

STEINWAY CLASSICS

CHOPIN

Late Masterpieces

Scherzo No. 4 | Three Mazurkas, Op. 56

Polonaise-fantaisie | Berceuse

Barcarolle | Sonata No. 3

Sandro RUSSO, *piano*



STEINWAY & SONS

Sandro Russo's playing has often been referred to as a throwback to the grand tradition of elegant pianism and beautiful sound. Composer Lowell Liebermann wrote of him, "Sandro Russo is a musician's musician and a pianist's pianist. There is no technical challenge too great for him, but it is his musicianship that ultimately makes the greatest impression. His interpretations reveal a unique and profound artist at work."

Born in San Giovanni Gemini, Italy, Mr. Russo displayed exceptional musical talent from an early age. He later entered the V. Bellini Conservatory, from where he graduated summa cum laude. He also earned the Pianoforte Performing Diploma from the Royal College of Music in London with honors. Soon after Mr. Russo moved to the United States in 2000, he won the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra Concerto Competition, and has ever since performed in such prestigious concert halls as the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, Weill and Zankel halls at Carnegie Hall, Kilbourn Hall (Eastman Theatre), Salle Cortot in Paris, Teatro Politeama in Palermo, the Konzerthaus Berlin and Stoller Hall in Manchester (UK).

His recitals include performances for The Rachmaninoff Society, the Dame Myra Hess series in Chicago, the American Liszt Society, the Houston International Piano Festival, the Husum Festival of Piano Rarities in Germany, the Chetham's International Piano Festival in Manchester (UK) and the Fernando Laires series at the Eastman Theatre. Mr. Russo has appeared as a soloist with the Slovak Philharmonic in Bratislava, the Jacksonville Symphony in Florida and the Brussels Chamber Orchestra, among others.

Mr. Russo's performances have aired on all the major radio stations in the US and abroad. His previous recordings include *Scarlatti Recreated — Transcriptions* and *Hommages and Russian Gems — Piano Rarities*. The more recently released Steinway & Sons albums, *Rachmaninov — Solo Piano Works* and *Images et Mirages: Hommage à Debussy*, were both chosen "Disc of the Month" by Italy's *The Classic Voice* magazine and the latter was also featured in Gramophone's "Sounds of America."

Sandro Russo is a Steinway Artist.



Delving into the world of Chopin during his later years, *Chopin — Late Masterpieces* features some of his undisputed treasures from that period. While it's sorrowful to think in terms of "late style" in the case of a composer who left us when only in his 30s, Chopin's final years were quite productive despite his worsening health. His late works indeed represented groundbreaking, innovative piano compositions and proved to be beacons onto future generations of composers, including Debussy, Ravel and Scriabin, among others.

Already based in Paris for more than a decade (following the failed Polish uprising), by the 1840s Chopin was at the apogee of his fame and occupied a prominent position in Parisian high society. Yet,

he poured into his last compositions much of his hidden pain, lingering toward introspection and nostalgic moods, whereas joyful moments assume more feverishly exulting tones. Liszt even wrote that Chopin's late art served to give voice to his own sense of tragedy.

A turning point in Chopin's late style undoubtedly arose from studying Cherubini's *Treatise on Counterpoint & Fugue* (1841), as well as from his ever-deep relationship with Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*; the latter guided him throughout his life. Interestingly, Chopin's newly acquired counterpoint mastery wasn't channeled into new (polyphonic) forms, but rather into genres he previously treated in a somewhat "homophonic" manner — scherzos, mazurkas, polonaises, etc.

New contrapuntal twists and inner voices now permeated even simple phrases, as in the middle section of the fourth *Scherzo* and in the bel canto melodies of the *Berceuse* and the *Barcarolle*.

The harmonic sophistication and dramatic arch of the latter were unprecedented; Ravel, who wrote extensively about it, referred to its magical ending as a “mysterious apotheosis.”

The three *Mazurkas* perfectly embody Ashton Jonson’s words that “in Chopin’s hands, the Mazurka ceased to be an actual dance tune, and became a tone poem, a mirror of moods, an epitome of human emotions...” Both these *Mazurkas* and the *Polonaise-fantaisie* are very intimate reflections on Chopin’s native Poland, from where he lived his whole adulthood away. The more visionary, “fantasy” element attached to this polonaise is reflected in both its elegiac themes and improvisatory character.

The third *Sonata* preserves a four-movement structure similar to his two earlier ones. The *B-minor Sonata*, however, is written on a larger scale — especially the 1st and 3rd movements — where the extended thematic material contributes to greater development. While Chopin was generally more prolific in terms of shorter works, his achievement here clearly demonstrates his ability to cohesively weave a broad range of emotions into a larger work.

— Sandro Russo

CHOPIN

Late Masterpieces

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at Patrych Sound Studio, New York City.

Producer/Engineer Joseph Patrych

Mixing and Mastering: Joseph Patrych

Piano Technician: Kenneth Farnum, Jr.

Piano: Steinway Model D # 147 (Hamburg)

Microphones: Sennheiser MHK20 (2 mics) Mic preamp - A/D: Weiss ADC2

Monitors: B and W 801 Matrix

Executive Producers: Eric Feidner, Jon Feidner

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Photo of Sandro Russo: Jiyang Chen

STEINWAY CLASSICS

FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN

Late Masterpieces

Sandro Russo, *piano*

- 1 Scherzo No. 4 in E major, Op. 54 10:55
THREE MAZURKAS, Op. 56
- 2 No. 1 in B major 4:36
- 3 No. 2 In C major 1:39
- 4 No. 3 in C minor 6:19
- 5 Polonaise-fantaisie in A flat major, Op. 61 13:31
- 6 Berceuse in D flat major, Op. 57 4:22
- 7 Barcarolle in F sharp major, Op. 60 8:35
SONATA NO. 3 IN B MINOR, Op. 58
- 8 I. Allegro maestoso 9:34
- 9 II. Scherzo: Molto vivace 2:42
- 10 III. Largo 9:24
- 11 IV. Finale: Presto non tanto 5:38

Playing Time: 77:19



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