

MUSIC M502
FALL 2013

CHARLES IVES

J. Peter Burkholder
Monday and Wednesday 9:30–10:45 AM
Music Library Seminar Room 267

Charles Ives (1874-1954) is recognized as one of the greatest American composers of art music, one who captured the sounds and experiences of American life in his compositions. His music is extraordinary, and so is his career as organist, composer, insurance man, and philanthropist. His works intertwine influences from the European Romantic tradition with American musical traditions, such as band music, Stephen Foster songs, church hymns, patriotic songs, Tin Pan Alley, and ragtime, and with his own brand of musical experimentalism. His cultural influences include Emerson and Thoreau, religious revivalism, business, and populism. Much of his music uses innovative techniques and modernist dissonance to evoke common people and events of the past. He in turn influenced younger artists, who often reinterpreted his work, outside its original context, as a model for the avant-garde. Thus he combines many of the apparently contradictory strands in musical life and society in the early twentieth century. This course will study his life and works in the context of these differing traditions and as a mirror that reflects upon them.

The class will be conducted as a seminar, with an emphasis on class discussion rather than lecture. Coursework will include regular listening and reading assignments, short writing assignments, participating in class discussion, and a research project on a topic related to Ives and his music, culminating in a class presentation and paper. There will be no examinations.