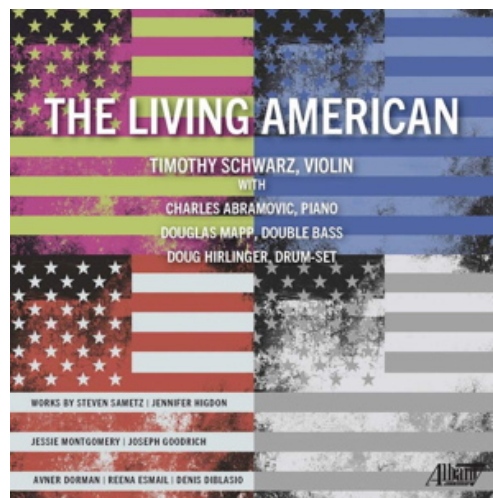




## THE LIVING AMERICAN (ALBANY RECORDS)

JUNE 28, 2023



Timothy Schwarz (violin)

Charles Abramovic (piano), Douglas Mapp (bass), Doug Hirlinger (drums)  
rec. 2022 at Gore Hall, University of Delaware, USA

Reviewed as a digital download from a press preview

**Albany Records TROY1930 [69]**

This new release from multitalented violinist, Timothy Schwarz represents a kind of state of the nation of musical America. It roams from hints of Broadway to jazz to more recognisably classical offerings even managing to take in a musical encounter between America and India.

Inevitably, such an eclectic mix is a little uneven in quality and it is a bit of a pity that such an intensely enjoyable programme peters out with a tepid offering of average jazz. As the greatest indigenous form of the United States, no musical portrait of America would be complete without some jazz and whilst Denis DiBlasio's offering is perfectly pleasant it is no match for the best of the other contemporary works on show.

Which leads me nicely on the astonishing violin sonata No.2 by the Israeli American Avner Dorman. This single movement work frames a ferocious central section which sounds for all the world like Bartók and Sarasate out on a wild night on the tiles with poignant slower passages featuring the violin at the very top of its range. Schwarz plays that central section with fearless abandon and at the sonata's end I went straight back and listened to it all over again.

Running Dorman close for the garland for most impressive piece including by Schwarz is Reena Esmail's sumptuous *Raag Charukeshi* whose luxuriant melodies swoop and soar like a murmuration of starlings – and all with a solo violin! This is intended as part of a multi movement work in progress and I very much look forward to hearing the finished composition.

Schwarz' charismatic playing is the glue that holds such a disparate programme together and apart from glorious tone and impeccable technique, it is the dynamism of his recreations of these new pieces that sets this disc apart. He is helped enormously by demonstration worthy sound.

Broadway composer Joseph Goodrich's pieces show him eager to show off his serious classical music chops though the aching melody of his *Lacrimosa* based on an Arabic love song, shows that he knows how to put over a tune matter whatever genre he is working in. His *The Machine* bristles with spiky energy brilliantly dispatched by Schwarz.

Elsewhere, Jennifer Higdon gives a typically well-made poetic reflection on misty hills and Jessie Montgomery's *Rhapsody No.2* is an ingenious reworking of Bartók with sly sideways glances at other composers. Choral composer, Steven Sametz, gets us under way with an extravagant Fantasia on (what I think is) the same Arabic love song as inspired Goodrich's *Lacrimosa*. This is a terrific opportunity to give Schwarz the chance off his splendid range.

Sadly for Schwarz a collection of contemporary works is never going to bring him the fame his musicianship deserves but he is to be applauded for his advocacy which will undoubtedly turn curious listeners on to the vibrant life of musical America.

***David McDade***