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Jun12



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## Album at a Glance



**Record Label – Musical Concepts:** Since 2006, Musical Concepts has brought the best in classical music, on its budget Alto label as well as more specialized recordings under the Musical Concepts imprint.

**Release Date: 2014-03-18**

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# Russian Gems: Piano Rarities – Sandro Russo, piano

Posted by [Paul Ballyk](#) on Jun 12, 2014 in [Romantic](#) | [1 comment](#)

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**Recommendation**

The sparkling opening bars of "Russian Gems" define the program of this Musical Concepts CD, one that is superbly performed by Sicilian pianist Sandro Russo. The concept behind this project is to "showcase the Romantic tradition in Russian music" (Russo), and features works by some composers I have not heard of before as well as some rarities by Rachmaninov and Medtner.

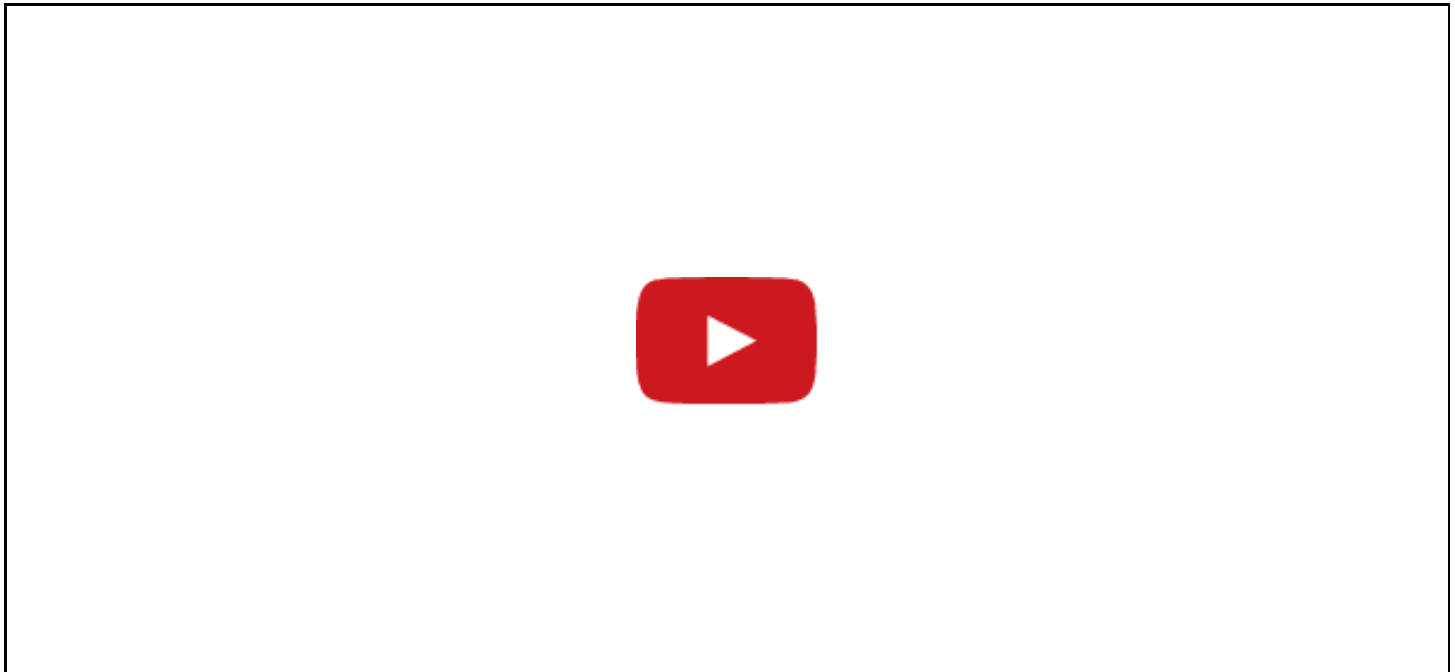
Space does not allow for even a cursory overview of the lives of each of these composers. Collectively, the span of their productive lives runs from the late Romantic period with Sergei Taneyev (1856-1915)

and Mily Balakirev (1837-1910) well into the 20th century with the music of Julius Isserlis (1888-1968) and Nikolai Rakov (1908-1990). To my ear, the largest unifying aspect of the music here is that each of these composers was a virtuosic pianist, a facet of their talents you can hear in the music. Some of these pieces, such as the opening *Fairy Tale, Op. 6* by Julius Isserlis (1888-1968) are soft, charming miniatures, redolent of French Impressionism while others, the sweeping *Sonata No. 1, Op. 5* by Nikolai Medtner for example, are full of Romantic passion and 'on the edge' pianism.

The sample in the sidebar for you to hear is a transcription by Grigory Ginzburg of a Waltz from the opera *Casanova* by Ludomir Różycki. You can also listen to *Islamey* by Mili Balakirev in the video below.

Sandro Russo handles it all without a blink. As far as I recall, I have not come across his name prior to encountering this CD, but I assure you, he is a pianist of extraordinary technical and artistic abilities. Captured in splendid sound on recordings dating from 2012 and 2013, this sixty-eight minute program will appeal to just about any music lover. If you enjoy the music of the composers you know here - Rachmaninov and perhaps Balakirev and Medtner - you will enjoy the entire program.

Pianist Sandro Russo performs *Islamey* by Mili Balakirev.



## 1 Comment

-  1. Jun19  
Gil Fields

Bravo!!!!!!!!!! Superb performance. I love Russian Romantic composition of known composers and unknown composers bring a much welcomed surprise.

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