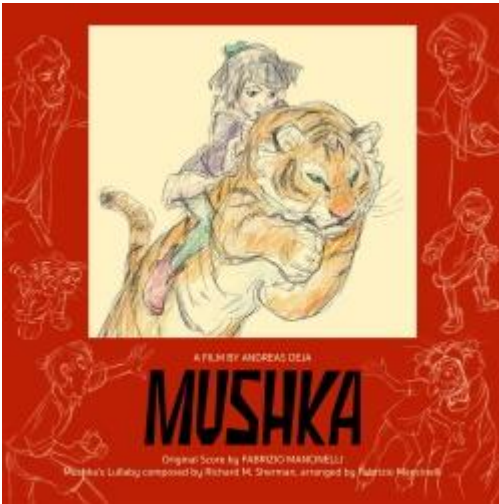


MUSHKA – Fabrizio Mancinelli and Richard M. Sherman



Mushka is a delightful Disney animated short film, and is the directorial debut of Polish animator Andreas Deja, who previously worked on *Enchanted* and *The Princess and the Frog*, among others. The film is set in Russia and follows a young girl named Sarah who raises an orphaned Siberian tiger cub she finds in the woods; the title, *Mushka*, comes from a Russian term of endearment similar to 'sweetheart'. The film is a gorgeous hand-drawn animation in the classic Disney style, and the music is in the classic Disney style too, bringing together one of the best young talents to emerge in film music over the last couple of years, alongside one of the greatest there has ever been.

The score is by Italian composer-conductor Fabrizio Mancinelli, who has written music for projects such as *The Land of Dreams* and *Il Viaggio Leggendaro* over the last couple of years, as well as numerous short films going all the way back to 2007, but who is probably best known as being the conductor for Kris Bowers on acclaimed works such as *Green*

Book, *The United States vs Billie Holiday*, and *King Richard*, as well as *Haunted Mansion* and *The Color Purple* this year.

What makes *Mushka* special is that it also contains brand new music by the legendary Richard M. Sherman, the composer/lyricist of classic Disney projects like *Mary Poppins*, *The Jungle Book*, *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, *Bedknobs and Broomsticks*, and many more. Sherman is 95 years old now, and for him to be contributing music to brand new projects at his age – and for it still to be this good – is extraordinary. Sherman's main contribution to the score is the theme heard in "Mushka's Lullaby," which is performed in two versions: a straight instrumental, and then as a song with gorgeous cut-glass vocals by Holly Sedillos. It's a classic, timeless theme which reminds me a little of "Hushabye Mountain" from the *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* score, crossed with Russian classical/folk music, and it is sure to melt the hardest of hearts.

Sherman's lullaby theme features in a couple of the other cues in the rest of the score, notably "I'll Call Him Mushka/Growing Together," "Instinct Awakes/Sarah's Nightmare/The Card Game," and the conclusive "Grandma Needs Me/Big Cat Rescue Team," and whenever it appears it elevates everything, but Mancinelli's original compositions should not be overlooked either. His music is every bit as rich and grand, tender, and emotional as Sherman's, and it also has that classic Disney sweep running through every gesture.

There's some beautifully bittersweet melancholy in the cello textures of "A New Home," vivacious prancing strings and charming whimsy in "Out There in the Forest," and a couple of unexpectedly intense action sequences in "Chasing the Tiger," "Instinct Awakes," "Sarah's Nightmare," and all throughout "They Want Mushka/Chase in the Forest" which have a more prominent brass part and more energetic rhythms. I haven't really heard Mancinelli write music this boldly before, and it brings out a whole new side of his musical personality that I really like.

I should also mention "I'll Call Him Mushka/Growing Together," which sees Sedillos's beautiful wordless vocals enlivening the orchestra – she comes across as one part Julie Andrews, one part Paige O'Hara from *Beauty and the Beast*, all gorgeous. I also like how Mancinelli subtly references the old folk song 'Korobeiniki' in "The Card Game," drawing parallels between it and *Tetris*.

The two pieces at the end the album, "Fantasia from *Mushka* for Flute and Piano" and "Mushka's Lullaby for Flute and Piano," are two classical concert arrangements of the score's main themes, featuring flute performances by Sara Andon and piano performances by Simone Pedroni. They are both superb – lyrical, expressive, and with a virtuosic sweep to them that is wonderfully appealing. The whole thing is a delight, and fans of classic Disney music should be especially pleased with the results. It is available to stream and download from all the usual outlets via Lakeshore Records.

Track Listing: 1. *Happy New Year* (1:22), 2. *I'll Be Alright* (0:52), 3. *Arrival at the Station* (0:57), 4. *The Miners/A New Home* (1:36). 5. *Out There in the Forest* (2:28), 6. *Chasing The Tiger* (1:42), 7. *I'll Call Him Mushka/Growing Together* (2:25), 8. *Instinct Awakes/Sarah's Nightmare/The Card Game* (2:50), 9. *They Want Mushka/Chase in the Forest and Farewell* (4:57), 10. *Grandma Needs Me/Big Cat Rescue Team* (3:11), 11. *Mushka's Lullaby* (2:54), 12. *Mushka's Lullaby (Instrumental)* (2:49), 13. *Fantasia from Mushka for Flute and Piano* (4:50), 14. *Mushka's Lullaby for Flute and Piano* (2:39). Lakeshore Records LKS36496, 35 minutes 32 seconds.