

the

novacane quartet

presents

The Best of All Possible Worlds Edward Hopper and America

Edward Hopper (1882-1967) was an American painter of the Realist movement, known for his calculated, economic renderings of everyday scenes of American life. *Sun on Prospect Street* (1934) is a definitive work of the artist's *oeuvre*; it depicts a beautiful, lonely street scene in American Suburbia. The light-saturated façades of the homes and polished, parked cars represent the heart of American values at the time; yet, there is something strange about the street. There is an underlying sense of isolation apparent in the painting. Perhaps Mr. Hopper, in his beautiful depiction of "normal" American life, has also touched on a timeless existential issue that will outlast even his own painting.

In this program, we will explore music relating to the search for "the best of all possible worlds"—each character represented in the music easily could be an inhabitant of the vivid, lonely houses on Prospect street, searching for his or her own slice of sublime life. Surely, though, this cannot be the only message to be drawn from such a picturesque scene. Americans have indeed thrived, making the most of "the land of opportunity". The program will capture the light-hearted spirit of America and its diverse background.

Brainwashed by his mentor, **Candide** believes he lives in "the best of all possible worlds". In this world, everything happens for a reason, and all events, whether good or bad, occur for the sake of the *greater good*. When Candide begins to travel the world, he witnesses absurd and unfortunate events, putting his unflinching optimism to the test. Candide must reconcile the reality he experiences with his own unrealistic philosophy.

Charles Ives is hailed as the first great composer of American art music. While warm and beautiful, the songs seem to have a shade of regret, lamenting the loss of happier, simpler times. Ives had an incomparable ability to write music that expressed the American sentiment, and his music still conjures nostalgia in the minds of listeners.

María is an innocent young girl from rural Argentina, whose dream to move to Buenos Aires drives her to run away from home and explore what the big city has to offer. Once there, however, she experiences the darker side of urban life. Entranced by the seductive tango dance, María is lured into a life of crime that leads to her death.

Championed as the brilliant successor to the inimitable Beethoven, the music of **Johannes Brahms** experienced enormous success. During his life, though, Brahms frequently wrote about his unsuccessful affairs with companionship. His music inspires listeners to recall their greatest loves and most cherished, tender moments, though Brahms himself felt lonely for much of his life.

George Gershwin is an icon of American popular music. His songs have remained famous to this day, heard on Broadway, in jazz clubs, in the concert hall, and in American homes. *Summertime* is a staple from his famous work, *Porgy and Bess*.

JunYi Chow represents a different era of America. Born in 1987, Chow is a Malaysian composer who came to America to study music. *Let's Snap!* is in the style of a flamenco dance, and was composed for the novacane quartet.