



CHARLES  
SZCZEPANEK

FLIRTING WITH THE DRAGON

SONNETS AND SERPENTS

CHARLES SZCZEPANEK, Pianist  
**FLIRTING WITH THE DRAGON**  
Sonnets and Serpents

FRANZ LISZT

1. Sonetto 47 del Petrarca
2. Sonetto 104 del Petrarca
3. Sonetto 123 del Petrarca
4. Isolde's Liebestod | Wagner, trans. Liszt
5. Funeral Music to Mosonyi's Death

PAUL AURANDT

6. Andante in C Minor, At a solemn walking pace  
World Premiere Recording\*
7. Andante in C Major, At a walking pace with anticipation  
World Premiere Recording\*
- 8-10. Sonata in B-Flat Minor<sup>+</sup>
  - I Allegro
  - II Adagio
  - III Allegro assai

TOTAL TIME | 74:19

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CREDITS

Producer | Charles Szczepanek

Recording, Editing, Mixing, & Mastering Engineer |

Charles Szczepanek, Winding Road Studios, [www.wrdstudios.com](http://www.wrdstudios.com)

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Piano | New York Steinway D Piano Technician | John Gottschalk

Design, Layout, Typography | Christina Dietrich

Photos of Charles Szczepanek | Your Personal Photographer, LLC



## Charles Szczepanek

"My hand was operated on once and it left me with a second lifeline. And it took. What I mean to say is: I know something about second lives, which may be one reason I relate so well to the performer who has given us this collection of recorded music.

Charles Szczepanek has been playing the piano since he was three and surprisingly soon thereafter was winning every piano competition he entered. But the Chicago, Illinois native originally did not even consider a career as a concert pianist. A math whiz, he fell in love with engineering and was already deeply into it by the age of twelve. But at fourteen he heard Russian Vladimir Feltsman play the Third Piano Concerto of Rachmaninoff in Wheaton College's huge Edmund Chapel, and Charles walked out unable to stop smiling. That was the epiphany which has shone its light over the years subsequent, and which illumines the recording you are about to hear.

It has been my pleasure to become personally acquainted with Mr. Charles Szczepanek in recent years. He's an intriguing fellow who can generate the impression of irresistible force without saying much. I've never known anyone quite like him. And in addition to his obvious and various talents in general, I have it on the best authority that the composer listed second in his collection is uniquely impressed by Szczepanek's grasp of his formidable material. It stands to reason; Charles Szczepanek is himself a wonderful composer."

—Paul Harvey Jr.

**CAN YOU HEAR THEM?** Can you hear the church bells chiming through the hills of Italy as the sun rises? Or can you hear the funeral bells tolling through the streets of Eastern Europe as dusk settles? This is a journey through love and death, through brooding horror, and through the reawakening of The Dragon in all its glorious smoke, flame, and brutality as it eagerly waits to devour your soul. Can you hear?

A glint of hope rises in the distance, but such hope is fleeting. This is a journey through life, a life full of joy and sorrow, peace and war, destruction and rebirth. Let the music of Liszt pull you from the depths of misery to the heavens of ecstasy and beyond as he recounts three love sonnets of Petrarch, the dramatic death of Tristan's lover, Isolde, in a beautiful transcription of Wagner's genius, and finally the accompanying funeral music to end the journey of life as we know it. But wait...

The soul's life after death is only beginning as the Andante in C Minor of Paul Aurandt murmurs in the shadows. Like an entrapped prisoner, the Andante schemes and plans its break. After a brief moment of panic and turmoil, the soul is freed. He stands on the steps of the prison, overlooking the new world which is his to conquer. Thus begins the glory and parade of the Andante in C Major, but no joy lasts forever. Upon leaving the refuge of his prison cell, the soul can feel a strange heat at his back, searing and humid like the breath of the devil. Coming about, he spies the gruesome dragon, seemingly waiting for this very moment. Smoke blinds all vision, and with a trembling roar the dragon commences battle as Aurandt's Sonata in B-Flat Minor begins. Drawing his sword and leaping to and fro it is a miracle the soul still lives. This Sonata, The Dragon, is the tale of the final battle against the last temptation.

Pianist Charles Szczepanek is your guide through earthly life and beyond. Who will be the victor? Listen closely, and Charles will tell you...



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