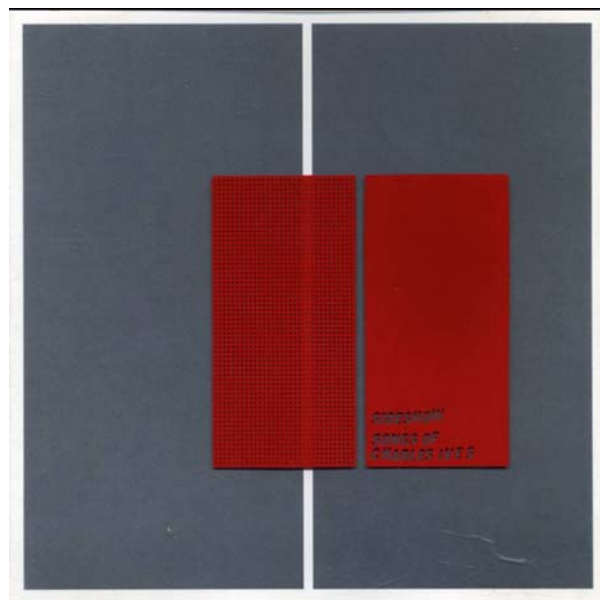


# NWCR2000

## Sideshow: Songs of Charles Ives



1. The Housatonic at Stockbridge ..... (8:29)
  2. The Cage ..... (3:46)
  3. Like a Sick Eagle ..... (7:25)
  4. Slugging a Vampire ..... (3:07)
  5. Memories ..... (3:01)
  6. Thoreau ..... (6:35)
  7. The See'r ..... (3:25)
  8. The Circus Band ..... (6:05)
  9. Serenity ..... (7:32)
  10. At the River ..... (1:54)
- Matt Moran, vibraphone; Adam Good, guitar, E-bow;  
John Hollenbeck, drums, percussion, bells, melodica;  
Oscar Noriega, alto saxophone, bass clarinet

Total playing time: 51:25

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## Notes

It's somehow fitting that the first release in CRI's new jazz series should be dedicated to the music of maverick American composer Charles Ives. As the label is opening up its definition of what constitutes a serious American composer to include jazz, so, too, was Ives open to the sounds and styles of vernacular music, including the popular song, brass band music, and ragtime that served as the precursors to jazz. Such borrowings lent his music a raucous vitality that was his alone.

The shimmering timbre of Matt Moran's vibraphone lends itself well to Ives's more impressionistic textures. Saxophonist Oscar Noriega's light, clean playing delivers the charming melodies in a straightforward manner, while occasionally flying off the beaten path with gleeful abandon. Guitarist Adam Good deftly handles Ives's unorthodox chord voicings, while drummer John Hollenbeck supports aptly and unobtrusively, creating parts for percussion where none previously existed and sometimes weaving his melodica into the harmonic tapestry. Together the four, who hail from a burgeoning and diverse scene of young improvisers based in Brooklyn, create an elegant ensemble voice well-suited to the breadth of Ives's style.

In selecting the songs they chose to perform, the members of Sideshow paid close attention to the lyrics and the images they evoke. According to Moran, the classic CRI recordings of Helen Boatwright and John Kirkpatrick were especially

influential for inspiring the moods of the interpretations. Only once are the lyrics literally performed, as the group delivers the first part of "Memories" in a joyously ragged ensemble style of which Ives would most certainly have approved. This must certainly reflect Moran's stated admiration for the recordings of the composer "singing and playing his own music with an amazing mixture of abandon, verve and discipline."

Elsewhere, it is left to the instrumentalists to convey the sensations and sentiments of the verse that Ives chose to set. Clearly they revelled in the possibilities that the music provided. Even without words, Sideshow brilliantly evokes the "dreamy realm" and "restive ripple" of the titular river in "The Housatonic at Stockbridge," the restless stalking of the leopard in "The Cage," the eerie, deliberate contemplation of "Thoreau" (during which Moran recites not the lyrics of the song, but a passage from Walden that Ives pencilled into the score as a sort of hidden recitative).

Ives's career had essentially ended prior to the advent of jazz. It's impossible to guess how he might have responded to Sideshow's sensitive and thoughtful reworkings of his songs or its improvised embellishments. But somehow it's hard to imagine that he would have objected to interpretations so respectful and innovative.

—Steve Smith

### **The Housatonic at Stockbridge**

Contented river! In thy dreamy realm  
The cloudy willow and the plummy elm:  
Thou beautiful! From ev'ry dreamy hill  
What eye but wanders with thee at thy will,  
Contented river! And yet overshy  
To mask thy beauty from the eager eye;  
Hast thou a thought to hide from field and town?  
In some deep current of the sunlit brown,  
Ah! There's a restive ripple, and the swift  
Red leaves September's firstlings faster drift;  
Wouldst thou away, dear stream? Come, whisper near!  
I also of much resting have a fear:  
Let me tomorrow thy companion be,  
By fall and shallow to the adventurous sea!

—Robert Underwood Johnson

### **The Cage**

A leopard went round his cage from one side to the  
other side; he stopped only when the keeper  
came around with meat; a boy who had been there  
three hours began to wonder, "Is life anything like that?"

—Charles Edward Ives

### **Like a Sick Eagle**

The spirit is too weak; mortality weighs  
Heavily on me like unwilling sleep,  
And each imagined pinnacle and steep  
Of God-like hardship tells me I must die,  
Like a sick eagle looking towards the sky.

—John Keats  
(from *Seeing the Elgin Marbles*)

### **Slugging a Vampire**

I closed and drew,  
but not a gun,  
The refuge of the weak,  
I swung on the left and I swung on the right then I landed on his  
beak;  
He started to pull the same old stuff  
But I closed in hard and called his bluff  
Yet his face is still astickin' on the yellow sheet  
And on the billboard adown the street.

—Charles Edward Ives

### **Memories**

A-Very Pleasant  
We're sitting in the opera house,  
The opera house, the opera house;  
We're waiting for the curtain to arise  
With wonders for our eyes;  
We're feeling pretty gay,  
And well we may,  
"O, Jimmy, look!" I say,  
"The band is tuning up and soon will start to play."  
We whistle and we hum,  
Beat time with the drum,  
We're sitting in the opera house,  
Awaiting for the curtain to rise  
With wonders for our eyes,  
A feeling of expectancy,  
A certain kind of ecstasy,  
Expectancy and ecstasy,  
Sh's's's's.  
-Curtain!

### **B-Rather Sad**

From the street a strain on my ear doth fall,  
A tune as threadbare as that "old red shawl,"  
It is tattered, it is torn,  
It shows signs of being worn,  
It's the tune my Uncle hummed from early morn,

'Twas a common little thing and kind 'a sweet,  
But 'twas sad and seemed to slow up both his feet;  
I can see him shuffling down  
To the barn or to the town,  
A-humming.

—Charles Edward Ives

### **Thoreau**

He grew in those seasons  
Like corn in the night,  
Rapt in reverie,  
On the Walden shore,  
Amidst the sumach,  
Pines and hickories,  
In undisturbed solitude.

—Henry Thoreau  
(adapted from *Walden*)

### **The See'r**

An old man with a straw in his mouth  
sat all day long before  
the village grocery store;  
he liked to watch the funny things  
a-going by.

—Charles Edward Ives

### **The Circus Band**

All summer long, we boys  
Dreamed 'bout big circus joys!  
Down Main Street, comes the band,  
Oh! "Ain't it a grand  
And glorious noise!"  
Horses are prancing,  
Knights advancing;  
Helmets gleaming,  
Pennants streaming.  
Cleopatra's on her throne!  
That golden hair is all her own.  
Where is the lady all in pink?  
Last year she waved to me I think,  
Can she have died? Can! that! rot!  
She is passing but she sees me not.  
(Hear the trombones!)

—Charles Edward Ives

### **Serenity**

O, Sabbath rest of Galilee!  
O, calm of hills above,  
Where Jesus knelt to share with Thee,  
The silence of eternity  
Interpreted by love.  
Drop Thy still dews of quietness,  
Till all our strivings cease;  
Take from our souls the strain and stress,  
And let our ordered lives confess,  
The beauty of Thy peace.

—John Greenleaf Whittier  
(from *The Brewing of Soma*)

### **At the River**

Shall we gather at the river,  
Where bright angel feet have trod,  
With its crystal tide for ever  
Flowing by the throne of God?  
Gather at the river!  
Yes, we'll gather at the river,  
The beautiful, the beautiful river,  
Yes, we'll gather at the river,  
That flows by the throne of God.  
Shall we gather? Shall we gather at the river?

—Robert Lowry

Vibraphonist and composer **Matt Moran** has performed and recorded with artists as diverse as Gunther Schuller, Lionel Hampton, Paul Bley, Combustible Edison, Ellery Eskelin, and Merita Halili. His distinctive sound is found in many Downtown ensembles in New York City, particularly among a rising group of young musicians who explore the boundaries of composition in jazz, and of improvisation in composed music. Matt received a Master of Music degree in jazz composition from New England Conservatory in Boston, where he studied with the visionary multi-instrumentalist and composer Joseph Maneri. Since moving to New York in 1995 he has performed both as leader and sideman for the Knitting Factory's What Is Jazz? Festival and Texaco New York Jazz Festival, the Panasonic Village Jazz Festival, Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors, and the Vision Festival, as well as leading tours in the U.S. and Europe. Matt currently leads the groups Sideshow (songs of Charles Ives), Slavic Soul Party!, and the Matt Moran Trio. He can also be heard with John Hollenbeck's Claudia Quintet, the Mat Maneri Quintet, Theo Bleckmann's quartet and Ellery Eskelin—four ensembles releasing debut recordings in 2001.

A graduate of the Berklee College of Music in Boston, multi-instrumentalist **Adam Good** has lived in New York City since 1996. With a foundation in jazz guitar, Adam has lent an inventive sound to the Downtown projects of John Hollenbeck, Andrew D'Angelo and Kung Fu Grip and has performed at venues such as the Knitting Factory, Tonic, alt.coffee, and CBGB's Gallery. His talent on the *tambura* (a small lute-like instrument with origins in the East) and *oud* playing Macedonian and Bulgarian folk and other Balkan music has made Adam a fixture of New York's Balkan music

scene. As the bass player for Harmonia, a Cleveland-based ensemble interpreting the music from areas between the Carpathian Mountains and the Danube, he has performed at the Philadelphia Folk Festival, the National Folk Festival in Michigan, Severance Hall in Cleveland and the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C.

Crisscrossing the world in pursuit of new musical languages, percussionist **John Hollenbeck** has created a body of work that ignores boundaries. From recent collaborations with Meredith Monk to appearances with the worlds' finest jazz ensembles and solo performances in Brazil, Hollenbeck's versatility as performer and composer is unparalleled. His many ensemble credits include Bob Brookmeyer's New Art Orchestra, the Village Vanguard Orchestra, and Maria Schneider's Jazz Orchestra. Among those he has performed or toured with are Mark Dresser, David Liebman, klezmer artist David Krakauer and the former Astor Piazzolla pianist Pablo Ziegler. Hollenbeck's first recording as a leader will be issued on BlueShift in the coming year. At the present he leads two ensembles, The Claudia Quintet and Quartet Lucy.

An Arizona native of Mexican origin, **Oscar Noriega** began as a saxophonist with a ranchera group, Hermanos Jovel. His movement into jazz started with the Duke Ellington Repertory Orchestra, conducted by Gunther Schuller. He now plays regularly in a wide range of contexts, at such clubs as the Knitting Factory, Tonic, Birdland, and Visiones. Groups that Oscar leads include Play Party, featuring Cuong Vu, Brad Shepik, Tom Rainey, and the Oscar Noriega Quartet.

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## Production Notes

Produced by Matt Moran and Adam Good.

Recorded at Tedesco Studios, New Jersey in November, 1988.

Engineered and mixed by Jon Rosenberg.

Mastered by Michael McDonald at AlgoRhythms.

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Sideshow thanks CRI, especially John Schultz, for bringing new and improvised music to your ears. Thanks also to Steve Smith for his enthusiasm and attentiveness, and to Douglas Wolk for giving Voice to our cause.

BlueShift was created to explore new developments in the ongoing relationship between original composition and improvisation at the leading edge of modern American jazz. BlueShift is a unit of Composers Recordings, Inc./CRI, America's premier new music label. CRI was founded in 1954 and dedicated to the discovery, distribution, and preservation of the finest in contemporary music representing the diverse inspirations of American culture.

Executive Director: John G. Schultz

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