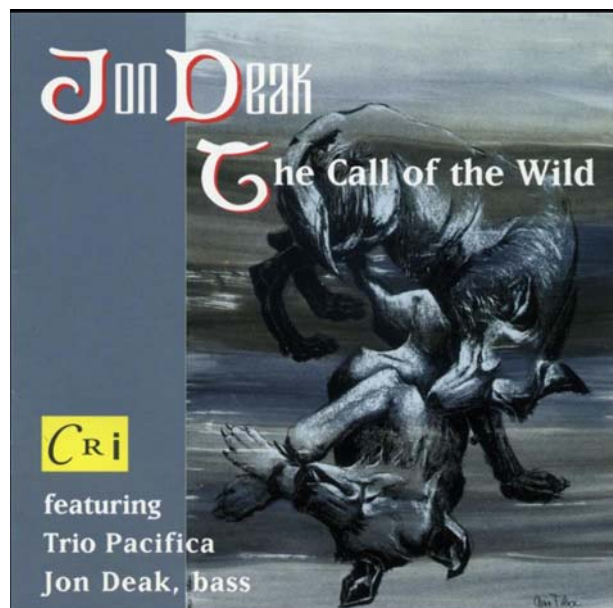


NWCR861

Jon Deak

The Call of the Wild



1. *The Wager at the Eldorado Saloon* (1993) (12:00)
(From Jack London's *The Call of the Wild*)
Kathryn Lucktenberg, violin; Steven Pologe, cello;
Victor Steinhardt, piano
2. *Readings from Steppenwolf* (1975–82) (11:14)
Jon Deak, double bass
3. *Metaphor* (1980) (9:59)
Steven Pologe, cello
- Greetings from 1984* (1984) (17:01)
4. I. The Antique Shop (9:38)
5. II. The Two Minutes Hate (5:15)
6. III. The Encounter (2:08)
Kathryn Lucktenberg, violin; Victor Steinhardt,
piano; Trio Pacifica: Kathryn Lucktenberg, violin;
Steven Pologe, cello; Victor Steinhardt, piano

Total playing time: 50:14

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Notes

Composer Jon Deak, cellist Steven Pologe, and violinist Kathryn Lucktenberg have shared some extraordinary experiences—musical and otherwise. They are long-time chamber music partners and have a common and intense love for the outdoors.

Deak and Pologe first met in the mid-70s at the Aspen Music Festival, and since 1980 the three have performed together regularly at the Grand Teton Music Festival. They have also climbed a number of the high peaks in the Tetons, sharing a variety of inspiring and sometimes harrowing experiences. On one occasion, they were denied access to the summit of Mt. Moran because of constant electrical storms. Huddled down together in the middle of a field, they survived as lightning bolts burst all around them. Such intimate familiarity can only enhance the process of musical collaboration, especially when the music is as dramatic and unusual as Deak's.

The Wager at the Eldorado Saloon is a vignette from Jack London's classic novel *The Call of the Wild*. The book tells the story of Buck, a dog stolen from his comfortable life in California to be a sled dog in the gold rush days of the Yukon. *The Wager* opens with eerie wolf howls in the cello and violin and icy commentary on the piano. After a melodramatic buildup the listener is brought out of the cold and into an 1890's saloon, complete with honky-tonk music. The prospectors are back from the mines and are boasting of their dogs' great strength at the sled. Buck's owner, Thornton, is taking bets as to how much weight his dog can pull. The betting gets more lively and the music more frenzied as the stakes get higher. Finally, the bet of a thousand dollars is set if Buck can break a sled, carrying the impossible load of a thousand pounds, out of the ice and pull it for a hundred yards. The saloon empties its occupants out onto the main street of Dawson. A suspenseful hush grows over the crowd as Thornton kneels down by his beloved dog. After a moment

he steps back and gives the command, "Gee!" "Haw!" (pull right, pull left). Amidst crunching and straining, the sled inches its way forward. One can hear the scrabbling of Buck's feet on the hard ice, the creaking and groaning of the overburdened sled. As Buck nears the finish line a triumphant march breaks out.

—Kathryn Lucktenberg

Readings from Steppenwolf

Well, as you'll hear on the recording, it all began one rainy night when I pulled a favorite Hermann Hesse novel, *Steppenwolf*, from the bookshelf, quite without forethought and plopped it on the music stand. I began to improvise on my bass, so that I could read the text (with my midwestern twang and all) and play the music and other effects at the same time. I also felt impelled to add such things as chattering teeth, twelve-tone music, a creepy melodioca, a champagne cork, thought balloons and—for the sickening finale—a pair of soaking wet Kleenexes landing...Splash!...on the floor, perfectly illustrating the sound of... well, you'll know it when you hear it.

—Jon Deak

Metaphor was inspired by the novel *My Antonia*, written by Willa Cather in 1918. Deak's work opens with the sounds of a typical day on the Nebraska prairie: wind, birds singing, the idle whistling of a young boy, and the creaking of an old wagon. All sounds are produced either vocally or with the cello and bow. Passages from the novel have been put into verse, which the cellist recites as he or she plays, sometimes transferring the words of the text directly to the cello.

In the novel, there is a brief scene where a young boy, as told in the first person, goes out on the prairie. He lies flat on the ground with his arms outstretched, crumbling the warm earth between his fingers. Willa Cather beautifully describes, through the boy's eyes and mind, the wonderment he feels as

he experiences this connection with the earth. This passage captures the essence of Jon Deak's *Metaphor*. Jon himself describes it well: "the 'metaphor' comes from the fact that as the boy is becoming part of the earth, his breathing mixing with the wind, and his whistling with that of the birds, so his speech, and perhaps even he himself become...the cello." Following are the final words of the text which become gradually inaudible under the sound of the cello: "Perhaps we feel like that when we die...and our bodies become a part of something entire...and are dissolved...into something...complete and great."

—Steven Pologe

Greetings from 1984, for violin and piano, recreates musically George Orwell's nightmarish vision of a totalitarian society. Deak chose three main segments from the book and wove them together into a continuous fifteen-minute composition. The date in the work's title has special meaning for Deak as he wrote this work in 1984 and felt that, because Orwell spoke to us from 1948, that it was only appropriate to look back and "greet" Orwell in return.

Of the four works on this disk, *Greetings from 1984* requires the performers to play the greatest number of instruments, including glockenspiel, door chimes, fire bells, bird and duck calls, a lamb cry, and a host of others—all to be played while the pianist and violinist are also playing their virtuoso instrumental parts and delivering the text vocally. The three episodes presented from the book are: (1) "The Antique Shop," in which Winston, a disillusioned worker wanders the fascist wasteland of future London and finds himself in a musty old antique shop; (2) "The Two Minutes Hate," a propaganda lecture delivered by Big Brother; and (3) "The Encounter," in which Winston meets the dark-haired girl from the anti-sex league.

The work opens with an eerie tone row played by the violin alone. This is picked up by the piano, not so much in echo as in stealthy pursuit. A feeling of paranoia fills the atmosphere. On his way to a political meeting, Winston wanders through dark alleyways, finding himself on the doorstep of an antique shop. As he enters, the store's dusty merchandise seems to come alive, ticking and chiming furiously. A grandiose piano cadenza leaves no doubt that the proprietor is a literary man—perhaps even a musician! Amidst the trinkets and rubbish, Winston is drawn to a smooth, sensuous glass object whose shape is reflected in the music's rounded phrases and glissandi. Suddenly we are jolted out of the almost hypnotic reverie by the screech of a police whistle announcing the mandatory "Two Minutes Hate." Big Brother's tirade is graphically painted using Deak's signature compositional technique found in all the works on this disk that he calls "Sprechspiel," or "Speakplaying." The violent ponticello scratchings and glissandi in the violin capture the vocal inflections and murderous intent of Big Brother's speech. Winston's compulsion to mimic his comrades is conveyed through imitative snippets of music and text tossed back and forth between violin and piano. Later, as Winston leaves his work cubicle to go to the cafeteria, he encounters the dark-haired girl. His diaphragm constricts! Just as she nears him, she suddenly falls down. As Winston nervously helps her to her feet, she whispers something unexpected in his ear.

—Kathryn Lucktenberg
and Mary Lou Humphrey

Jon Deak's compositions have been heard worldwide at venues ranging from mountaintops and concert halls to city streets and kindergartens. His orchestral works have been performed by such institutions as the New York Philharmonic, the Chicago, National, Minnesota, Cincinnati, Atlanta, and

Colorado Symphonies, and many of the world's leading chamber ensembles. He is one of the few composers who holds a major symphonic position: he is the associate principal bassist of the New York Philharmonic, and is also that orchestra's creative education associate.

Recently Deak completed an acclaimed three-year appointment as composer-in-residence with the Colorado Symphony under the Meet The Composer residency program, including affiliation with the Colorado Children's Chorale and the Denver Public Schools. While in Colorado, he reorganized the "pre-concert event" concept and founded a contemporary music series which brought together Colorado composers of jazz, symphonic, blues, country, indigenous, and electronic music. Perhaps his most intensive work in Colorado besides his composing was—and is—his involvement with public school children. It was his dream to enable grade school kids to write music for the symphony orchestra just as naturally as they would paint, draw, or write words. This concept has borne unquestionable fruit and has attracted wide attention. Through a grant from ASCAP, he is spreading the idea to other composers and schools.

Jon Deak was educated at Oberlin College, the Juilliard School, the University of Illinois, and, as a Fulbright scholar, at the Conservatorio di Musica Santa Cecilia in Rome. His mentors and inspirations range from John Cage and Pierre Boulez to Leonard Bernstein, rap, and Walt Disney. His training also includes work in the visual and theatrical arts, and he was active in the performance art movement in New York's SoHo. He now teaches a composing class in the New York City public schools that his own children attend. His love of nature often takes him into the wilderness, where he has led and co-led climbing expeditions into the Canadian Rockies, Alaska, and the Himalayas, and he performs benefit concerts to aid environmental and arts groups.

Trio Pacifica was formed in the fall of 1993 with its first performance at the University of Oregon School of Music. Kathryn Lucktenberg, violin; Steven Pologe, cello; and Victor Steinhardt, piano, bring together extensive musical experiences. Lucktenberg and Pologe have performed together as concertmaster and principal cellist of the Honolulu Symphony, members of the Honolulu Symphony String Quartet, and co-founders and directors of the chamber music series Academy Camerata in Honolulu.

In 1993 they joined the artist/faculty at the University of Oregon and have maintained busy concert schedules with Trio Pacifica and the Oregon String Quartet, both in residence at the University of Oregon. They have performed frequently as featured artists at the Oregon Bach Festival and the Grand Teton Music Festival. Recent engagements have included performances throughout Oregon, Washington, California, Mississippi, Wyoming, Idaho, Hawaii, and Taiwan. In addition to the works on this CD they have performed most of Jon Deak's chamber works, including *Lucy and the Count*, *Hyde and Jekyll*, and *Quilting Frolic*.

Victor Steinhardt, professor of music at the University of Oregon, performs as a soloist and chamber musician throughout the United States. He has appeared with the Oregon Mozart Players, Oregon Bach Festival, Sun Valley Music Festival, Chamber Music Northwest, and Bargemusic chamber series in New York City. He also performs frequently as a duo with his brother, violinist Arnold Steinhardt, with whom he has released a CD of music for violin and piano by Robert Fuchs. Steinhardt recently released a CD of his own compositions, *Sonata Boogie*, available from Town Hall Records.

Production Notes

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Metaphor, *Greetings from 1984*, and *The Wager at the Eldorado Saloon* recorded September 10–12, 1996 in Beall Concert Hall at the University of Oregon in Eugene.

Readings from Steppenwolf recorded March 1, 1997 at the Purchase College Conservatory of Music Recital Hall, SUNY, Purchase, New York.