

Ian Maksin

## The Alchemist



There has never been a better time to take a journey back into arcane history. Some known and some not so known. Composer and cellist **Ian Maksin** will be our guide for this thrilling adventure into the unknown. It was a time when science and religion were deadly enemies, but magic was what they feared the most. This is the story of **The Alchemist**. Told in twelve olde world tales, it is created through the magic of music. “Maksin the Magnificent” uses cello, strings, and other instrumentation employing world, contemporary, and ethic genres to bring the journey to life. The incredible challenge of this hero is that he must scour the globe in search of the answers to his enigma. The prize is something greater than gold. Based on the novel by *Paulo Coelho*, it adds a new dimension to the well-known storyline.

It all began in Egypt. **The Great Sphinx** produces the first enigma. The tune is jaunty, almost exhilarating as his travels begin with a question from within. Why do I exist? Why do I breathe? What is my purpose? Maksin’s composition sets the mood with bright cello work and the lead character searches for direction. With a single drawn out note the song **Soul of the World** begins. It has this bleak and sometimes gypsy feel, like deep sorrow has taken over the spirit. The song becomes a bit dirge-like and that is to be expected as there is darkness in many souls.

Gifted with **The Two Stones**, the character continues looking for answers. Traveling across the vast desert he and his party come to **The Oasis**. It is represented by this wonderful, dreamy waltz. This dance is for two where a love blooms where nothing else can. The music is gushing with olde world charm. What if the prize isn’t something you can hold in your hand? Maksin’s tune **The Great Treasure** has a meandering theme like camels trudging on the Silk Road. With nothing but sky and sand, where does one look? Light percussion combines with the cello that wavers in the heat in this Middle Eastern caravan refrain. The music suggests that if you don’t surrender, the prize will be yours. In **Broken Wings** everyone thinks the journey is at end. Maksin uses strong pizzicato and sorrowful strokes to convey the sadness and loss of our hero.

Finally, the hero meets **The Alchemist**. The protagonist knows the future and tries to pass on his knowledge. Maksin uses bold, echoing cello to represent the central figure. There is something earthy, daring, and powerful to this theme. The tune is electrifying. The hero wanders the desert under the **White Sun**. The medium tempo ballad has a complex story. Where you are is not where you are supposed to be. The cello wails in this desert song to push you into changing your direction north. This was my favorite on the album for its changeability and strong melody.

The last track, **Becoming the Wind** is the final reward. You have searched for the treasure and you find it in your own land. Ian’s tune recounts the entire journey, the tribulations, the gains and losses, all of it in this one throbbing, intense anthem.

Although Ian Maksin does not cover every chapter from the book, the overall Middle Eastern tone and mysterious sensibilities of this cohesive, eclectic recording is enough to make it the

perfect companion for not just reading *The Alchemist*, but for any thought provoking journey of discovery. Highly listenable. - R J Lannan, Artisan Music Reviews