itself in the principal theme, which enters at the very beginning in the chorus, and repeatedly reappears in variants:

The action, as in the case of all these little works, is so negligible that it does not call for consideration. This zarzuela was received with applause when it was given in Madrid, in 1894, at the "Teatro de Apolo," and has been published by Pujol (now "Union Musical").

Had Albéniz been able to secure better Spanish texts, and had he been content to stick to the unpretentious genre for which he
was suited, he could, in view of his natural talent, have achieved fine and lasting successes as a stage composer. Yet fate so willed it that—largely influenced by his English friends—he entered upon a course in which his best powers were wasted to no end.

This misfortune began with his setting a libretto by Arthur Law, "The Magic Opal," a tale of brigands in modern Greece dealing in the most stultifying fashion with a genuine and a false talisman. That Albéniz did not know just what to do with this book and—save for an Oriental Dance in Act Two—wrote a decidedly impersonal score, need not surprise us. The score was produced in London, in 1893, first at the Lyric Theatre, then in the Prince of Wales’ Theatre, and has been published (Chappell & Co., London); but soon vanished from the stage. His connection with the Prince of Wales’ Theatre brought him an acquaintance who, while very useful to him financially, was to do him incalculable damage humanly and artistically, and, perhaps, was responsible—in so far as inner reasons come into question—for Albéniz’s untimely end.

A very wealthy banker, Francis Money-Coutts, was financially interested in the aforementioned theatre, and this man had the weakness, not only of writing dramatic verse in his leisure hours, but also of using every means to get it performed. So he got in touch with Albéniz and persuaded him to sign a contract to receive an annual stipend of $5,000—under then existing conditions a princely sum—on the sole condition that he set to music only librettos written by the banker under the pseudonym “Mountjoy.” The wretched Albéniz was unable to resist the temptations of Mammon although he soon enough revised his opinion and—at first merely in jest—called his agreement “the pact of Faust.”

Now Albéniz was obliged to inter all plans for operas in the Spanish style for which he was specifically adapted (as, for instance, a “Riconete y Cortadillo,” after Cervantes), in order to prostitute his art as the splenetic Englishman’s slave. Coutts had written a trilogy based on the Arthurian cycle and wanted music for it by Albéniz. So the poor Spaniard was forced to torment himself writing in Wagner’s manner and to compose a “Merlin,” though the second score of the trilogy, “Lancelot,” was not completed. “Merlin” (Max Eschig, Paris), is textually as well as musically nothing but an uninspired Wagner imitation; in vain poor Albéniz tried to find a way out of the labyrinth of his leading motives, which he handled “improvisationally.” (!)
It was as though a palm tree had been transplanted to the polar snows.

Quite as tiresome is the text and music of another opera by the prolific Coutts, his “Henry Clifford,” which developed with supposed romanticism and major lack of clarity a subject of the period of the War of the Roses, and for which Albéniz improvised absolutely undramatic music at the piano. It was a theme entirely removed from Albéniz’s sympathies and with which his relations were exclusively financial. Given in Barcelona, May 8, 1895, in Italian, the work achieved a success of esteem and has since been printed (Pujol, now “Union Musical”).

How entirely disoriented, with what an absolute misconception of his own most personal gifts, Albéniz was at that time, may be deduced from the fact that he, the charming improvisor of the pianistic miniature, when he composed “Merlin,” made a special trip to Munich, in order to hear “Die Götterdämmerung,” and upon his return confided to a friend, amid sobs, that he felt he must confess an evil thought he had entertained—he had envied Wagner.

Even worse is what Arbos told me: that Albéniz, against the counsel of his wife, who advised him to break his diabolic pact with the English banker, thought—so blind was he—that his real gift was for serious opera composition, and clung to this fallacy almost to the end of his days. A few months before his death Arbos visited Albéniz, at that time already a sick man, when the latter suddenly underwent a nervous collapse, during which he lamented without ceasing, that he had lavished his whole precious span of life on these barren operas instead of sticking to the field in which he was a master. Too late!

Once only was he successful in inducing his English “patron” to write him a libretto after a Spanish model; this was “Pepita Jimenez,” adapted from Juan Valera’s famous novel, and it is a fact that this work obtained somewhat wider diffusion (first performance, 1896, in the Teatro Liceo, Barcelona; then, 1897, Prague; and 1905, Brussels). Albéniz had a particularly high opinion of the score of “Pepita,” and Turina dates his entrance into genuine mastership from it. Yet neither composer was a man of the stage, and both overlooked what is actually needed for effective dramatic composition. A first essential is a genuinely, striking, theatrically effective book (I might here be permitted to refer to the explanations of principles in my book “The Art of Writing Opera-Librettos”). Valera’s novel does not offer an

action suited to stage needs; for the most part it moves in the field of psychic description. The heroine who supplies the novel with a title, a beautiful, charming young Andalusian widow, manages to fascinate the youthful seminarist, Don Luis. Luis already has taken minor orders and is about to become a full-fledged priest when powerfully overcome by love and jealousy. There develops an arduous, decidedly Spanish, conflict between sacred and profane love, in which—strangely enough, one may say with regard to Spain—profane love is the victor, its victory due to the intervention of Donna Antonia, Pepita’s resolute and well-characterized nurse. The novel appeared in 1874, and in spite of its tremendous popular success, the author was obliged to defend himself against his critics’ accusation that he had allowed his hero, Don Luis, to take the wrong road.

A real dramatist, nevertheless, would have found it possible to extract the kernel of scenic happenings rich in conflict and movement from the shell of an action bare and merely sketched. But to this the worthy Coutts could not rise. His two-act libretto (the second act calling for a change of scene) follows in its essentials the psychic descriptions of the novel, wearies with endless chatter, which poor Albéniz was compelled to set to music without abbreviation, and conduces to an immensity of boredom which is further emphasized by the rhythmic monotony of the music and the colorlessness of the instrumentation. Albéniz, who has not the faintest suspicion of dramatic composition, and who forges straight ahead absolutely without contrasts or strettos, in general, has almost nothing to say, in a musical sense, that his best piano compositions do not adequately reveal. At the same time it is gratifying to note that in this score he has freed himself from the aberrations of a misconceived Wagnerism and found his way back to his homeland. His music impresses most favorably where, detached from the dramatic events, it pours itself out in lyric detail. Of this I submit some examples; in first instance the beginning of Act Two:

Next, the beginning of Pepita’s “Romance”:
And, finally, the enchanting Christmas song for childrens' chorus, with humming accompaniment:

Albeniz also wrote some songs to poems by Coutts, which appeared as "Quatre Mélodies," with English and French text (Rouart, Lerolle et Cie., Paris), and "To Nelly," six songs with English words (Heugel et Cie., Paris). This last group of compositions, dedicated to Gabriel Fauré, and pianistically very interesting, unfortunately does not lie well for the voice, which is handled in purely declamatory style. The same may be said of a song with French text by the Marquis Costa de Beauregard, issued by the same publisher, "Il en est de l'Amour," and dedicated to Mme. Ernest Chausson. Some time before, Albéniz had occasionally written songs, somewhat in Schumann's manner, but they are of no moment in his creative work.

Madame Chausson, the wife of the sensitive composer (b. 1855; d. 1899), a pupil of Massenet and Franck, at the time when Albéniz settled in Paris, was the leading figure in a salon in which the most important representatives of the world of music foregathered. Here Albéniz was received with open arms and entered into intimate relations with Charles Bordes (1863–1909), also a Franck pupil. Bordes had acquired merit, in particular, by his study of Basque music and was active as a composer in that field (Suite Basque, Rapsodie Basque). Later he called upon Albéniz to take a position in the Schola Cantorum which he directed. Albéniz, furthermore, became a friend of Fauré,
Dukas and d'Indy, and this friendship was to be of special importance with regard to his subsequent work. Albéniz, the amiable improvisor, now began to speak contemptuously of his former efforts, which he tried to dismiss with the word *musiquette*, and admired that which was neither adapted to his nature nor could be acquired by him at so late a date—architectonic structure. Thus it was, that as in opera, he was induced to overstep the boundaries of his talent in the symphonic field as well. It was Dukas who aided him with the instrumentation of a “Suite populaire” entitled “Catalonia” (A. Durand et Fils, Paris), a suite of which only one movement was completed. Orchestrally the composition turned out somewhat opaquely, and it was not very strong with regard to actual invention. Most attractive is the second theme which—an exception in the case of Albéniz—has been borrowed from Catalan folk-lore:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Allegretto con spirito} \\
\text{Strings} \\
\text{etc.}
\end{align*}
\]

Quite delightfully original is the humorous conception of having village musicians (“Musiciens ambulants,” p. 38, pocket score) enter, who attempt to play the principal melody with their wind instruments and percussives. Alas, the poor unfortunates, the clarinet is off tune and the bass drum continually comes in a beat too late! Here Albéniz reveals himself as an amiable rascal.

It is a pity that Albéniz in the compositions of his Paris period so seldom gave his own original moods free rein. Instead he grew more and more complicated and generalized, he, whose most captivating qualities had been clarity and transparence. His metamorphosis began with his piano piece “La Vega” (the first number of an uncompleted suite, “The Alhambra,” inspired by verses of the unescapable Coutts, and published by Eschig, Paris), and Mlle. Blanche Selva, as early as March 6, 1905, at its first performance in the Schola Cantorum, found that a polyphony such as:
Isaac Albéniz called for a two-manual piano. Later, in his last piano works ("Navarra," "Azulejos" and "Iberia"), Albéniz went even further.

Among these works the "Azulejos" (the name given the charming Spanish porcelain floor-tiles which Albéniz's music, so to say, is meant to reflect) does not come into consideration because the composition, which Albéniz had left a mere sketch, has been played in a rather over-elaborated version by Enrique Granados. "Navarra" too (Eschig, Paris), which really belongs to the "Iberia" series, remained a fragment, yet only a few measures are missing, and these Déodat de Séverac supplied in a very stylistic manner. "Navarra" is a bravura fantasy on a pretty Jota theme:

\[\text{Allegro non troppo} \]

which, unfortunately, grows all too complicated in development.

The principal work of Albéniz's last creative period, and at the same time his swan song, is the suite of twelve numbers known as "Iberia" (the ancient name of the Pyrenean peninsula), with the sub-title "Douze nouvelles impressions en quatre cahiers," the first book of which appeared in 1906, the year of its first public performance by Mlle. Selva. The individual numbers are entitled as follows: "Évocation," "El Puerto" (The Harbor), "Fête-Dieu à Seville" (Corpus Christi Day in Seville), "Rondeña" (a dance), "Almeria" (the name of a Spanish port town), "Triana" (name of a suburb of Seville), "El Albaicin" (the Gipsy quarter in Seville), "El Polo" (an Andalusian dance), "Lavapies" (a species of lower East Side in Madrid), "Malaga," "Jerez" (the home of sherry), and "Eritaña" (a tavern on the outskirts of Seville). The numbers are unequal in value; among them are some which unquestionably must be numbered among the greatest masterpieces of piano literature, side by side with others which show more industry
and toil than inspiration. Common to them all is a quite exceptional degree of pianistic difficulty, which drove even Albéniz to despair. Collet relates that one day Manuel de Falla and Ricardo Viñes met the Master in the street, in Paris, in a perfectly heartbroken state, and that he confided to them the cause of his sorrow, saying: "Last night I came near burning the manuscripts of 'Iberia,' for I saw that what I had written was unplayable." This undoubtedly was somewhat exaggerated, but "almost unplayable" would probably be the correct shade of expression. Only virtuosos of the very first rank are able to master its horrific difficulties on one of our modern pianos, and even they, here and there, indulge in simplifications. The very first interpreter, Blanche Selva, did so and repeatedly told the Master, "This cannot be played." With sadistic cruelty Albéniz, however, was wont to reply: "You shall play it." With regard to certain difficult crossings of the hands he would add: J'ai écrit cela pour voir tes petites mains blanches bibeloter. (The word bibeloter, derived from the well-known "bibelots," i.e., gimcracks, knicknacks, is untranslatable). Albéniz himself possessed small, fleshy and pliant hands, and used to play his "Iberia" at the piano in a strange way, slowly and with gestures, by means of which he sought to gain fulness of tone. At times, as at the beginning of the "Albaicin," he would scan the music: "Tic et tic—tic et tic et tic et toc—tic et tic, etc."; while in the "Fête-Dieu," after every "rataplan" in the introduction he would withdraw his hands from the keyboard and cross them over his stomach.

That the expressional means of the piano are not adequate for the "Iberia" and that these compositions are in reality orchestral sketches in disguise even Albéniz himself finally realized. In consequence he instrumented the first two movements, the "Évocation" and the "El Puerto," and in this form (so Arbos told me) they were tried out on a single occasion in private by the orchestra of Léon Jehin, in Nice. The instrumentation sounded so badly, however, that Albéniz did not have them played in public, but left the work of reorchestrating them to his friend Arbos.

In the course of years Arbos has instrumentated five movements of the "Iberia"—the "Évocation," "El Puerto," "La Fête-Dieu," "El Albaicin," and "Triana"—in a very sonorous manner and (several printed by Max Eschig) they have been frequently performed in public. To these should be added an instrumentation of "Navarra," completed toward the end of 1926, which was performed in Madrid early in 1927 for the first time. Were it
Isaac Albéniz

possible to secure the permanency of all of Arbos’ instrumentations owing to the pressure of greater diffusion, many of the Albéniz compositions hitherto little played outside of Spain might become very popular.

The “Iberia” is a work which could have been written only by a Spaniard, yet—paradoxical as it sounds—written only outside of Spain. For so long as Albéniz still trod the Iberian soil, so long as he, like the legendary giant Antaeus, drew his strength out of his contact with that ground, he wrote in another style; simple, with folkwise amiability, at times, perhaps, in a manner somewhat banal (to use a term the musical artist affects), but always naturally. In Paris, in a circle of famous and musically cultured colleagues, Albéniz was evidently ashamed of his naturalism. Instead of singing his little song beneath the eternally smiling sun of Spain, freely and happily, with no concern for academic demands, he spun himself into the grey Parisian mists of his studio, working, studying, brooding, discussing, and seeking to win the approbation of that Schola Cantorum into which an Albéniz really did not fit at all because he was far too unacademic and vital. It was thus that the music of his “Iberia” came into being, a music in which his erstwhile out-of-doors inspiration struggles with the effort always to remain “distinguished” and “interesting”; and as a result, though in a purely artistic sense much was won, in a truly musical one much was lost. In one word: “Iberia” is studio music, of a highly subtilized French type.

As such it was quite naturally admired by his Parisian fellow-students. Debussy (whom Albéniz, incidentally, never liked), in the S.I.M. of December 1, 1913, wrote a very laudatory article in which he stressed the “Albaicín” and “Eritaña,” in particular, and said, in general: “Albéniz here has given us his best, and has done so in such exaggerated fashion that he fairly throws his music out of the window.” Herewith Debussy evidently meant to say that Albéniz lacked that sense of economic proportion which the very great masters of music all have possessed. Believing himself the owner of inexhaustible musical treasures, Albéniz treated them like a child which flings gold pieces into the street. Paul Dukas once put the same thought into other words in conversation. He gave Albéniz due credit for being “a poet moved and agitated by nature, an impressionist who writes in established forms which he does not seek to renovate, but in which he pours out his heart, a landscape painter with a rich palette”; but he adds: “Albéniz handles his colors as lavishly as he does
his money. When he finds that five *sous*’ worth of stamps are not quite enough for postage on a letter, he immediately pastes ten *sous*’ worth of stamps on it.” Thus all critics agree that in his “Iberia” Albéniz overdid himself, and that “less would have been more.” This holds good as well for the often excessively long drawing-out of his compositions, more in keeping with the Spanish conception of time than that held by other nations. And in the same way, besides purely pianistic over-elaboration, there is a superfluity of eternally restless harmony and counterpoint, which does not permit of any real enjoyment, although it quite often presents charming subtleties. Most original, perhaps, despite the “Iberia’s” adhesion to folk-music, are his rhythms. And one may, in fact, look upon the work as an idealization of Iberian dance-forms.

Thus the movement, “Évocation”:

![Allegretto espressivo](image)

is a fandanguillo.

The second movement, “El Puerto,” with its piquant motive:

![Allegretto commodo](image)

is related to the *polo*, while the third, “Fête-Dieu à Seville,” takes on the character of a march and, climaxes in a *saeta*:

![Allegretto commodo](image)
The following movement, the “Rondeña,” has for its very title the name of the dance to which it is dedicated (though this number, with its alternating 6/8 and 3/4 times is not so valuable as its predecessors). In the piece entitled “Almería” we recognize the tarantas habitually danced in that city, a word which has nothing in common with the Italian tarantelle, but is derived from Tarantes, the inhabitants of the province of Jaen. The copla of the Jota also puts in an appearance in “Almería”:

In the “Triana” we find the pasodoble, and its Gipsy variants greet our ear. Related to them is the movement following, “El Albaicin,” whose scene of action is also a Gipsy city quarter in Granada. Guitar-figurations and the melodic peculiarities of the cante jondo give this movement its specific character.
Debussy admired this movement in particular, and wrote about it as follows: "Few musical compositions equal in merit this 'Albaicin,' in which one rediscovers the fragrance of the blossom-filled nights of Spain. ... It seems like the tone of a muted guitar which sings its sorrow to the night, sings with sudden awakenings and nervous starts. Without actually repeating folk-themes, it is as if some one had imbibed them, had absorbed them, so that they had passed over into his own music without it being possible to draw the line of demarcation."

The next, less important movement, "El Polo," again bears the name of a dance. In the Madrid movement, "Lavapies," one may quite plainly hear the dance of the chulos, those cavaliers of the suburbs, with their majas, a famous one among them painted by Goya both clothed and in a state of nudity.

The ninth movement, "Malaga," consists of a malagueña:

The piece entitled "Jerez," after the famed wine city, is built up upon the soleares. Especially attractive is its tonality (hypodorian—A minor without the leading-tone),
“Eritaña,” finally, in conformity with its *genius loci*, moves in the rhythm of the *sevillana*:

This composition, too, was particularly admired by Debussy:

“Eritaña” is the joy of dawn, happy to have found a tavern where the wine is fresh. An interruptedly flowing tide of humanity bursts into laughter, laughter scanned by the tinkling of tambourines. Never has music achieved such differentiated, such colorful impressions, and the eyes close as though blinded by these pictures all too vivid in hue.

Albéniz was not to enjoy for any great length of time the creative heights he had attained with “Iberia.” In the spring of 1908 his daughter already found that he had aged noticeably, and, when after various journeys, he returned to Paris in the fall, he himself knew that he was seriously ill. In the spring of 1909, when his condition seemed to have improved, he settled down with his family in Cambo-les-Bains, a small bathing resort in the French department of the Basses-Pyrénées; and there he died no later than May 18, 1909, all too early for his Art, which he might still have enriched with many a distinctive work.

His daughter Laura has movingly told of her father’s passing from earth:

The spring had been damp and chill, and the flowers refused to bloom. My father’s room opened on a terrace filled with woodbine and rose-trees, and every day he asked me would the roses never bloom? Two days before my father’s death the sun shone in fullest radiance, and on the morning of May 18th, as though by magic, we found that all the roses had opened. They were purest pink in color. And that evening my sister and I went out on the terrace and cut all the roses to cover our father with them. . . .

The Master’s body, with a great concourse of mourners, was taken from Cambo to Barcelona, where it rests in the South-West Churchyard. The Requiem by his friend Gabriel Fauré, and the funeral marches of Chopin, Beethoven and Wagner gave him the final escort.
With Albéniz there passed one of the most amiable personalities of modern music. His manner of playing has been compared to that of Franz Liszt, but his kindness and his readiness to help others were still more Lisztian. At the same time he had possessed a fund of high spirits, a modesty and a sincerity which few of his contemporaries could boast. And he, who despite his adventurous youth, through his own industry and talent had reached so noticeably high a rung in music’s ladder of achievement, once carried modesty so far as to say that he believed he had not been born to be a musician: "J’étais né pour être philosophe.
How rarely a human being realizes his own most individual gift!

(Translated by Frederick H. Martens.)