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Top Picks: ESPN's World Cup app, Hiromi's new album 'Alive,' and more

National Geographic's docudrama 'Miracle Landing on the Hudson' chronicles the achievements of Capt. Chesley 'Sully' Sullenberger, The Secret Mountain releases a new children's book titled 'Simply Fantastic,' and more top picks.

By Staff | JUNE 13, 2014

Protest and soccer in Egypt

Egypt not only quavers with political protests, it also pulses with a passion for soccer. Politics and sport come together in a one-hour PBS documentary, **American Pharaoh**, which follows the efforts of the Egyptian national soccer team, led by American coach Bob Bradley, to qualify for the 2014 World Cup – a formidable challenge. Soccer games are rife with political rivalry and machinations. Egypt hadn't qualified for the World Cup since 1990, and the Arab Spring was erupting in the streets. The 2012 Port Said stadium riot left more than 70 soccer fans dead. The documentary debuts June 16.



Hiromi (Muga Miyahara/CONCORD MUSIC GROUP)

World Cup in tweets

With the World Cup kicking off June 12, soccer fans can stay on top of each match with **ESPN FC Soccer & World Cup**. The free app for Apple and Android devices posts game schedules, team rankings, and video highlights. In addition to news and analysis, ESPN pulls in a Twitter feed of worldwide fan reactions. Plus, its notification service lets you create customized alerts for when a game starts, a team scores, or halftime wraps up.

Fairy imaginative

Simply Fantastic is the latest in a series of children's books with an accompanying music CD from The Secret Mountain. Beautifully illustrated, this entire series is a wonderful way to introduce young listeners to the world of classical music. "Simply Fantastic" explores the gnomes, fairies, and other magical creatures that have inspired three centuries of renowned composers to create such works as "The Fairy-Queen" (Purcell), "A Midsummer Night's Dream" (Mendelssohn), and "In the Hall of the Mountain King" (Grieg).

A month for opera lovers

The Metropolitan Opera and Fathom Events will once again present **The Met: Live in HD** in a series of encore performances in more than 400 US cinemas. This summer's series includes Verdi's **Rigoletto** (June 18), Puccini's **La Rondine** (June 25), Verdi's **Otello** (July 9), and the Baroque pastiche **The Enchanted Island** (July 16).

Spontaneous spunk

Mentored by Ahmad Jamal and inspired by Frank Zappa, composer and pianist Hiromi has a musical influence that stretches across the charts. **Alive**, her latest album, begins with a rumbling, then roaring piano. Simon Phillips's percussion punctuates her exuberance, while Anthony Jackson's bass lines provide a gentle undercurrent. "Seeker" is a playful jazz pop tune while "Player" emphasizes a bold, rhythmic swagger and "Firefly" settles into a soft lullaby. Hiromi continues to shine as a bright star in the constellation of jazz innovators.

Heroic pilot

National Geographic's docudrama **Miracle Landing on the Hudson** chronicles Capt. Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger's 2009 heroic landing of US Airways Flight 1549 on the Hudson River in New York without a single casualty. The uncertainty of the outcome is retold through testimonials from passengers as well as actors who re-create the event. The discrepancies between the passengers' stories emphasize the shock factor of the traumatic event, but all agree that getting off that flight alive was a true miracle. It airs June 22 at 9 p.m.

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