



## Alma Española

Works by Rodrigo, Tárrega, Granados, Lorca, Montsalvatge, Falla and Lara  
Isabel Leonard (voice), Sharon Isbin (guitar)

BRIDGE 9491 66:24 mins

By Christopher Dingle  
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PERFORMANCE: ★★★★★  
RECORDING: ★★★★★



Voice and guitar may be a natural combination for the passions and colours of Spanish song, but rarely have they sounded as vivaciously, seductively idiomatic on disc as in this collection from Isabel Leonard and guitarist Sharon Isbin.

Most of the pieces here are arranged by Isbin, but the word does scant justice to her achievement with Federico García Lorca's *Canciones españolas antiguas*. An accomplished guitarist and pianist in addition to being a poet, García Lorca composed these songs for a touring theatre group. Preferring the oral tradition, García Lorca never committed them to paper. Fortunately, given his murder in 1936, he recorded some of these flamenco songs in 1931. Transcriptions for piano and guitar were published after his death, but Isbin returned to the recordings as the basis for the arrangements heard here. The result is a delight, recovering the spirit of this music as

something living, part of the *cante jondo* tradition. Moreover, from the wry melancholy of 'Romance de Don Boyso', with its twist in the tale, to the exuberant high spirits of 'Sevillanas del siglo XVIII', they are thoroughly entrancing, matching those of García Lorca's friend Manuel de Falla for quality. Isbin's range of colour in the latter's *Siete canciones populares españolas* masterfully matches the twists and turns of Leonard's bewitching voice. With nuanced performances of songs and solo guitar pieces from Montsalvatge, Rodrigo, Granados, Lara and Tárrega woven through the collection, this is an absolute joy.



Spanish revival: Isabel Leonard sings Federico García Lorca's entrancing songs