

# GRAMOPHONE

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## Alma Española

**Falla** Siete Canciones populares españolas (transcr Llobet, rev Pujol/Isbin)  
**Granados** Danzas españolas – No 5, Andaluza **Lara** Granada (arr Isbin) **Lorca**  
Canciones españolas antiguas (arr Isbin) – El café de Chinitas; Las morillas de  
Jaén; Anda, jaleo; Romance de Don Boyso; Zorongo; Nana de Sevilla; La Tarara;  
Los mozos de Monleón; Sevillanas del siglo XVIII **Montsalvatge** Cinco Canciones  
negras (arr Isbin) - Canto negro; Canción de cuna para dormir a un negrito  
**Rodrigo** Aranjuez ma pensée **Tárrega** Capricho árabe  
**Isabel Leonard** sgr **Sharon Isbin** gtr  
BRIDGE 9491 (66 + DDD \* T/t)

By Laurence Vittes  
October 2017

### “Spectacular”

Isabel Leonard and Sharon Isbin illuminate Spanish art songs in orbit around Lorca and Falla by mixing popular favourites and surprising discoveries with two jewelled pieces for solo guitar.

In each of the nine Lorca songs, reflecting the poet/composer's commitment to speaking with the voices and instruments of the people, Leonard and Isbin find and intensify their individual message. At the end of 'Los mozos de Monleón', a six-minute narrative with spoken voice and recitative about a dead bullfighter and his widowed mother, the silence in the final bar is thunderous. Leonard and Isbin swing with infectious enthusiasm into the concluding 'Sevillanas del siglo XVIII'. The Falla is equally fine if less theatrical in its impact.

Among the showpieces, their performance of Rodrigo's *Aranjuez, ma pensée*, set to the poem Victoria Kahmi wrote in 1988 while listening to the slow movement of her husband's *Concierto de Aranjuez*, is a study in exquisite beauty masking controlled emotion, each arc of Leonard's phrasing telling a story of its own, Isbin's guitar delivering spectacular rhapsodic riffs among the strums. The solo tracks are an audiophile's dream. In the opening of Tárrega's *Capricho árabe* Isbin imbues

each tone with its own special beauty without restricting flow, creating a resonance that hangs in the air like aural perfume.

Recorded at the American Academy of Arts and Letters in New York, the close-up sound is suffused with the intensity of the playing. Allan Kozinn's booklet notes tell the absorbing story of how the recording came about and what you are listening to.

