

AN AMERICAN AFFAIR



THE UPPER VALLEY DUO

Tim Schwarz, violin ♦ Dan Weiser, piano

Produced by Red Leaf Productions
Recorded at Cedar House Sound and Mastering

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Artistic Director: Lia Rothstein
Graphics: Lufkin Graphic Designs

Special Thanks to Cheryl Hanna, Greg Lipscomb, Opera North,
and all of our supporters in the Upper Valley and elsewhere who
helped make this recording possible.

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violin piano

MARQUIS
CLASSICS

AARON COPLAND (1900-1990), while raised in Brooklyn, portrayed a decidedly different America in his music, based on the popular tunes and great expanse of the West. Copland's early music is abstract and progressive, filled with the spirit of novelty and modernity that characterized the 1920s. Yet, the next decade brought depression, social change, and a new mass medium — radio. Copland, like artists Grant Wood and Thomas Hart Benton, moved away from his atonal experimentation in order to attract a wider audience. His new simplified style promoted greater accessibility while also capturing the sense of space, energy, and spirit of the American heartland. Wide intervals and jagged diatonic themes evoke the broad plains and rugged mountains. Traditional American folk songs and dances become the building blocks of his compositions. *Rodeo*, set on a ranch, is the story of a tomboyish cowgirl who gets her man only after donning a dress for the Saturday night dance. The "Hoe-Down," which Copland transcribed for violin and piano, constitutes the final dance sequence of the ballet. It is based on the square-dance tune, "Bonyparte," with additional material from the Celtic "McLeod's Reel."

CHARLES IVES (1874-1954) grew up in Danbury, Connecticut, the son of an amateur bandmaster. After attending Yale University, Ives became an actuary in the Mutual Life Insurance Company in New York, a job he held throughout his adult life, using nights and weekends to do his innovative composing. Ives' fresh approach to composition is clearly revealed in the Second Violin Sonata, a Cubist-like collage derived from the pastoral, yet vibrant, vision of his youth in New England, filled with Saturday night barn dances, Sunday morning hymns, marching band concerts, and patriotic festivals. The first movement, *Autumn*, refers to a hymn tune with that title, not the season. *In the Barn* quotes numerous tunes, including "Turkey in the Straw," "Battle Cry of Freedom," and the "Sailor's Hornpipe" (more familiar as "Popeye the Sailor Man's" theme). This raucous movement also includes ragtime and a drunken fiddle sound, achieved with slightly off-pitch tones. At the end of the movement, Ives wrote that an "extra pianist could be used as a drum corps" to bang the bass and obtain a final chaotic drive. *The Revival* is a magical, evanescent fantasy on an old Appalachian folk tune, "Nettleton," that Ives had heard at a gospel camp meeting.

CAMARGO MOZART GUARNIERI (1907-1993), one of Brazil's most important contemporary composers, traveled throughout his country to discover the various folk songs and traditions of the native peoples, especially Afro-Brazilians and Amerindians. As a founding member of the Brazilian Academy of Music and conductor of the Sao Paulo Orchestra, Guarnieri had a significant impact on the direction of Brazilian classical music this century. The *Cantiga de Ninar*, or "cradle song," is a magically haunting tune that hovers over a hypnotic and polytonal harmonic base.

DEEP RIVER is part of the great African-American spiritual tradition that has had a tremendous influence on a wide range of twentieth century music. The words of the song are: "Deep river, my home is over Jordan, Deep river, Lord, I want to cross over into campground. Oh don't you want to go to that gospel feast, That promised land where all is peace? Oh deep river, Lord, I want to cross over into campground." The lush arrangement is by violinist Mischa Elman, with additions by the Upper Valley Duo.

JOHN CORIGLIANO (b. 1938) is currently one of America's most talented and versatile composers. His spectacular

opera, *The Ghosts of Versailles*, holds a place in the Metropolitan Opera repertory; his score for the film, *Altered States*, received an Academy Award nomination; and he even experimented with an electric rock opera called *Naked Carmen* in 1970. The Violin Sonata is one of the great American masterpieces of this genre. Written for his father, the long-time concertmaster of the New York Philharmonic, the Sonata portrays the urban experience in America, particularly the fast-paced New York life where Corigliano was raised. Jazz syncopations in the first and fourth movements echo the big city energy while emphasis on clusters and seconds reveal the city's congestion and alienation. The second movement is a sensuous and lyrical conversation between the instruments. Motives are freely traded and the lilting theme eventually builds to a passionate and virile climax before fading away to a final caressing kiss at the end. The remarkable violin cadenza in the third movement acts as a primal, anguished scream, akin to Munch's famous image, which saps the remainder of the movement of all emotion. The entire work is a majestic and virtuosic *tour de force* that deserves to be played and heard more often.

The **UPPER VALLEY DUO**, formed in September of 1994, is dedicated to the performance of great American music. They seek to uncover and revitalize American chamber music, exploring its tremendous variety, energy, virtuosity, and craftsmanship. *An American Affair*, their debut recording, seeks to showcase the diversity of twentieth century American music and the critical influence of traditional indigenous folk music. Works from South America and the African-American spiritual tradition are here combined with more classically derived compositions that still maintain a very close rapport with the popular spirit. From Copland's use of traditional square dances to Ives' quotations of familiar hymns and tunes to Corigliano's syncopated, jazzy urban drive, the influence of the songs and soul of the people is always evident. The **Upper Valley Duo** aims to restore this American music to its rightful place in the standard concert repertoire. This is music that bristles with unbridled energy and soothes with poignant tenderness, music that constantly echoes the diverse American experience, music that is an integral part of our American soul and spirit.

TIM SCHWARZ, *violin*, made his debut with the Philadelphia Orchestra at the age of nine. He has maintained an active solo career in the United States and abroad, including several radio and television appearances. Mr. Schwarz's prizes include the 1994 Maryland Council of the Arts Classical Music Competition, the WGUC Classical Radio Competition, and the Starling International Scholarship Competition. In 1992, the Peabody Conservatory of Music awarded Mr. Schwarz the Rose and Lou Becker Prize for excellence in violin performance. Mr. Schwarz is represented by Marilyn Gilbert Artists Management.

DAN WEISER, *piano*, has served on the faculty of the Musicorda Summer Festival and as Music Director for Opera North and Opera New England. A *phi beta kappa* graduate of Columbia University, Mr. Weiser spent a year at Harvard Law School before leaping into the world of music. Mr. Weiser is a candidate for a Doctorate in Piano from the Peabody Conservatory, where he has studied with noted collaborators Samuel Sanders and Robert MacDonald. At Peabody, Mr. Weiser taught a course on the interrelationships between music and painting and received the Richard Franko Goldman Prize for outstanding contribution to the school's educational life.

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AARON COPLAND

[1] "Hoe-Down" from *Rodeo* (1942) 2:52

CHARLES IVES

Second Sonata for Violin and Piano (1907-1909)

[2] Autumn 5:42

[3] In the Barn 4:23

[4] The Revival 4:11

CAMARGO MOZART GUARNIERI

[5] Cantiga de Ninar 2:33

DEEP RIVER — Spiritual

[6] Arr. by Mischa Elman 3:52

JOHN CORIGLIANO

Sonata for Violin and Piano (1963)

[7] Allegro 2:35

[8] Andantino 6:19

[9] Lento 5:15

[10] Allegro 7:35

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Printed in Canada

ERAD 179