

A painting of a woman in a yellow and blue dress standing on a balcony overlooking a city. The woman is in profile, looking down thoughtfully with her hand to her chin. She wears a yellow long-sleeved blouse and a long, patterned skirt with a blue sash. In the background, a city with colorful buildings and a large tower is visible under a blue sky. To the right, there is a building with ornate architectural details and a mural. The overall style is that of a 19th-century painting.

NAPOLI

ANTONIO POMPA-BALDI, PIANO

IMPROVISATIONS ON NEAPOLITAN

SONGS BY ROBERTO PIANA



STEINWAY & SONS

This group of **IMPROVISATIONS ON NEAPOLITAN SONGS** follows a similar commission from a few years ago of Edith Piaf songs, also released on Steinway & Sons and also featuring Antonio Pompa-Baldi.

For these “creative arrangements” it was hard to choose which songs from so many popular melodies and chamber arias. It was inevitable to leave out some favorites. And so we have masterpieces such as *Torna a Surriento*, *Cannetella*, *Funiculí Funiculá*, and *Marechiaré*; But (I hope) the absence of the famous ‘*O sole mio*, *Malafemmena*, or *Fenesta vascia* is compensated by featuring some absolute gems that remain unjustly hidden, such as *Serenata Medioevale*, *T’aggio ditto*, *M’allicordo* and *Lo ninno mio* (the last three woven into the piece titled “*Napoli*”).

As I began work, I appreciated in every song an immense potential and evocative power that I could use in many different combinations; Intense melodies, rich harmonies, on which I could improvise producing ever different results, ever changing outlooks.

From a compositional standpoint, these Improvisations can be classified into various categories. Some maintain the style of the *Salon Romance*: *Te voglio bene assaje*, *Raziella*, *Il segreto*, *Serenata Medioevale*, *Cannetella*, ‘*A vucchella*, in which I mainly enriched and varied the harmonic language. In others, the elaboration has been more incisive and transformative, creating a new outlook in timbre and colors (*Pastorella*), or in harmonic aspect (*Marechiaré*, *Era de maggio*). There are also some with more pronounced virtuosic traits, imbued with a strong exuberance (*Serenatella*, *Funiculí Funiculá*, *La fiera de Mast’Andrea*). Lastly, some represent a conceptually different approach, quite unique and distinguished within this cycle: *Lo Marenaro* becomes a *Passacaglia*; *Napoli* is actually a fantasy on five different Neapolitan melodies; in *Torna a Surriento*, I created a funny and somewhat irreverent contrapuntal game combining this famous song by Ernesto de Curtis with the very well-known Sonata K27/L449 of Domenico Scarlatti. Hence, the title *Improvvisazione Scarlatta*, a reference to the baroque Master and also a play on the words Scarlatti and the color scarlet, which in my mind colors this music. Two Neapolitans from distant epochs meet here, in this musical *divertissement*.



ANTONIO POMPA-BALDI is an Italian pianist. He won the Cleveland International Piano Competition in 1999, and embarked on a career that continues to extend across five continents. A top prize winner at the 1998 Marguerite Long Competition in Paris, France, he also won a silver medal at the 2001 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition.

Mr. Pompa-Baldi appears regularly at the world's major concert venues including New York's Carnegie Hall, Paris' Salle Pleyel, Milan's Sala Verdi, Shanghai's Grand Theatre, and Boston's

Symphony Hall. He has performed in London, Tokyo, Seoul, Beijing, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Kiev, Auckland, and Hong Kong, to name a few. Recent live performances include the 5 Beethoven Piano Concertos, as well as the complete Rachmaninoff Piano Concertos and Rhapsody on a theme of Paganini. His extensive recording catalogue features 30 CDs and is constantly growing.

His albums include the complete music for solo piano and chamber music of Edward Grieg, and discs dedicated to Schumann, Rachmaninoff, Liszt, and Brahms, among many others. He is the founder and artistic director of Todi International Music Masters, an Italian pedagogical summer camp featuring concerts and masterclasses for talented young musicians.

A Steinway artist, Mr. Pompa-Baldi is on the piano faculty of the Cleveland Institute of Music, and serves regularly on the juries of major piano competitions such as Cleveland, Grieg (Bergen), Minneapolis (E-Competition), Hilton Head, San Jose, Lang Lang (Shenzhen), and BNDES Rio de Janeiro. He is an honorary guest professor at many institutions including the China National Conservatory in Beijing.



Pianist and composer **ROBERTO PIANA** was born in Sassari, on the Italian island of Sardinia, in 1971. He perfected his studies with numerous famous pianists, but owes his training to Isabella Lo Porto, with whom he graduated in piano studies with top marks, at the Music Conservatory of Sassari.

As a pianist, he has performed with great success in numerous theatres such as Rond Point on the Champs-Élysées in Paris, Teatro Regio in Turin, Teatro alla Scala in Milan, University of Stuttgart,

Germany, and Saint Petersburg, Russia, as well as in cities such as Barcelona, Zurich, Liège, Brussels, Charleroi, Mons, Lausanne, and Düsseldorf.

While maintaining a busy performance schedule, Roberto is also committed to the study of lesser known composers such as Anserme, Gutmann, Ornstein, Rebello, Ricordi, Tellefsen, Wolff, and others. Since 1994, he has authored essays, books, and CDs (Stradivarius, Da Vinci Classics, Amadeus, Tactus, Documenta Edizioni, Suonare News).

As a composer, Roberto Piana is the author of various works for piano, voice, symphonic and chamber music, published by Bèrben, and Editoriale Documenta. Many of his compositions can be heard on CDs released by labels such as Steinway & Sons, Centaur Records, Music & Arts, and TwoPianists.

He is a piano professor at the Sassari Conservatory of Music. He holds piano master classes in Italy and Russia (St. Petersburg).

NAPOLI

Recorded October 10, 2016 and February 23, 2017
at Steinway Hall, New York City.

Producer: Jon Feidner

Engineer: Lauren Sturm | Editing: Kazumi Umeda

Assistant Engineer: Melody Nieun Hwang

Production Assistant: Renée Oakford

Mixing and Mastering: Daniel Shores

Equipment: Pyramix using Merging Technologies Horus Converters;
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Microphones: DPA 4006A, Schoeps MC6/MK2

Executive Producers: Eric Feidner, Jon Feidner

Art Direction: Jackie Fugere

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Piano Technician: Lauren Sturm

Pianos: Steinway Model D # 597590 (New York),
Steinway Model D # 519960 (Hamburg)

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IMPROVISATIONS ON NEAPOLITAN SONGS BY ROBERTO PIANA

1. Funiculì funiculà 1:57 | 2. Serenatella (Little Serenade) 3:24
3. Il Cardillo (The Linnet) 3:45 | 4. Marechiare 3:26
5. Serenata Medioevale (Medieval Serenade) 4:37 | 6. La Rosa (The Rose) 2:19
7. Era de maggio (It was May) 5:12 | 8. Il segreto (The Secret) 3:51
9. Pastorella (Little Shepherdess) 2:12
10. La fiera de Mast'Andrea (The Fair of Mast'Andrea) 1:45
11. Lo Marenaro (The Sailor) 5:10 | 12. 'A Vucchella (A Sweet Mouth) 2:39
13. Cannetella 2:58 | 14. Te voglio bene assaje (I Love You So Much) 3:00
15. Scarlattian Improvisation on Torna a Surriento (Back to Sorrento) 4:09
16. I'te vurria vasà (I Long to Kiss You) 4:47 | 17. Raziella 3:23
18. Maria, Mari 4:15 | 19. La stella dell'Arenella (The Star of Arenella) 2:39 | 20. Napoli 6:45

Playing time: 72:13



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