## Leonard Bernstein - Wonderful Town (1999)

*1. Overture 5:18 2. Christopher Street (Guide/Tourists/Villagers/Violet) 4:58 3. Ohio (Ruth/Eileen) 3:29 4. Conquering New York (Ruth/Chorus) 3:52 5. One Hundred Easy Ways To Lose a Man (Ruth) 3:22 6. What a waste (Baker/Ruth/First Editor/Second Editor) 3:07 7. A Little Bit in Love (Eileen) 2:58 8. Pass the Football (Wreck) 3:46 9. Conversation Piece (Eileen/Frank/Ruth/Chick) 3:48 10. A Quiet Girl (Baker/Men's chorus) 3:38 11. Conga! (Cadet/Ruth/Cadets) 3:36 12. Entr'acte 3:54 13. My Darlin' Eileen (Solo cop/Men's chorus/First Cop/Second Cop/Third Cop/Eileen) 3:33 14. Swing! (Villager/Ruth/Chorus/First Man/Second Man/First Girl/Second Girl) 5:14 15. Quiet Incidental (Eileen/Ruth) 0:49 16. Ohio Reprise (Eileen/Ruth) 1:25 17. It's Love (Eileen/Baker/Chorus) 3:33 18. Ballet at the Village Vortex 2:28 19. The Wrong Note Rag (Ruth/Eileen/Chorus) 2:25 20. It's Love Reprise - Finale Act Two (Eileen/Baker/Ruth/Chorus) 1:23* Ruth: Kim Criswell (soprano) Eileen: Audra McDonald (soprano) Robert Baker: Thomas Hampson (baritone) Wreck: Brent Barrett Guide/First Associate Editor/Frank Lippencott: Rodney Gilfry (baritone) Secodn Associate Editor/Chick Clark: Karl Daymond (baritone) Lonigan: Timothy Robinson (tenor) Firts Cop: Robert Fardell Second Cop/Second Man: Lynton Atkinson (tenor) Third Cop/First Man/Cadet/Villager: Michael Dore First Woman: Simone Sauphanor Second Woman: Melanie Marshall (mezzo-soprano) Violet: Kimberly Cobb Tourists/Greenwich Villagers/Cadets: London Voices Birmingham Contemporary Music Group Simon Rattle - conductor

Leonard Bernstein's collaboration with Betty Comden and Adolph Green on Wonderful Town is one of his great Broadway triumphs, filled with memorable music and great lyrics. And the screwball tale of two fish-out-of-water small-town sisters in NYC (based on the play My Sister Eileen by Joseph Fields and Jerome Chodorov) still sounds comical and fresh, despite the fact that it was written in the '50s and set in the '30s. Up until now, the 1958 television cast recording was the disc to have: a slightly embellished version of the original cast recording starring Rosalind Russell. The strong cast on this 1999 studio recording is every bit as impressive. Audra McDonald shines as Eileen during "A Little Bit in Love," Kim Criswell is a fine Ruth (though less memorable than Russell), and Thomas Hampson--a baritone best known for his work on the opera stage--is great as Ruth's gruff editor, Bob Baker. Simon Rattle's orchestrations are grand, yet quirky, a perfect match for Bernstein's score. It's easy to

recommend a disc that has so many great vocal moments: "Conga!," "My Darlin' Eileen," "Conversation Piece," and "Pass the Football" (sung by Brent Barrett), to name a few. ---Jason Verlinde, amazon.com

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