



# SANDRO RUSSO



"...ONE OF THE MOST TALENTED  
YOUNG PIANISTS I HAVE  
HEARD..."

STEPHEN HOUGH

## Acclaimed for his profound sense of poetry

Sandro Russo has been in great demand as a soloist in many venues around the world. He unanimously receives accolades for his sparkling virtuosity, and his playing has often been referred to as a throwback to the grand tradition of elegant pianism and beautiful sound.

Born in San Giovanni Gemini – Sicily, Mr. Russo displayed exceptional musical talent from an early age. In 1995, he graduated summa cum laude from the V. Bellini Conservatory, and earned the Pianoforte Performing Diploma 'with honors' from the Royal College of Music in London. While still a student, he won top prize awards in numerous national and international competitions, including Senigallia, and the Ibla Grand Prize.

Soon after Mr. Russo came to the United States in 2000, he won the

Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra Concerto Competition, and performed Liszt's A major Concerto with Maestro David Gilbert. Early in 2002, Mr. Russo gave an acclaimed Chopin recital at the prestigious Politeama Theatre in Palermo, Italy, and later appeared at the Nuove Carriere Music Festival.

Highlights of past seasons include solo recitals for The Rachmaninoff Society in London, Memphis, and New York, the "Homage to Cziffra" Festival in NYC, and he has also performed at the Salle Cortot in Paris and the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam. More recently Mr. Russo has been heard in concert at Carnegie Hall, in the Moiseiwitsch Recital Series at the Music Festival of the Hamptons, and the Yamaha Piano Salon, in a recital presented by the American Liszt Society – New York Chapter.

Mr. Russo has performed as a soloist with the Slovak Philharmonic in Bratislava, The Jacksonville Symphony in Florida, the Brussels Chamber Orchestra at the opening gala of The Music Festival of the Hamptons (2008), and in July 2008 he had a triumphant return to his homeland of Sicily, giving three outdoor performances of the Rachmaninoff 3rd Piano Concerto on a tour with the Orchestra Sinfonica Siciliana.

In the coming season Mr. Russo will appear in recital at "Concerts Grand" in San Francisco, the "Dame Myra Hess Memorial Concerts" in Chicago, the Chetham's International Festival in Manchester, U.K, and in June 2009 he will be a featured soloist with the New York Asian Symphony Orchestra for their Japan tour.

<http://www.sandrorussopianist.com>

# Recording on the Liszt Piano...

---

When I first heard from the general manager of the Bechstein Piano Centre in NYC about the historical 1862 Bechstein Piano (# 576) – formerly owned and played by Liszt – having just arrived at the showroom for its FIRST-EVER U.S. TOUR, I was overwhelmed with excitement and great expectations. As we were in the middle of finalizing the last details for my recital at the salon – to be performed on a magnificent brand-new Bechstein concert grand piano, the general manager and I thought that it would be marvelous to arrange a “Liszt Tribute Performance” as a salute to Liszt’s glorious original instrument, and to Liszt himself.

Although I only performed my ‘encore’ selection on the Bechstein “Liszt Piano,” I instantly felt drawn to another world of sound and beauty while playing his gorgeous 3rd Consolation in D-flat. I also felt a profoundly stirring connection with the essential being and very soul of Liszt as I performed his work, touching the actual keys and pedals of the instrument Liszt had once played. The audience shared what I was feeling and experiencing during the performance, and was totally thrilled to witness such a piece of history come to life!

When I received the official invitation from the Bechstein Piano Centre in Manhattan to record a DVD on the vintage 1862 Bechstein “Liszt Piano,” I felt once again very excited at the marvelous opportunity to immortalize such a historical event for this piano, and most of all, to come into closer contact with my most beloved master’s sound world. While it is very fascinating reading the many appreciatory letters of Franz Liszt to Carl Bechstein, there are no other documents of this piano having ever been recorded, or used for any public recitals after the composer’s death.

The project of the DVD recording both arose, and of necessity, had to be realized within, a highly abbreviated time frame. In fact, the Liszt piano had already been scheduled to be packed up and shipped back to the Bechstein headquarters in Germany (where it permanently resides) within two weeks.

Thus, I had to immediately select an appropriate repertoire to showcase the instrument’s most distinctive voice. My only regret, however, was that I could not include some of Liszt’s consummately pyrotechnical works from my repertoire. This was due to the original, unaltered condition of the piano. As such, I was told to approach the piano as a real ‘museum piece’, and was therefore limited to playing only the gentler, more caressing pieces. Thank goodness Liszt’s colossal output of piano works can indeed satisfy all needs and demands!

The fact that this DVD features the more lyrical and profound side of Liszt’s compositional world (including two works by different composers, the arrangement closely resembling Liszt’s own pianistic style), provided a rich opportunity to my ever deepening, perpetual search for the soul of his art, during my journey with this illustrious instrument.

I truly felt as though the master’s spirit still dwelled somewhere inside those strings and soundboard, inextricably linked to the muse that glowed out of the instrument’s signature sound. However, my recording session on this most unique instrument was not free of dealing with certain mechanical glitches due to the inexorable process of aging. The burden of 147 years of existence does take its toll – particularly noticeable as a squeaky noise from the damper pedal motion. Still, I was mesmerized by the rich palette of tones and timbres that could be drawn out of that aged action.

I’m extremely grateful to this experience of performing and recording on the Bechstein Liszt Piano, which allowed me to exceptionally and intimately connect with one of history’s greatest musicians, and an individual whom I most revere, both on an artistic and personal level. It is my hope that the effects of such a rare musical communion will reach out and inspire the listener through this short compilation of piano miniatures.