

# MARC-ANDRÉ HAMELIN

Pianist

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**SFGate.com**

## CD Review

Joshua Kosman

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## ALBÉNIZ

Isaac Albéniz's "Iberia" is one of the great works of musical pictorialism, an extended series of 12 musical evocations of the Spanish composer's homeland done in virtuoso style. And as this compulsively listenable new CD demonstrates, Marc-André Hamelin -- the restlessly adventurous pianist who will return to Herbst Theatre on Friday night to perform the entire set under the aegis of San Francisco Performances -- is just the musician to illuminate the work's diverse strands. On the one hand, there are the beautiful, endlessly varied reminiscences of Spanish musical tradition, including a multiplicity of dance forms, song types and instrumental mimicry, and Hamelin captures these with a loving touch. But at the same time, "Iberia" is a fiercely demanding showpiece, especially in the later books, and Hamelin has the virtuoso technique to render even the most difficult passages cleanly and with unfussy precision. Taken together, the result is a superb performance that brings out all the music's verve and brilliance while still getting at the emotional resonance within.

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