

January 2006

ROREM'S *OUR TOWN* TO HAVE WORLD PREMIERE AT INDIANA UNIVERSITY

Friday, February 24 marks the world premiere of **Ned Rorem's** new opera *Our Town*, with a libretto by J. D. McClatchy based on Thornton Wilder's classic American drama. The Indiana University Opera Theater production, directed by Vincent Liotta, will run for four performances (February 24 and 25, March 3 and 4) at the Musical Arts Center on IU's Bloomington campus. IU Opera Theater, the lead commissioner of the opera, is regarded as the foremost collegiate opera program in nation, and is a fitting choice to premiere this major work by Rorem, an Indiana native (b. 1923 in Richmond).

an American classic

Wilder's *Our Town* opened on February 4, 1938 and was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for drama that year. For decades, Wilder (and later his estate) resisted the idea of an opera based on the play; not even Aaron Copland was able to gain permission, though he later created a touching score to the film version. Ultimately, J. D. McClatchy, a noted Wilder scholar, was able to persuade Tappan Wilder, executor of the estate and the playwright's nephew, that Rorem would be the ideal choice to transform the work into an opera. "My family and I are thrilled at the prospect," says Wilder.

the challenge of
setting a beloved play

Rorem, justly renowned for his vocal writing, has responded to the challenge of setting *Our Town* with some of his most poignant and memorable music to date, creating dramatic tension while maintaining the play's elegiac atmosphere. Through Rorem's vocal lines and orchestration, Wilder's protagonist, Emily, comes vividly to life in all of her emotional complexity.

further stagings
to come

In the months following the premiere, five co-commissioners will present *Our Town*: Opera Boston, the Aspen Music Festival and School, North Carolina School of the Arts, Lake George Opera in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., and Festival Opera in Walnut Creek, Calif.

OUR TOWN: 2S,2M,3T,Bar,B,SATB chorus; 2.1.2.1—2.1.0.0—pft—strings**Duration:** 2 hrs