

EDWARD **MacDowell** Alan Mandel, piano

PHCD 148

CD 1

WOODLAND SKETCHES, Op. 51

- To a Wild Rose 1.41
- Will O' the Wisp 1.22
- At an Old Trysting Place 1.46
- In Autumn 1.33
- From an Indian Lodge 2.39
- To a Water Lily 2.12
- From Uncle Remos 1.13
- A Deserted Farm 2.35
- By a Meadow Brook 1.17
- Told at Sunset 3.52

SEA PIECES, Op. 55

- To the Sea 2.23
- From a Wandering Iceberg 1.56
- AD, 1620 2.55
- Starlight 2.11
- Song 2.16
- From the Depths 3.18
- Nautilus 2.39
- In Mid-Ocean 3.06

SONATA NO.1 (SONATA TRAGICA) Op. 45

- Largo maestoso-Allegro risoluto 8.20
- Molto allegro, vivace 2.48
- Largo con maestria 8.04
- Allegro eroico 7.29

CD 2

SONATA No. 2 (SONATA EROICA) Op. 50
"Fios requam Arthurus"

- Slow, with nobility - Fast, passionately 7.46
- Elf-like, as light and swift as possible 3.54
- Tenderly, longingly, yet with passion 5.36
- Fiercely, very fast 7.37

SONATA No. 3 ("NORSE" SONATA) Op. 57

- Mesto, ma compassions - Brissimo 6.33
- Tristemente, ma con tenerezza 5.12
- Allegro con fuoco 6.19

SONATA NO.4 ("KELTIC" SONATA) Op. 59

- With great power and dignity 7.38
- With native tenderness 5.38
- Very swift and fierce 5.38

Produced FOR CD by Jeffrey Kaufman
 Design: Laura Gardner Recording Engineer: Ed Kelly
 Recorded January 4&7, 1999 at
 The Coolidge Auditorium of
 The Library of Congress,
 Washington, D.C. under the
 supervision of Alan Mandel
 © © 2000 Phoenix USA. Visit us at
www.phoenixcd.com

File under
 Classical/MacDowell

0 74629 30148 8

COMPACT
 DIGITAL AUDIO

EDWARD **MacDowell**

Piano Sonatas
Tragica, Op.45
Eroica, Op.50
Norse, Op.57
Keltic, Op.59

Woodland Sketches, Op.51
Sea Pieces, Op.55

PHCD 148
 2 CDs

Alan Mandel, piano

narrow nationalism; in the same lecture, he averred,

"...nationalism, so-called, is merely an extraneous thing that has no part in pure art."

Yet in his own *Indian Suite (Suite No. 2 for his Orchestra, Opus 48)* and *From an Indian Lodge* (from *Woodland Sketches for Piano, Opus 51*), MacDowell actually used elements of native American Indian music to form his principle themes. In a broader sense, MacDowell expressed many aspects of the 19th Century American scene and landscape in his music—for example, in his piano works *Fireside Tales, Opus 61*; and *New England Idylls, Opus 62*.

Woodland Sketches, Op. 51, was written and published in 1896, the year that MacDowell began teaching at Columbia University. Since this suite first appeared, it has been the most popular of MacDowell's piano works. Indeed, *To a Wild Rose* has been a staple of American artistic consciousness, in a manner analogous to Louis Moreau Gottschalk's *Last Hope* and George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*. The suite itself owes its popularity not only to its artistic merit; it also follows a line of Romantic suites that glorify nature, such as Robert Schumann's *Blumenstück* and *Waldenscenen*, and Edward Grieg's ten suites of *Lyriske Stykker*, as well as countless songs by German Romantic composers, and also by composers of America's New England school.

An earlier America had an infinite variety of awe-inspiring vistas, unspoiled wilderness, verdant woodlands. Vivid, luminous pictorial accounts of American landscapes, creatures, and plants had been painted by Albert Bierstadt, Frederic Edwin Church, Thomas Cole, Asher Durand, Thomas Moran, and countless others. Nature in its scenic grandeur was at the center of American artistic identity and consciousness. Slightly later American poets and musicians, MacDowell among them, were completely in harmony with the earlier American artists.

Woodland Sketches contains ten pieces, with *To a Wild Rose* heading the list. This is a perfect little piece in form, proportion, balance, and crafted details. *Will o' the Wisp* is swift, light and fanciful; judiciously syncopated, it avoids squareness through uneven phrase lengths. *At an Old Frying Place* contains subtleties of phrasing that belie its seeming simplicity. The composer directs that it be played "Somewhat quaintly, not too sentimentally." *In Autumn* is buoyant, almost exuberant, and more complex formally than its predecessors. *From an Indian Lodge*, which contains native Indian melodic material, is of stern and mournful character to be played "with great emphasis." The main theme, which enters after an introduction, is a kind of funeral dirge. *To a Water Lily* has attained almost as much popularity as *To a Wild Rose*. It is indeed a winning piece, exerting an almost hypnotic attraction in its dreamy, swaying rhythm. A change of meter in the middle section

EDWARD MACDOWELL (1861-1908) was the most celebrated American composer of his generation, and a fine concert pianist. Born in New York City, he was encouraged in his early piano studies by his parents; among his teachers was the great pianist Teresa Carreño. At age fifteen, he went to study in Europe, where he was to remain for twelve years (1876-1888). After two years of study in Paris, he resolved a crucial dilemma in his life—namely, the choice between art and music as a career. Selecting music, he continued his studies in Stuttgart, then in Frankfurt, where he studied with Joachim Raff. It was Raff who exerted the deepest influence upon MacDowell; as a result, MacDowell decided to become a composer. At Raff's urging, MacDowell visited Franz Liszt in Weimar; Liszt was so impressed with MacDowell's music, that he proceeded to help the young composer in various ways. As a result, two of MacDowell's works (*First Modern Suite*, and *Piano Concerto No. 1*) were published in Germany. The death of Raff was a severe shock for MacDowell, who had come to revere the elder composer as both teacher and friend.

In 1888, MacDowell finally returned to the United States and settled in Boston for eight years, devoting himself to composing, teaching, and concertizing. In 1896, he accepted a chair as head of the newly created Department of Music at Columbia University and taught there for another eight years. His position at Columbia ended most unfortunately in a violent controversy between MacDowell and the administration, and the composer's dream of a department at Columbia that would integrate the study of music, literature, painting, sculpture, and architecture terminated instead with his own resignation in 1904. MacDowell never really recovered from this traumatic episode.

MacDowell's talents as composer and performer were recognized and hailed in his own lifetime, both in the United States and Germany. Teresa Carreño contributed significantly to MacDowell's fame; she frequently performed her former pupil's works in her own concerts, and premiered his Second Piano Concerto in Leipzig.

MacDowell's music is fully Romantic, in the tradition of Grieg, Raff, and Liszt. Rhapsodic, dramatic, lyrical, and often programmatic, it is characteristically American in its spontaneity and strength. MacDowell himself said (in a lecture at Columbia University):

"What we must arrive at is the youthful optimistic vitality and the undaunted tenacity of spirit that characterizes the American man. That is what I hope to see echoed in American music."

Striving for a broader definition of Americanism in Music, MacDowell rejected the notion of

negates the squareness of phrase lengths. *From Uncle Remus* brings up a highly objectionable chapter and attitude in American history. However, once we overlook the title, we find a thoroughly charming work, to be played "With much humor, joyously." This movement's energetic skips, irregular phrase lengths, and doited rhythms contribute to its ebullience. *A Deserted Farm* returns to the simple lyricism of earlier pieces. *By a Meadow Brook* is sparkling, graceful, and merry. The runs and trills in the high treble bring to mind sunlight on a brook. *Told at Sunset*, the final piece of the set, introduces a note of pathos at the conclusion. The middle section is a kind of dance that gradually gathers intensity and then recedes into the distance. In the coda, MacDowell returns to material in *From an Indian Lodge*.

Sea Pieces, Op. 55, written in 1898, presents the somber, self-contained, brooding side of MacDowell. This majestic suite, written before his "Norse" and "Celtic" sonatas, sings of the mystery and spell of the sea. The theme of sea or ocean has always been a favorite of poets; this attraction is especially evident during the Romantic era. For example, MacDowell might well have read in Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*:

"Wild, wild the storm, and the sea high running,
Steady the roar of the gale, with incessant undertone muttering,
Shouts of demoniac laughter fitfully piercing and pealing,
Waves, air, midnight, their savagest trinity lashing..."

or in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *The Sounding of the Sea*:

"The rushing of the sea-tides of the soul;
And the inspirations that we deem our own,
Are some divine foreshadowing and foreseeing
Of things beyond our reason or control."

In *Sea Pieces*, MacDowell prefaced each of the eight movements with either quotations or fragments of poems, some by poets William Dean Howells and Oliver Wendell Holmes, some possibly by MacDowell himself. The composer pictured the sea as a living, breathing, supernatural being, much as other elements of nature were perceived in the 19th Century, in Germany, England, and the United States.

The first piece, entitled *To the Sea*, is prefaced with

"Ocean thou mighty monster"

Directing the performer to play "With dignity and breadth," the composer has written ponderous chords, long lines, and music of enormous dynamic range. The second piece, *From a Wandering Iceberg* is prefaced with:

"An errant princess of the north,
A virgin, snowy white
Sails down the summer seas
To realms of burning light."

Here, the mood and character of the first piece is continued, although this movement features a glorious crescendo from PP to FFF, and then it gradually fades into the distance. The third piece is entitled A.D. MDCXX (A.D. 1620). This is the year of the landing of the Pilgrim settlers at Plymouth. It is prefaced as follows:

"The yellow setting sun
Melts the lazy sea to gold,
And guilds the swaying galleon
That towards a land of promise
Lunges hugely on."

The tempo indication here is "In unbroken rolling rhythm." And the tempo slightly increases. Again, a great climax is reached, whereupon the dynamics gradually fade to PPP. The next movement, *Starlight*, bears the preface:

"The stars are but the cherubs
that sing about the throne
Of grey old Ocean's spouse,
Fair Moon's pale majesty."

Again the tempo increases slightly to effectuate a tender and fragile movement, less somber and philosophical than previous sections. The following piece, entitled *Song*, includes the

following poem:

"A merry song, a chorus brave,
And yet a sigh regret
For roses sweet, in woodland lanes
Ah, for love can ne'er forget!"

The mood changes here to that of a rather vigorous, cheery folk song. In fact, this is the one movement that is not really concerned with the sea. However, its charm and ebullience are most welcome. The middle section features a soaring melody in the bass. The sixth movement, "From the Depths," is prefaced by the question:

"And who shall sound the mystery of the sea?"

Here we return to languid, swaying rhythms and ponderous chords. In mood and harmonic progressions, this movement is reminiscent of late Brahms piano pieces. The penultimate piece, *Nautilus*, contains the following quote:

"A fairy sail and a fairy boat."

A delicate, graceful movement, it contrasts greatly with the general mood of the suite. The main theme suggests the sound of a solo cello. The final movement, *In mid-Ocean* is prefaced by the poem:

"Inexorable!
Thou straight line of eternal fate
That ring'st the world,
Whil'st on thy moaning breast
We play our puny parts
And reckon us immortal!"

This movement, to be played "With deep feeling," is perhaps the crowning jewel of the entire suite. Whereas the suite is generally extremely ponderous (as befits an ocean) and anti-virtuosic, the middle section of this movement (preceding the climax) is like a swirling vortex of passion. The final section gradually gains serenity before the final crashing chord.

Sonata No. 1 was written to commemorate—approximately ten years later—the death of Joachim Raff, MacDowell's teacher at the Frankfurt Conservatory. A composer of 214 opus numbers and many more works in manuscript, Raff was a composer whose achievements fell into deplorable desuetude after his death. Raff was a primary influence, both personally and musically, on MacDowell, and the older composer's death held great meaning for the younger. MacDowell noted that Raff's music faded into anonymity; ironically, this was to become the fate of much of MacDowell's music.

The *Sonata No. 1*, or *Sonata Tragica*, has been compared to the *Sonata No. 3* of Johannes Brahms. The comparison is apt, as the two works are comparable in form, spirit, and heroic majesty. The MacDowell sonata, since its composition in 1891-2, has been enormously successful with audiences. MacDowell himself premiered the work in Boston and New York in 1893, and Teresa Carreño played it many times in Europe and the United States. When Josef Hoffman played it in Moscow, the audience would not stop applauding until the pianist repeated the final movement. William Mason, a friend of MacDowell and a composer and teacher of some distinction, played the work every day for several months.

The first movement begins *Largo maestoso*, with great chords in the grand manner. The introduction leads to a superbly proportioned sonata allegro form; the movement is above all characterized by intensity of expression, and great dynamic and emotional range. The fact that this movement was played at MacDowell's funeral recalls that the composer gave the sonata many performances.

The second movement, *Molto allegro, vivace*, has been called a puzzling miscalculation. The movement contains a Mendelssohn-like quality in its rapidity and ebullience; it is felt by the composer's critics that it does not belong in this particular work. The present writer does not agree with this view. We find in many tragic works, from William Shakespeare's *King Lear* and *Hamlet* to Sean O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars*, elements of humor that play against and offset the dark nature of each work, and make the dramatic impression even more effective. In any case, the movement does have darker elements in its bass octaves, as well as a lyrical quality in its Schumannesque middle section.

The third movement, *Largo con maestra*, overflows with tragedy and despair. The middle section contains some of the great moments of MacDowell's creative world, in its descending melodic scale as well as in its rich harmonies and counterpoint. The dramatic, sweeping upward motion of much of the middle section contrasts mightily with the general downward melodic thrust of the rest of the movement.

The fourth movement, *Allegro eroico*, opens with the enormous chords reminiscent of the first movement, followed by tremolos, trills and cascading runs. The movement rushes toward a triumphant conclusion until, close to the ending, the opening theme returns, "Maestoso-grandioso," in a pitch range spanning the entire keyboard. At the conclusion, one understands the title, *Sonata Tragica*.

Sonata Eroica, Opus 50, was composed in 1894-5, and premiered in 1895 in Leipzig and New York. After the great success of his first sonata, MacDowell had entered upon a period of uncertainty; however, William Mason and others were extremely encouraging, and in the end MacDowell dedicated his second sonata to Mason. Having subtitled his work "Flos regum Arthurus," (Arthur the glory of his kingdom), MacDowell explained it as follows:

"I had in mind the Arthurian legend when writing this work. The first movement typifies the coming of Arthur. The scherzo was suggested by a picture of Dore showing a knight in the woods surrounded by elves. The third movement was suggested by my idea of Guinivere. That following represents the passing of Arthur."

King Arthur, who is known to every British schoolchild, has only the most conjectural claims to historical reality. He may have been a British chieftain, overlord, or King who participated in significant battles, uniting the former Roman territories of the British Isles before it split into separate states. On the other hand, he may have been a romantic invention of the twelfth or thirteenth centuries. However, that may be, MacDowell was immersed in and inspired by Arthurian lore and legends. He undoubtedly knew the narrative poem by Alfred Lord Tennyson, *Idylls of the King*, in which the following appears:

"Blow trumpet! he will lift us from the dust,
Blow, trumpet! live the strength and die the lust!
Clang battleaxe, and clash brand! Let the King reign.
Strike for the King and die! And if thou diest,
The King is King, and ever wills the highest,
Clang battleaxe, and clash brand! Let the King reign...."

And Arthur and his knighthood for a space
Were all one will, and thro' that strength the King

Drew in the petty princedom under him,
Fought, and in twelve great battles overcame
The heathen hordes, and made a realm, and reign'd."

In the **Sonata Eroica**, the first movement, which is marked in English *Slou; with nobility*, builds from pianissimo to fortissimo in seven measures. After the introduction, the main body of the movement is marked *fast, passionately*, mostly in the bass range. Following this section, the music flows into a lyrical second theme, *simply, yet with pathos*. The development section exploits the drama of the introduction and motif from the second theme. The movement ends *furiously* in running scales ranging from PPP to FFF, in a passage that recalls the conclusion of Ludwig van Beethoven's *Emperor* concerto.

The second movement, *Elf-like, as light and swift as possible*, exploits virtuoso possibilities of the instrument to the fullest extent, in delightfully translucent textures. Its spirit, but not its melodic material, may remind one of Franz Liszt's concert etude, *Gnommenreigen*. The middle section is a graceful trio. The movement as a whole, sometimes with startling and kaleidoscopic contrasts in mood, has a magical effect, ending with a swift glissando into the higher realms.

In the score of the third movement, MacDowell directs: *tenderly, lovingly, yet with passion*. Here we have a portrait of Queen Guinevere, whose heavenly beauty and purity (so the legends tell us) was always passionately adored by Arthur, but was sullied and used for evil deeds, to her everlasting shame, disgrace, and grief. The movement contains great beauty and nobility, as befits a portrait of Guinevere, as well as a mastery blending and counterpointing of several melodies, including material from the first movement.

The final movement is marked *fiercely, very fast* as one would expect from a portrait of Arthur going into battle against his nephew and son, Mordred. In both the flaming first theme and the spacious second theme, motifs are introduced from the first movement. The second theme is developed virtuously before a tumultuous reprise of the first theme. At the grand climax, marked FFFF, one envisions hammer blows signifying the slaying of Arthur. There follows by turns a mysterious section in which the original Arthurian motif gradually descends into the bass, then by an approximate restating of the opening section of the sonata, and finally by a *dolcissimo* section, to be played *with breadth and dignity*. The movement (and sonata) concludes on a triumphant note.

The **Third Sonata**, Opus 57, in D minor, was composed in 1899; it is dedicated to Edward Grieg, with whom MacDowell corresponded. The two composers greatly admired each other's music.

Stylistically influenced by Grieg, the present work is called "**Norse**" Sonata. The following anonymous Norse poem, based on Norse mythology, appears on the first page of the music, thereby serving as a programmatic introduction to the sonata:

"Night has fallen on a day of deeds.
The great rafters in the red-ribbed hall
Flashed crimson in the fitful flame
of smouldering logs.
And the stealthy shadows
That crept round Harald's throne
Rang out a Skald's strong voice,
With Tales of battles won;
Of Gundrun's love
And Sigurd, Siegmund's son."

The **Norse Sonata** remains one of MacDowell's most successful creations—rich in beautiful melodic lines, adventurous harmonies, and impressive climaxes. This work is in three movements, more compact and compressed than the first two sonatas. The introduction to the first movement begins *Mesto, ma con passione*, gradually building to a *briso* first theme. While certain passages in the first movement seem to anticipate the music of Sergei Rachmaninoff, the opening of the memorable second movement foresees the music of Giacomo Puccini, in its inflections and also in its doubled and generously long melodic line. The third movement, *Allegro con fuoco*, is heroic and driving, except for a short, lyrical interlude. Shortly after the commencement of the recapitulation, the music gradually builds to an awesome climax, before a "heavy and gloomy" concluding section.

MacDowell's **Sonata No. 4**, or "**Keltic**" Sonata, was composed in 1900; it was thought by the composer to be his most important work in this form. Allan Kozinn, in his program notes to James Tocco's recordings of MacDowell's sonatas, avers that "the **Sonata No. 4**...is certainly the greatest, and it stands at the pinnacle [of the sonatas]." Also, the music critic Lawrence Gilman thought that this sonata was the composer's most successful creation.

The verse on the flyleaf of the published score is by William Sharp, alias Fiona MacLeod:
"Who minds now Keltic tales of yore,
Dark Druid rhymes that thrall

Deidre's, and wizard lore
Of great Cuchullin's fall."

In Keltic legend, Deidre was the beautiful daughter of the harper of King Conchobar. After the King betrothed her, she escaped with her true love. The King invited her lover and his brothers back, and treacherously had them slain, whereupon Deidre killed herself. Cuchullin (or Cú Chulainn) was the great hero of Keltic legend, a Herculean demi-God, a performer of astonishing feats, who was in the end slain by his enemies.

Perhaps MacDowell knew the poem "Cuchlain's Fight with the Sea," by William Butler Yeats, written in 1893, contains the following:

"Cuchilian stirred,
Stared on the horses of the sea, and heard
The cars of battle and his own name cried;
And fought with the invulnerable tide."

MacDowell later wrote that:

"this **Fourth Sonata** is more of a 'bardic' rhapsody on the subject than and actual presentation of it, although I have made use of all the suggestions of tone-painting in my power—just as the bard would have reinforced his speech with gesture and facial expression."

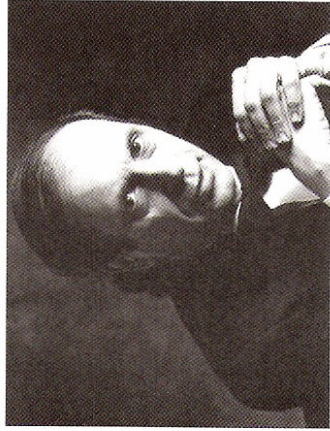
The first movement of the "**Keltic**" Sonata begins *With great power and dignity* in towering chords. As in other sonatas, this movement contains great dynamic contrasts and virtuosic sweep. MacDowell's musical directions throughout the movement include *very broad and emphatic, with breadth and power, and passionately and steadily louder*. At the end of the movement, the composer requests that one measure be played PPPP, to be followed by a final measure marked PPF.

The beautiful second movement, which seems to be musical portrait of Deidre, is to be expressed *With naive tenderness*. At the outset, tranquil harp-like arpeggios appear, and the melodic material is in duet. A Celtic melody is introduced *as heard from afar*. Soon the music increases in passion. The opening melody is repeated *with grandeur and breadth*, and again, with directions *state-ly and sonorous*. The final section is a repetition of the Celtic theme, leading to a tranquil coda.

The final movement, which is marked *Very swift and fierce*, is extremely powerful and

cohesive, plummeting toward its conclusion. The extraordinary momentum contained therein generates a sweeping rush of sound that hardly relaxes until the final denouement. The movement concerns Cuchullin's extraordinary exploits and downfall. MacDowell directs, before the epochal climax, that the music should be *gradually increasing in violence and intensity*, and then played *furious*. The final section is to be played *With tragic pathos*. There is a gradual decrescendo to pppp, before the tumultuous ending.

— Alan Mandel



ALAN MANDEL is noted for his brilliant performances, in the United States as well as in fifty other countries, of music by European and American composers, of traditional and esoteric repertoire. He was the first pianist of stature to regularly program both classical and ragtime music at his concerts, a feature that continues to delight, surprise and educate his audiences. Professor of Music and Chairman of the Piano Department at American University in Washington, D.C., Mr. Mandel was co-founder and Artistic Director of the world-famous Washington Music Ensemble.

A prodigious recording artist during his long and distinguished career, Mr. Mandel was the first to transcribe, premiere and record lives' unpublished works. His four-record album *The Complete Piano Works of Charles Ives* has been called "historic" by *The New York Times*. Mandel's other four-record album *Louis Moreau Gottschalk: Forty Works for the Piano*. Has also received innumerable rave reviews in newspapers and magazines throughout the country, and his three-record album *Anthology of American Piano Music: 1790-1970* has become a hallmark of American music recordings. Mandel's other recordings, for labels such as Columbia, Vox, CRI, Orion and Premiere, have further enhanced his reputation. The pianist is busy researching, considering and rehearsing unknown and previously unrecorded works by American composers for future release.