

# V I O L I N S O F H O P E

PRESENTED BY THE MINNESOTA JCC  
FAMILY LEGACY SPONSOR: THE EIGER & ZAIDENWEBER FAMILIES

## THE VANDERVEEN VIOLIN

This French Mirecourt violin (circa 1920) belonged to Joyce Vanderveen (1927–2008) — a gifted prima ballerina, violinist, painter, and author born in Amsterdam.

Joyce's parents came from humble beginnings: her mother, Rachel, was a deaf Jewish seamstress estranged from her family for marrying Jan, an orphan and sculptor. Despite hardship, Joyce's artistic gifts were evident early. She danced and played violin at neighborhood festivals, and by age nine was conducting a children's orchestra. Her father selected this violin especially for her — small enough for her frame, elegant in form, and its warm wood tone a match to her red hair.

When the Nazis invaded Holland in 1940, Joyce was only 13. She and her family endured raids and hunger. Once, a shopkeeper's urgent warning saved her from arrest. Eventually, Joyce escaped Amsterdam with her mother and sister on a bicycle, carrying this violin as her one precious possession. They survived in hiding, though many relatives perished.

After the war, Joyce pursued dance and rose to international acclaim. She became a star of the Royal Netherlands Ballet, later touring the world with the Monte Carlo Ballet. A special visa signed by Senator John F. Kennedy brought her to the United States, where she enjoyed a career in ballet, television, and film — including an appearance in *The Ten Commandments*.

In 1997, Joyce discovered that a childhood magazine photo of her had been cut out and pinned above Anne Frank's bed in the Secret Annex. She later returned to that room to give a filmed interview, the portrait still hanging in place.

Though Joyce rarely played this violin again — too painful a reminder of wartime — she kept it safe her entire life. In 2021, her daughter donated it to Violins of Hope during a ceremony at the Library of Congress, ensuring its journey and her mother's story would endure.

