CHARLES IVES (1874-1954)

Why He Matters Today

A Sesquicentennial Celebration

edited by Joseph Horowitz and J. Peter Burkholder

THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR

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Charles Ives at 150
Why He Matters Today

JOSEPH HOROWITZ AND J. PETER BURKHOLDER

For many, Charles Ives is the supreme creative genius in American classical music. And yet Ives remains insufficiently known, insufficiently performed, insufficiently understood. Born on October 20, 1874, he turns 150 years old this fall. Hence this collection of essays, published in conjuction with *The American Scholar* magazine on the occasion of Indiana University's Ives sesquicentennial celebration, Charles Ives at 150: Music, Imagination, and American Culture (September 30-October 8, 2024), the biggest such festival to take place this year.

The larger theme of the festival, curated by J. Peter Burkholder and Joseph Horowitz, is Ives's ever-expanding place in the narrative of American culture. Half a century ago, celebrations of Ives's one hundredth birthday mainly pegged him as an accidental modernist, anticipating radical innovations in harmony and rhythm. In retrospect, this view—a product of its time—marginalized Ives as a clairvoyant anomaly. The Bloomington festival celebrates Ives as an iconic American rooted in his own time and place: a vibrant fin-de-siècle New World moment.

Ives both celebrates the American past and is himself a necessary link. As he wrote in the Epilogue to *Essays Before a Sonata*: "America is not too young to have its divinities, and its place-legends." No other American composer connects more importantly with the Civil War and its long aftermath, with the Transcendentalist tradition of Emerson and Thoreau, with the self-made New World genius of Mark Twain and Herman Melville. Today, when we bear witness to a rapid erosion of the American arts, Ives both embodies and espouses the uses of cultural memory. He exemplifies how the arts support American self-understanding.

The five essays here assembled broach fresh perspectives on a large historical screen. Joseph Horowitz's "Ives, Gustav Mahler, and the Uses of Memory" (also to be found in the Autumn 2024 print edition of *The American Scholar*) juxtaposes Ives with an illustrious European contemporary—and discovers a kindred reliance on the past as a rudder for the future. Tim Barringer, writing as a leading authority on nineteenth-century American visual art, newly ponders "Charles Ives and the Visual." Allen Guelzo, writing as a leading Lincoln scholar, newly frames "Charles Ives's Civil War." Sudip Bose's "A Boy's Fourth" considers how Ives's music might be heard differently in a time of intense political division. J. Peter Burkholder's "The Power of the Common Soul" finds hope for today in Ives's unquenchable idealism and his celebration of people and their music. Ives is protean; he knows no silos.

The cross-disciplinary Indiana University festival comprises twelve concerts-with-commentary, encompassing the entire range of Ives's music, plus additional talks and discussions. The centerpiece of the festival is an orchestral program that premieres a new "visual presentation," by Peter Bogdanoff, for Ives's *Three Places in New England*. The featured performers include such pre-eminent Ivesians as the baritone William Sharp, and pianists Jeremy Denk, Gilbert Kalish, and Steven Mayer.

Indiana University's is the largest of four Ives Sesquicentennial festivals supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities administered by Horowitz. The others are hosted by the Brevard Music Festival (July 15–19, 2024), Bard College's "The Orchestra Now" (November 9–21, 2024), and the Chicago Sinfonietta in collaboration with Illinois State University (February 17–22, 2025). Horowitz will incorporate performances from the Brevard and Bloomington festivals into a 50-minute Ives celebration on National Public Radio: "Charles Ives' America" (scheduled for mid-November 2024 in the wake of the Presidential election). He is also producer of a pertinent Naxos DVD, "Charles Ives' America," whose participants include Burkholder and Sharp.

Joseph Horowitz's 13 books about the American musical experience include *Moral Fire: Musical Portraits from America's Fin-de-Siecle* (2012) with a 50-page Ives chapter situating him alongside the orchestra-builder Henry Higginson, the music critic Henry Krehbiel, and the Brooklyn impresario Laura Langford; and *Dvorak's Prophecy* (2022), which proposes a "new paradigm" for American classical music anchored by Ives and George Gershwin, both of whom hug the vernacular. His 50-minute "More than Music" explorations are regularly heard on National Public Radio. www.josephhorowitz.com

Tim Barringer is Paul Mellon Professor of the History of Art at Yale University. He has published widely on the art of Britain and its empire and on American landscape painting He has co-curated many exhibitions, including "American Sublime," "Art and Emancipation in Jamaica," "Pre-Raphaelites: Victorian Avant-Garde," "Thomas Cole's Journey: Atlantic Crossings," and "Victorian Radicals." His writings on art and music have appeared in *Art History* and in collections such as *British Music and Modernism, 1895–1960*, *The Edwardian Sense*, and *Vaughan Williams in Context*.

Allen Guelzo is the Thomas W. Smith Distinguished Research Scholar and Director of the James Madison Program's Initiative on Politics and Statesmanship at Princeton University. His most recent book is *Our Ancient Faith: Lincoln, Democracy, and the American Experiment*.

Sudip Bose is the editor of *The American Scholar*, only the eighth person to hold that position since Phi Beta Kappa began publishing the magazine in 1932. For three years, he wrote a column on classical music for the *Scholar*'s website called "Measure by Measure."

J. Peter Burkholder is Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Musicology at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music and author of the four most recent editions of *A History of Western Music* and *Norton Anthology of Western Music* (W. W. Norton). He has served as President of the American Musicological Society and of the Charles Ives Society, and his scholarship on Charles Ives, modern music, musical borrowing, and music history pedagogy has won numerous awards and has been translated into six languages. His most recent book is *Listening to Charles Ives: Variations on His America* (2021).

Ives, Gustav Mahler, and the Uses of Memory

JOSEPH HOROWITZ

I

Among canonized composers of classical music, Charles Ives—born 150 years ago this autumn—possesses the most elusive, least stable reputation. There are composers whose standing has sharply declined (the operas of Giacomo Meyerbeer were once repertory staples) or risen (Sergei Rachmaninoff is no longer despised as a sentimental anomaly). There are composers whose full stature was only recognized generations after they died (Hector Berlioz's opera *The Trojans* languished for a century). But Ives remains a moving target.

That at the same time he is for many the supreme American creative genius among concert composers, a figure protean and iconic, must say something about America and Ives both: as ever, we're not sure who we are. Even our orchestras and instrumentalists perform him far less than they should. If it follows that the present Ives sesquicentenary is insufficiently observed, that is all the more reason to take stock.

Though Ives lived and worked in New York City, he was and remained quintessentially a product of New England. He was born in Danbury, Connecticut; he eventually settled in nearby West Redding. His dates—1874 to 1954—are misleading: his creative years began in the 1890s and mainly ended by 1926. That he was therefore a product of the late Gilded Age and early 20th century, preceding the modernist decades, is initially difficult to grasp because his music was only later discovered. The momentous (though poorly attended) New York City premiere of his *Concord* Piano Sonata, finished by 1919, took place in 1939; Lawrence Gilman wrote in the *New York Herald Tribune:* "It is … the greatest music composed by an American, and the most deeply and essentially American in impulse and implication." Ives's Second Symphony, finished by 1909, was first heard in 1951. The conductor was Leonard Bernstein, who called Ives "an authentic primitive—a country boy at heart," "wandering in the grand palaces of Europe like one of Henry James's Americans abroad, or better still like Mark Twain's innocents abroad." Of these two famous assessments, Gilman's was more apt. Bernstein's—which he repeated as late as 1987—misreads Ivesian complexities as untutored. As

an undergraduate at Yale, Ives composed a song, "Feldeinsamkeit," that bears comparison with the lieder of the German masters. He moved on from there. The "primitive" in Ives is a sometime pose.

Ives's first reputation, congealing midway through the 20th century, was framed by modernists who pedigreed "originality." Ives's "experiments" in tonality and rhythm were compared to those of Arnold Schoenberg, whose music he did not know. In his landmark volume *Our New Music* (1941), Aaron Copland ventured: "Ives was far more originally gifted than any other member of his generation. ... [He] had the vision of a true pioneer, but he could not organize his material." (In 1968, Copland declared himself guilty of a "misapprehension," having ultimately found in Ives "a richness of experience ... unobtainable in any other way.") Elliott Carter—compared with Copland a later, higher modernist—discovered in Ives "a lack of logic. ... The esthetic is ... often too naive to express serious thoughts." In that same 1939 assessment (which he would, like Copland, later reconsider), Carter joined a parochial debate that long usurped riper assessment: "The fuss that critics make about Ives' innovations is ... greatly exaggerated, for he has rewritten his works so many times, adding dissonances and polyrhythms, that it is probably impossible to tell just at what date the works assumed the surprising form we know now." This obsession with "Who got there first?" pigeonholed Ives as an intriguing historical oddity rather than an expressive genius. It placed him firmly in play, but proved essentially patronizing.

Once the modernist criterion of originality dissipated, however, it became possible to resituate Ives not as an anomalous victim of repressive materialistic decades—a view tenaciously pursued by Frank Rossiter in *Charles Ives and His America* (1975)—but as a complex product of a dynamic period of American growth itself undergoing revision. (Among historians, the term "Gilded Age" no longer signifies barbarian businessmen, wealthy snobs, and corrupt politicians.) Jan Swafford's 1996 Ives biography is a case in point. My own *Moral Fire: Musical Portraits from America's Fin-de-Siècle* (2012) relocates Ives as an intelligible product of turn-of-the-century ferment. Meanwhile, J. Peter Burkholder, today's eminence grise among Ives scholars, has devoted decades to inquiring into the composer's
indebtedness to past musical models and materials.

Hence the opportunity at hand as we celebrate the 150th birthday of this most volatile cultural bellwether. With Ives ensconced in a ubiquitous fin-de-siecle moment, we can at last thrust him onto the international stage he deserves and inquire: What about Ives resonates with musical developments abroad—not as a possible harbinger of Schoenberg's innovations, but as a precise contemporary of Gustav Mahler, the European composer he most strikingly resembles? What is

more: the American experience is today ever more crippled by a condition of pastlessness. Ives both curates the American past and is himself—no less than Herman Melville, no less than Mark Twain—an American icon. He must be remembered.

II

The essential similarity linking Ives and Mahler has long been loudly audible: both oscillate boldly between the quotidian and the sublime. And the quotidian content basically derives neither from Ives's New York (the life insurance practice he co-founded) nor from Mahler's Vienna (the Court Opera he commanded), but from the everyday of long ago: both composers glance heavenward one moment, and in the next remember a rural bandstand or barracks bugle. A landmark analysis, "Ives and Mahler: Mutual Responses to the End of an Era," was published by Robert P. Morgan in 1978. Of equal interest is Carl Schorske's "Mahler and Ives: Populist Archaism and Musical Innovation" from 1983. Writing as a music historian, Morgan explored the high-low duality in Mahler and Ives as a musical strategy. Schorske perceived a mutual temperamental predilection. I here adduce a third perspective: Ives and Mahler as products of fin-de-siecle dislocation, engaged in exigent identity quests conditioned by the unmooring pressures of modernity.

Mahler, betwixt and between, famously declared himself "thrice homeless, as a native of Bohemia in Austria, as an Austrian among Germans, and as a Jew throughout the world. Everywhere an intruder, never welcomed." In his symphonies and songs, he resorted to shards of memory to supply points of anchorage. He piled on the past—motley childhood sounds and sensations traceable to his native Iglau (today's Jihlava, in the Czech Republic), a birthplace Austrian, Bohemian, and Jewish—to buttress the present.

It bears stressing that this strategy was something not to be found in the Bach-Mozart-Beethoven lineage that Mahler passionately embraced. Hints occur in Franz Schubert's torrid final year, 1828. In the first of his *Drei Klavierstücke,* the whiff of a tavern zither invades a dark landscape of the soul. Late Schubert also evokes the existential fractures of the self we associate with later times: the Andantino of the A major Piano Sonata, D. 959, succumbs to an eruptive collapse of tonal order; the song "Der Doppelgänger" narrates the horror of a man looking out a window and seeing himself on the dark street below. But Schubert was shattered (and also shuttered) by terminal illness, not by a civilizational pivot. In his essays, Richard Wagner—like Schubert, a composer for whom Mahler felt profound affinity—extrapolated an elaborate historical context for his innovations; and Wagner's musical leitmotivs are, again, an exercise in memory. Even so, Mahler's memory shards are singular and unprecedented—save for the contemporaneous music of a heretical American an ocean away.

There exists no evidence that Ives knew the music of Mahler (though he demonstrably knew *of* it). It is rumored that while in New York (1907–1911) Mahler discovered Ives's Third Symphony in score and thought to conduct it, but no proof survives. The resemblances binding these composers are wholly coincidental. The coincidences, however, are meaningful.

Mahler's Iglau was a German island within a Hapsburg Czech dominion. Born to an upwardly mobile Jewish household—his father ran a liquor business—Mahler spoke German from birth. He intimately knew Czech folk ensembles and the military band of the imperial garrison. He must have heard synagogue chant. Ives's Danbury was also musical, with his father a leading figure. George Ives led patriotic band music, theater music, reels and dirges, choral music for church services and revival meetings. The Taylor Opera House hosted minstrel shows and operettas. The annual Firemen's Parade featured as many as three dozen bands and drum corps. The Rossini Musical Soiree, the Mozart Musicale, and the Mendelssohn Musicale were women's music clubs. All of this flooded Ives's memory bank, alongside baseball games and circus parades.

No homespun musical medium more links Mahler and Ives than the band: winds and brass, cymbals and drums. In the finale of Mahler's Second Symphony, an offstage contingent of trumpets, triangle, and drum strikes a military tattoo while the orchestra launches an ardent song—"isolated sounds of a barely audible music," Mahler instructs, "carried in the wind." A pertinent anecdote, told by his friend Natalie Bauer-Lechner, records Mahler's reaction to the outdoor cacophony of a military band, men's choral society, and multiple barrel organs. "You hear? That's polyphony, and that's where I get it from! Even when I was quite a small child, in the woods at Iglau, this used to move me so strangely." Ives's delight at hearing Danbury bands playing simultaneously in different meters and keys is well known—and evoked in his *Putnam's Camp* (1912–1914). This phenomenon of unruly memory shards unpredictably imposed signifies something more than an experience of auditory delight. "Move[d] me strangely," Mahler says. He and Ives recall "scenes from childhood" of a different stamp than previous *Kinderszenen*.

And the same may be said of the childhood tunes that both composers decontextualize: they serve a need unknown to Mozart or Béla Bartók or countless others who notably recall songs learned early. Mahler rarely quotes songs literally—the exception proving the rule being "Frère Jacques," transformed into a grotesque funeral march for solo double bass in his First Symphony. Typically, he culls a familiar vernacular genre, like the Alpine folk song he improvises in movement three of his Third Symphony. He launches that symphony by citing the finale of Brahms's First, in a *fortissimo* passage scored for eight horns. Five movements later, he launches the Adagio finale with a theme from Beethoven's Op. 135

String Quartet tickling his ear. In his Fourth Symphony, Mahler adopts Schubert's innovation of a children's paradise finale—and clinches the debt by conspicuously quoting the heavenly last movement of Schubert's D major Piano Sonata. Many another composer would resist the notion of surreptitious borrowings; Mahler, an open book, wishes to conceal nothing.

And so it is with Ives, except that his remembered music is all pervasive. It is cited directly and indirectly, explicitly and subliminally, and serves many a purpose. He even anticipates the "messages in a bottle" that Dmitri Shostakovich would sneak into his symphonies and string quartets, quoting songs whose titles or temper instruct the knowing listener. That is: when Ives echoes Stephen Foster's "Old Black Joe" in the finale of his Second Symphony, we are expected to remember the words and absorb—as Ives put it in a letter to the conductor Artur Rodzinski—"sadness for the slaves." The citation in question, sung first by a solo horn and later by a solo cello (instruments that evoke the human voice), unforgettably elevates Foster's "Gone are the days"—words made to reverberate down long corridors of time. In fact, as J. Peter Burkholder has memorably demonstrated, Ives's Second is "all made of tunes"; it weaves a singular American tapestry, whose every melodic scrap may be traced to another source. An inane college song—"Where, O Where Are the Verdant Freshmen?"—becomes the second movement's lyric second subject. Much more familiar to present-day ears are "Camptown Races," "Turkey in the Straw," and—driving the final, refulgent climax—"Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean." Also, evoking Mahler's practice, there are fugitive whiffs of Bach, Brahms, and Wagner. In these feisty passages, Ives is father to the parent. A snatch of Brahms's Third Symphony provokes a polytonal disruption. An allusion to Brahms's First is italicized by a snare drum. A striding bass line uses Bach as a straight man for slapstick.

Some of Ives's most telling, most original borrowings occur in his tribute to Colonel Robert Gould Shaw's heroic Black Civil War regiment: "The St. Gaudens in Boston Commons." Keying on the proud Black faces and striding Black bodies of Augustus St. Gaudens's familiar bas-relief, this ghost dirge evinces a fog of memory suffused with weary echoes of Civil War songs, work songs, plantation songs, church songs, minstrel songs. Its obscure tonality and turbid scoring produce a patriotic mirage. Its hypnotic tread conveys stoic fortitude. An accompanying poem, a "black march" by Ives himself, references "generations of pain."

One searches in vain for musical precedents. Franz Liszt specialized in "reminiscences." These are personal impressions of operas by Meyerbeer, Vincenzo Bellini, and Giuseppe Verdi for virtuoso pianists. The chosen memories are shrewdly calibrated. They seamlessly combine opportunities for keyboard display with worldly exercises in

cultural inventory. For his *Rigoletto* reminiscence, Liszt chose a sublimely palpitating residue of the Act Three quartet, a perfumed elixir divorced from the action of the opera. Most exceptionally, Liszt experiences the final duet in Verdi's *Aida* as a Wagnerian love-death; in the hands of a sorcerer pianist like Claudio Arrau, the result is a masterpiece of musical alchemy, "O terra, addio" becoming a memory at the mercy of the rememberer.

The memory shards in Mahler and Ives, in comparison, are a chronic intrusion: the rememberer at the mercy of the memory. Their occurrence is made to seem involuntary, unpremeditated, unwilled. In "The St. Gaudens in Boston Commons," the outcome is spectral: a haunting of the present.

III

Memories unbidden, memories intermingling generate another mutual characteristic binding Mahler and Ives: impressions of collage or stream of consciousness. This is what makes their music seem to some "shapeless," "excessive," "cluttered." And the streaming memory shards—the snatches of song, the glimpses of childhood—do not typically coalesce as ordered musical structures; rather, they congeal as memory *swaths:* tropes of personal experience embedded in the psyche.

A well-known story: Young Gustav fled to escape his quarreling parents and heard on the street a barrel organ playing the children's tune "Ach, du Lieber Augustin." When Mahler conferred with Sigmund Freud in 1910, Freud inferred from this anecdote that the conjunction of "light amusement" with "high tragedy" was fixed in Mahler's mind. In his symphonies, Mahler does not quote "Ach, du Lieber Augustin." But neither does he escape the dark ripples of a foreboding home environment ruled by a tyrannical father. And there was death—of 10 of his siblings; of his adored first child, Maria Anna, nicknamed Putzi. In Manhattan in 1908, working in bed, he was transfixed by a funeral procession on the street below, a massive cortege flanked by bareheaded throngs. A fireman had drowned in the flooded basement of a burning store. The thudding bass drum heralding the finale of Mahler's unfinished Tenth Symphony is said to remember this event.

Tunes signaling light amusement equally signal a morbid susceptibility that shadows Mahler's musical moods. If his culled shards of memory are often biting, satirical, or insinuating, a signature memory swath is funereal: public rituals of mourning written into the dirges of his symphonies. Not only are there funeral march movements in the First, Second, Fifth, and Seventh symphonies; the funeral mode may also intrude at any moment—as when the clarion *fortissimo* opening of the sanguine Third instantly dissipates to the wailing winds and searing trumpet cries of a *pianissimo* processional: a stream of consciousness non sequitur.

If Mahler's memories are frequently ominous, Ives's are often consoling. A pertinent memory swath, distinctive to Ives, is of sounds heard over water. In the 1920 booklet *Essays Before a Sonata,* he fixes on a passage in Thoreau evoking "a melody, as it were, imported into the wilderness":

> At a distance over the woods, the sound acquires a certain vibratory hum as if the pineneedles in the horizon were the strings of a harp which it swept. ... A vibration of the universal lyre. ... Just as the intervening atmosphere makes a distant ridge of earth interesting to the eye by the azure tint it imparts.

"A horn over a lake," Ives continues, "gives a quality of sound and feeling that is hard to produce in any other way." In "Thoreau," the final movement of his *Concord* Piano Sonata, he pictures the writer sitting in his sun-drenched doorway, "rapt in reverie." "His meditations are interrupted only by the faint sound of the Concord bell," windswept over Walden Pond. An optional part for solo flute, performed offstage, evokes Thoreau playing his flute from afar.

Ives's fundamental memory was of his father, with whom he lovingly and fervently identified, and who died during his freshman year at Yale. "Father died just at the time I needed him most," he would recall. He also testified to daily communion with his deceased parent. The song "Remembrance" (1921), less than a minute long, sets words by the composer:

> A sound of a distant horn
> O'er shadowed lake is born
> my father's song.

The exquisite piano accompaniment, marked *pianissimo* and "with both pedals" (that is, softly smeared), is a polytonal wash—as of water and mist. Memory beckons: a siren song.

It was Harmony, Ives's wife as of 1908, who most filled the parental void. Her first love letter reads: "I never wrote a love letter and I don't know how. If I don't mail this today you won't get mail until Monday and I can't wait that long to have you see in my writing what you've seen these perfect days in my face—that I love you, and love you, and love you and no numbers of times of saying it can ever tell it. But *believe* it and that I am yours always and utterly—every bit of me." Harmony, too, inspired a song over the water. Ives recalled its provenance:

> The "Housatonic at Stockbridge" was suggested by a Sunday morning walk that Mrs. Ives and I took near Stockbridge, the

> summer after we were married. We walked in the meadows along the river, and heard the distant singing from the church across the river. The mist had not entirely left the river bed, and the colors, the running water, the banks and elm trees were something that one would always remember. Robert Underwood Johnson, in his poem, "The Housatonic at Stockbridge," paints this scene beautifully.

Johnson's poem—verses as provincial as Ives's setting is elemental—reads (as excerpted by Ives),

> Contented river! In thy dreamy realm
> The cloudy willow and the plumy elm:
> Thou beautiful!
> From ev'ry dreamy hill
> What eye but wanders with thee at thy will ...
> Ah! there's a restive ripple,
> And the swift red leaves
> September's firstlings faster drift;
> Wouldst thou away, dear stream?
> Come, whisper near!
> I also of much resting have a fear:
> Let me tomorrow thy companion be,
> By fall and shallow to the adventurous sea!

In 1910, Ives set "The Housatonic at Stockbridge" as a symphonic work, the third of his *Three Places in New England*. Remembering his courtship, Ives begins with a layered rendering of the river: steady in the low bass, trembling atop. The "distant singing from the church" is a tune as enraptured as its source, the hymn "Dorrnance," is plain. Then—an ecstatic moment—the "restive ripple" redoubles in a rush toward the Atlantic. The ending, a five-second *pianississimo* sonic residue, contradicts caricatures of Ives the naif; no American composer was ever more immune to cliche. In sum, Ives's memory song about courtship and marriage is equally a transcendental nature song, in which the becalming wife and eruptive husband are the Housatonic's dreamy realm and restive ripples.

Ives told a story that further contextualizes "The Housatonic at Stockbridge" and more. He had a habit, going back to his teens, of setting poems already famously set. His version of "Feldeinsamkeit," among the most sublime of all Brahms's songs, was under scrutiny by his Yale composition teacher, Horatio Parker, when George Chadwick turned up reeking of beer. Parker was objecting to the mobile harmonic raptures of

Ives's ersatz lied. Chadwick, New England's saltiest "official" composer, winked at Parker and quipped: "That's as good a song as you could write." He also said: "It's different from Brahms, as in the piano part and the harmony it takes a more difficult and almost opposite [approach], for the active tranquility of the outdoor beauty of nature is harder to express than just quietude." As the source of this anecdote is Ives himself, perhaps "active tranquility" paraphrases rather than quotes. What matters is that the observation is precisely apt—and not only for "Feldeinsamkeit," with its whispered, gently bristling "wrong notes" in the piano. It characterizes Ives's nature pieces to come, in which a restless quiescence, aquiver with elemental living matter, conveys both serenity and an internal thrust and power. It is the "restive ripple" that drives the Housatonic to the Atlantic—and that could suddenly drive Charles Ives to his couch, as observed in his retirement, collapsed and panting.

Ives wrote: "To think hard and deeply and to say what is thought, regardless of consequences, may produce a first impression ... of great muddiness. ... The mud may be a form of sincerity." He endorsed the "mud and scum" that Ralph Waldo Emerson extolled in his poem "Music": "There alway, alway something sings." "Feldeinsamkeit," "Remembrance," "The Housatonic at Stockbridge," "Thoreau," and other outdoor reveries are in Ives invariably discordant, however faintly. The water, the ether are never wholly limpid; harmonic and textural impurities abound. Ives's visions of river and meadow, woods and mountaintop are layered with Emersonian mud and scum: particles of sound; particles of memory.

It speaks volumes that Ives's favorite painter was J. M. W. Turner, whose obscurely layered landscapes resist clarity. Of the "shadow lines" Ives often adds to his crowded textures, Jan Swafford writes in his exceptional Ives biography that they "suggest other realities, parallel memories, the subconscious. They murmur sometimes inaudibly ... but float up now and then like a phantom presence within the music. Always they suggest something beneath the surface, beyond the immediate time and place."

IV

In Mahler's Vienna, the leading painter was Gustav Klimt, who comparably practiced a psychological realism stressing desire and anxiety, neurosis and transcendence. His mural *Philosophy* (1900) shows a tangle of naked bodies floating aimlessly: an aqueous cosmos inhabited by torpid humanity. As in other Klimt paintings, the liquefied medium suggests a stratum of primal subjectivity, an unconscious world of instinct: a stream of consciousness. The gently irregular harp tones punctuating the Adagietto of Mahler's Fifth Symphony similarly suggest particles adrift in an amniotic medium. In Mahler's Ninth, harp tones articulate the slow

motion of both outer movements; the seemingly random forward motion of this music in fact generates structure in the relative absence of the sonata forms that Mahler more commonly deployed. And so for Mahler, "water" is not—as in Ives—"nature." Rather, nature is the rarefied Alpine meadows Mahler signifies (in two of his symphonies) with the distant clamor of cowbells. And, like his water music, Mahler's mountain mode distills harmony and texture; it abjures mud and scum.

Ives, too, maps mountain summits, peaking with the tingling closing pages of his Second String Quartet and Fourth Symphony (the same music, redeployed). This is not the thin, rarefied air Mahler breathes aloft, but something muddy with hidden possibilities. Ives pertinently writes of Emerson: "As thoughts surge to his mind, he fills the heavens with them, crowds them in, if necessary, but seldom arranges them along the ground first." More fundamentally: like Mahler, Ives discovers the transcendental in outdoor tramps and reveries. Like Mahler's, his is a religious personality rejecting dogma, seeking and finding the divine in nature, and so silencing his demons and surmounting worldly travail.

And Ives and Mahler were composers with sundry demons to silence: demons, I am suggesting, that may be the ultimate source of the urgency of remembrance they experienced. Friedrich Nietzsche diagnosed as "weightlessness" the prevalent erosion of personal identity bred by the decline of religion, and by the anomie and enforced passivity of modern urban life. It is a condition we readily associate with fin-de-siecle Vienna—Mahler's wife, Alma, being a prominent example of the city's "neurasthenics," victims of "nervous prostration." But neurasthenia was also rampant among American women of the same era. Many points of dissimilarity may be adduced in juxtaposing Vienna and New York in the decades before World War I: the Americans remained buoyed by gusts of moral uplift long passe abroad; the Viennese avidly succumbed to currents of aesthetic decadence stigmatized in the New World. But the psychic stress of modernity was experienced in common. Ives and Mahler were powerfully buffeted by this seismic change.

Consider the magnitude of Mahler's dislocation as an assimilated Jew from Bohemia. The polyglot Hapsburg Empire was increasingly gripped by ethnic and political pressures. Jews enjoyed new social and physical mobility—and in sending Gustav to Vienna to study music, the ascendant Mahlers were ascending further. Even so, to take over the Court Opera 22 years later, Mahler had to convert to Catholicism (toward which he was not unsympathetic). Culturally, he identified as German. He married into a privileged precinct of non-Jewish society with anti-Semitic tendencies: unlike the city's composers and writers, its visual artists—Alma's milieu—were not Jews. His Jewish friends felt abandoned and betrayed. Meanwhile, the musician in Mahler was persecuted by overtly

anti-Semitic criticswho questioned his very pedigree. Add to this the death of his first daughter in 1907, the concurrent diagnosis of a diseased heart, and the consequent pressures on a marriage already incongruously and incompletely fused.

If Mahler in important ways remained an outsider in Vienna, Ives was ever more a stranger to the 20th century. In retirement, he spurned owning a radio or phonograph. He disliked using the telephone. He would flaunt his cane and curse overhead airplanes. He had in 1920 elaborately proposed a direct democracy amendment; decades later, disillusioned, he spurned newspapers and distanced himself from world events. He visited Danbury and found it too much changed; he moaned aloud, burying his head in his hands. His health, always erratic, declined. His recurrent cardiac symptoms and nervous collapses were classically neurasthenic.

He also suffered from diabetes. And he stopped composing—the music would not come. These symptoms may suggest irrational submission to his father's world (and Ives wanted to "see father again"). But they also signal a principled rejection of what life had become. The "Alcotts" movement of his *Concord* Sonata records the domestic pleasures and spiritual fortitude of a famous New England family, about which Ives wrote prophetically in 1920:

> Within the house, on every side, lie remembrances of what imagination can do for the better amusement of fortunate children who have to do for themselves—much-needed lessons in these days of automatic, ready-made, easy entertainment which deaden rather than stimulate the creative faculty.

No previous composer had been as subject to a rupture of past and present. For Mahler and Ives both, the fin-de-siecle was a momentous synapse, a state of sustained creative tension and flux. Subject to gusts of nostalgia, they could not go back—Ives's Danbury, Mahler's Iglau were no more. At the same time, both clung to Germanic ideals of uplift. "A symphony must be a world," Mahler said; more, his symphonies aspire to redeem the world. Ives's Fourth Symphony is comparably a world surging toward redemption. Mahler's incomprehension of the new music of Schoenberg—not just its means, but its purposes—was chronic. Ives rejected Claude Debussy, Maurice Ravel, and Igor Stravinsky as unwholesome.

The creative act, however understood, is therapeutic: a conversation with the self. For Mahler, for Ives, shards of memory proved an exigent mooring ingredient. And both secured a final mooring. Mahler said, "My time will come"—and meant it. His stunning death mask radiates fruition. Ives equally knew who he was and what he had done. In a 1942 birthday tribute, his daughter Edith wrote,

> Daddy, I have had a chance to see so many men lately—fine fellows, and no doubt the cream of our generation. But I have never in all my life come across one who could measure up to the fine standard of life and living that you believe in. … You have continually given to humanity right from your heart, asking nothing in return;—and all too often getting nothing. The thing that makes me happiest about your recognition today is to see the bread you have so generously cast upon most ungrateful waters, finally beginning to return to you. All that great love is flowing back to you at last. Don't refuse it because it comes so late, Daddy …

Charles Ives died of a stroke in the company of his wife and daughter. According to the pianist John Kirkpatrick, who had premiered the *Concord* Sonata:

> Edith told afterwards how the three of them held hands quietly—that it was a time of the kind of luminous serenity that animates his greatest music; he seemed as if transfigured. It was an intimate communion of unspoken awareness she could never have imagined, a serenity resolving all the tensions of his life that somehow persisted intact after he had quietly stopped breathing.

A last necessary topic is a footnote: New York City. Rather astonishingly, Mahler and Ives resided in Manhattan at the same moment—and their frustrations have contributed to misimpressions that endure. Pre–World War I New York was a world musical capital. More: the late Gilded Age maps the peak decades of American classical music. In Manhattan, the dominant figures were the composer Antonín Dvořák, directing the National Conservatory of Music (1892–1895), and the conductor Anton Seidl, leading the Metropolitan Opera (1885–1891) and New York Philharmonic (1891–1898). As New World cultural leaders, they tirelessly endeavored to jumpstart an American canon of symphonies and operas. Seidl, who had once been Wagner's amanuensis, was also high priest of a Wagnerism movement that flavored intellectual discourse nationally and "cured" many a neurasthenic. Dvořák himself acquired an American style to point the way. Seidl's proteges included Victor Herbert, whose Second Cello Concerto (a delightful work still performed) inspired Dvořák (still in New York) to write the most popular of all cello concertos. Slightly later, in the wake of Seidl's early death, the Met eclipsed venerable European companies showcasing a "Golden Age" of operatic art. Oscar Hammerstein, an impresario of genius, concurrently fielded the Manhattan Opera Company, which was every bit as impressive as the Met. Then, in 1908, Arturo Toscanini arrived to galvanize New York opera all over again.

Though indisputably a great conductor, Mahler was a minor player in this musical surge. At the Met, beginning in 1908, he introduced two novelties: a stylized Secessionist staging of *Fidelio* by Vienna's Alfred Roller, and a new style of Mozart performance stressing intimacy and ensemble. The Toscanini juggernaut forced him out, however, and these innovations were forgotten. He wound up leading the New York Philharmonic—and introducing what had already confounded Vienna: his own symphonies, and retouched versions of symphonies by Beethoven and other masters. As at the Met, he was ahead of his time. More crucially, he failed to advance music by Americans. Though he has typically been portrayed as a casualty of New York's ostensible innocence, he was plausibly judged a failure by those who remembered Dvořák and Seidl.

Ives's full-time New York City years are 1898 to 1912. As he attended symphonic concerts, he unquestionably heard Mahler conduct. He was aware of Dvořák's recipe for American composers, relying on African-American and Native American sources—and critiqued it. His Yale professor Horatio Parker had previously taught at Dvořák's National Conservatory. When Charles and Harmony attended a 1905 Hartford performance of Dvořák's *New World* Symphony, their courtship turned a corner; they called it "La Vita Nuova." The slow movement of Ives's own First Symphony pays homage to Dvořák's Largo. But Ives was alienated by musical New York. He grew tired of European masterworks. He equally ignored the city's musical bad boys: Edgard Varèse and Leo Ornstein. He was impatient for a different species of radical change—and would have felt no differently anywhere else. Arnold Schoenberg's impatience with musical Vienna is a pertinent cross-reference.

During the interwar decades, Aaron Copland—remembering visits to Mexico, where composers "direct[ed] the musical affairs of the nation"—complained that American composers labored "in a vacuum." He did not realize (few did) that not so long before, New York's musical leaders and patrons—including Germans, Italians, and Jews who by no means represented the social elite—jostled vigorously for precedence. Or that in Boston, Henry Higginson had invented, owned, and operated the Boston Symphony, built Symphony Hall, and made his orchestra the city's cultural hub and bellwether. It would be obtuse to deny that Ives, however disgruntled, fed off the agenda and energies of musical New York in its heyday. No more than Mahler was he the victim of a musical backwater. There was no "vacuum."

The larger picture here is of fin-de-siecle cultural ferment. It did not only occur in Vienna, Paris, and London. That Ives, like Mahler, relied on memory as a catalyst no more impugns New York than Mahler's memory shards impugn Vienna. Both cities were musical metropolises that variously stranded and empowered experimentation. Rooted in the

past, seeking the future, pursuing strenuous dual lives in business and art, Ives embodied dissonances—paradoxes and contradictions—that fired his genius even as they strained body and soul. Insisting on the goodness of mankind, unable to relinquish his ideals, he ultimately withdrew from the 20th century with a tenacity that calibrated the existential abyss into which he would otherwise have plunged.

V

Gustav Mahler, multifarious, is ever discovered anew. For Schoenberg, he signified a fresh sonic template, replacing the recessed cathedral sonority of the Romantics with a kaleidoscopic tapestry of individual voices. For Leonard Bernstein, citing the evaporative ending of the Ninth Symphony, Mahler was a prophet of 20th-century doom, "telling something too dreadful to hear." Obviously, these perspectives tell us as much about Schoenberg and Bernstein, their needs and circumstances, as they do about Mahler. Today's Mahler, I would say, is a remedial custodian of cultural memory, whose shards of recollection furnish ballast in times less doomladen than lethally shallow. In this role, he could hardly be more pertinent.

And Charles Ives even more so: he both curates the American past and is himself a necessary link. As he wrote in the Epilogue to *Essays Before a Sonata:* "America is not too young to have its divinities, and its place-legends." No other American composer connects more explicitly with the New England Transcendentalist tradition of Emerson and Thoreau. No other resonates so mightily with the ragged New World arts species epitomized by Herman Melville. Both Melville and Ives eschewed finishing school in Europe—the treasures and literary traditions of Italy and France, the conservatories of Vienna and Berlin. Concomitantly, both embraced a democratic ethos. Melville's schooling was obtained on the South Seas among sailors of every race and stripe. Ives insisted that his second vocation—selling life insurance—enhanced his musical vocation. "Get into the lives of the people!" he thundered. Melville's masterpieces are proudly unkempt. So it is with Ives: a frontier trait. If *Moby-Dick* and *Benito Cereno* are peak American achievements in large and smaller forms, so are Ives's 50-minute *Concord* Piano Sonata and four-minute "Housatonic at Stockbridge." And an early Ives composition, his Second Symphony, parallels Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*; fearlessly mining American vernacular speech and song, they are kindred landmarks in appropriating the European novel and symphony. In short, the pantheon of the self-created, "unfinished" American genius—the high canon of Emerson, Melville, and Twain, also of Walt Whitman, George Gershwin, and William Faulkner—is Ives's rightful home. And yet he remains less known, less widely appreciated.

If Nietzsche, processing decades of bewildering flux, diagnosed a condition of "weightlessness," today's affliction is pastlessness. Our world of social media and mounting, ever-multiplying gadgetry swims in bits and pieces, in disconnected dots, in superficia and ephemera. And the cause is global: technological. Looking at the big picture, positing a "new theory of modernity," the German sociologist Hartmut Rosa calls the governing dynamic "social acceleration." He surveys evaporating family structures, vanishing political and religious ties severed by the rocketing velocity of change. He evokes alienated "masses excluded from the processes of acceleration and growth" who will "take a stand against the acceleration society." He predicts an "unbridled onward rush into an abyss." It is a veritably Ivesian perspective, a trajectory hurtling toward memory's cancelation. Processing the lapse in cultural memory evident all around us, we should fear losing touch with the arts—with civilization—as a renewable reservoir.

Leonard Bernstein's recovery of Ives's Second Symphony in the 1950s—widely reported and acclaimed—should have secured Ives a firm foothold in the American symphonic repertoire. Bernstein broadcast and recorded Ives. He espoused Ives on national television. He took Ives abroad. He laid the groundwork, but it never happened. Incredibly, tellingly, the present Ives sesquicentenary is mainly being celebrated abroad. In the United States, it will be commemorated most ambitiously not by any orchestra or music director, but by the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana
University, which in October hosts nine days of cross-disciplinary exploration supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities. Who else—what institutions of education and performance—will remember Charles Ives in the years to come? It is not an idle question. It is now 78 years since the composer Lou Harrison unforgettably wrote,

> I suspect that the works of Ives are a great city, with public and private places for all, and myriad sights in all directions. ... In the not-too-distant future it may be that we will enter this city and find each in his own way his proper home address, letters from the neighbors, and indeed all of a life, for who else has built a place big enough for us, or seen to it that all were equally and justly represented? Such is the work of Ives, and if we here, in the United States, are still really homeless of the mind, it is not because men have not spent their hearts and spirit building that home ... but simply because we refuse to move in.

Charles Ives and the Visual

TIM BARRINGER

In 1914, a chance conversation with an artist in a railroad carriage brought forth from Charles Ives a rare meditation on painting. "The human anatomy," he wrote, "can never be and has never been the inspiration for a great work of art." Neither Michelangelo nor Picasso, it seems, was his cup of tea. Reserving the possibility that "a great painter," a Rembrandt perhaps, might capture "the influence and benediction of the tender, strong and beautiful soul," Ives seems to have discounted the possibility that visual art might, like his own music, capture the affective power of memory, or to encapsulate a world.

Ives's exact contemporary Arnold Schoenberg (both men were born in 1874) corresponded with the painter Wassily Kandinsky in 1911 about composition and abstraction across media, a dialogue that stands as a paradigmatic exchange in modernist aesthetics. Ives, by contrast, was, despite the radically unorthodox nature of his compositions, as pointedly uninterested in the European musical innovations of his own day as he was unwilling to conform to older academic proprieties. He turned his back, too, on the contemporary developments in painting and sculpture (exemplified by Marcel Duchamp and Constantin Brancusi) that convulsed American critical opinion at the Armory Show of 1913—the first large-scale exhibition of modern art to be held in this country.

But to count Ives as merely one more prudish, iconophobic New England Yankee and thus dismissive of the fine arts (he was all those things) would be to overlook a central aspect of his work: namely, that formally innovative representations of place, space, and atmosphere are essential components of his finest music, and that his compositions are insistently visual in their evocation of locations and events experienced and of times past. By examining the key American visual media of Ives's formative years—photography, landscape, and still-life painting; lithographic prints, quilt, and collage—we might begin to identify suggestive parallels with his idiosyncratic, vernacular creative practice.

To do so is to confront the disjuncture between the modernity of Ives's restless musical experimentation—a modernity shared by visual media beyond the canon of the fine arts—and the by-now hackneyed attempt to locate him in a linear narrative of musical modernism. During the 20th

century, critics attempted with limited success (and against his vehement objections) to conscript Ives as a pioneering modernist, a precursor of Igor Stravinsky, Arnold Schoenberg, or Karlheinz Stockhausen. But Ives cannot be co-opted for any grand narrative. He was a more interesting figure than that, a musician able to find a sonic language with which to explore the fraught and unresolved condition of modernity as he experienced it. Ives was his own man, staging in his music unresolved paradoxes of innovation and nostalgia, dissonance and tonality, saturnalia and convention.

Photography and Memory in Danbury

Accounts of Ives's life and work concur that his hometown of Danbury held an outsize role in the composer's imaginary. The city's presence, alongside that of townships such as Concord, Stockbridge, and Redding, is felt across his oeuvre. The position of his family—long-established, respectable, and prosperous merchants—provided Ives with a deep sense of local belonging that was increasingly unusual in a country scarred by Indigenous dispossession and political schism, one in the throes of rapid economic and social change, its population repeatedly transformed by waves of immigration from Europe and beyond. Ives was defined as a composer not by conformity but by difference. In recalling the quotidian rhythms and rituals of life in a Yankee town, he fashioned compositions of exceptional originality. His music constantly revisited the scenes of his youth as if searching the pages of a Victorian album, whose sepia photographic prints and stiff *carte-de-visite* portraits could offer a shockingly direct link with lost times and people, with the faces of the dead. Indeed, the very lifeblood of Ives's works is a vividly immediate affect that we might think of as photographic; like the photograph, his music connects us viscerally with a world that is lost.

The key figure in Ives's portrait gallery was, undoubtedly, his father, an eccentrically experimental bandmaster. In Figure 1, George Edward Ives is seen in band uniform around 1890 in a photograph that aptly echoes the composition of tintypes from the Civil War. As a young man, George had led the Second Connecticut Heavy Artillery Band, a formative experience and one greatly respected by his son. Expertly cradling his cornet, Ives senior has a quizzical look, refusing the formal frontality typical of the genre. The bandleader seems to be taking a breath, about to speak; is there perhaps a hint of sardonic wit about his whiskered mouth? Among George's experiments, which included toying with quarter tones, the most notorious was to direct two bands, playing pieces in different keys, to march past each other, creating a sound of (in Charles's phrase) "cacophonous conflict," a clear precedent for the younger Ives's most outlandishly joyous musical mash-ups. An early death in 1894 left this youthful and vigorous image, zealously preserved by his son, as George's final memorial.

An albumen print of the Ives houses, shown in Figure 2, was made in the summer of 1892, at a time when Charlie, at 17, was a popular school football player, soon to head off to Hopkins Grammar School in New Haven and thence to Yale. A precocious organist and composer, the boy had recently performed his own *Variations on America* in a concert at Brewster, New York. The following year he would encounter modernity at its most unapologetic at the electrically lit World's Columbian Exposition. Preserved among the Ives papers in the Yale Music Library, this faded image of a corner of Danbury captures the spirit of the place. It does so with the revelatory magic that attached to the photograph in Ives's youth, when the medium was but half a century old. Chapel Place is viewed from Main Street: on the left, the modest home in which Ives was born sits demurely among trees and shrubs; beyond it can be glimpsed the larger house, converted from the family barn, in which he lived as a teenager.

The photograph marked a radical divergence from earlier forms of popular representation seen on the walls of Victorian America, such as silhouettes cut from paper, or Currier and Ives's hand-colored lithographic prints, for example, *American Homestead Spring* in Figure 3. Imagery of this kind hovers in Ives's pictorial imagination in the way that Stephen Foster's songs are ever-present in his musical vocabulary, as fondly remembered half-truths of an earlier era. Every aspect of the Currier and Ives lithograph reinforces the theme of fecundity, safety, homeliness. But unlike the print's sugary idyll, the photograph of the homestead at Danbury (much like Ives's later scores) incorporates a multitude of incidental, miscellaneous, quotidian details. The lens registered the undulations of worn brick pavement and the soil in the road, likely the dung of horses such as those driven at speed by Charles's eccentric uncle Isaac. Most poignant is the slim figure of a child, holding a portfolio, doubtless told by the photographer to stand motionless as the plate was exposed. Our surrogate in the image, this small white-clad figure allows the viewer by association to see, to hear, to smell a lost world with the uncanny smack of truthfulness that also marks out Ives's compositions. Our avatar contrasts vividly with the rich darkness of the mossy lawn behind, like a figure in a dream; above rises the severe geometric bulk of the First Congregational Church, where the Ives family worshipped.

The photograph sits today in an acid-free solander box in a silent, air-conditioned archive, but the juxtaposition of large white-painted church and small residence irresistibly conjures a soundscape: surely, from the quiet wooden interior of the homestead, the echoing cadence of hymns could be heard from services across the lane. Such experiences might account for Ives's repeated evocation of the foursquare plod of Victorian hymnody, which so often penetrates the complex carapace of his experimental scores. Just as the sound of many congregations and denominations in full voice must have echoed though Danbury on a Sunday

morning, communal singing bursts forth through the eclectic texture of scores including the Second and, spectacularly, Third Symphonies, written long after Ives had stepped aside from formal religious observance and ceased his work as a professional organist, embracing a double life as insurance executive and visionary composer.

Picturesque and Sublime by the Housatonic

Though Danbury was a small industrial city, indelibly marked by environmental pollution, strikes, and social upheaval, Ives's musical evocations are overwhelmingly pastoral in mood. With a brisk walk, Victorian Danburians could be amid countryside that was palpably bucolic. A close reading of the Transcendentalists was formative for Ives's understanding of the numinous in nature. Emerson's "Nature" featured in an essay he wrote in his senior year at Yale for William Lyon Phelps's celebrated course on American literature. A lifetime later, Ives returned to the Transcendentalists in the first section of his *Essays Before a Sonata*, an aesthetic manifesto published to accompany his Second Piano Sonata, *Concord, Mass. 1840–60*, whose muscular first movement is titled "Emerson."

Ives's view of nature, like that of his literary heroes, was fundamentally shaped by looking; visual contemplation would lead to spiritual truth. For Emerson, as for his English contemporary John Ruskin, familiar natural forms could reveal the profundities that lie behind or beneath them. Ruskin first formulated his aesthetic theory by looking closely at the work of J. M. W. Turner. It is no surprise that on his first trip abroad, to England in 1924, Ives headed to the Tate Gallery. There he steeped himself in Turner's work, which he revered more than that of any other artist. Turner's early watercolors captured a profusion of detail within the comforting framework of the picturesque; but one suspects it was the later, visionary canvases that Ives admired. Like Ruskin, he would have been aware that a work like Turner's *Norham Castle, Sunrise*, shown in Figure 4, though apparently unfinished, inchoate and hazy, was rooted in a lifetime of close observation. "The higher Emerson soars, the more lowly he becomes," wrote Ives, and the same is true of Turner, who, Ruskin complained, retained a lifelong fondness for "black barges, patched sails, and every possible condition of fog." The affinity between the composer and the long-dead English painter surely rested upon their shared insistence on solid earthy matter, on the real, rendered truly, but without excessive detail or flashy finish. Ives quotes Ruskin on the power that all great pictures have, which "depends on the penetration of the imagination into the *true* nature of the thing represented." When Ives described Emerson as "a seer painting his discoveries in masses with any color that may lie at hand—cosmic, religious, human, even sensuous; a recorder freely describing the inevitable struggle in the soul's uprise," he could have been describing Turner, or himself.

Fig. 1: *George Ives in his Bandmaster's Uniform* c. 1890, photograph.

Charles Ives Papers MSS 14, photograph courtesy of Irving S. Gilmore Music Library, Yale University

Fig. 2: *Danbury, Chapel Place viewed from Main Street*, 1892, photograph.

Charles Ives Papers MSS 14, photograph courtesy of Irving S. Gilmore Music Library, Yale University

Fig.3: *American Homestead: Spring*, c.1869. hand-tinted lithograph
Published by Currier & Ives.
Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C.

Fig.4: Joseph Mallord William Turner, *Norham Castle: Sunrise*, 1845, oil on canvas
Tate, Accepted by the nation as part of the Turner Bequest 1856.

Fig. 5: Frederic Edwin Church, *Autumn*, 1856, oil on canvas
Olana, New York State Historic Site

Fig. 6: Frederic Edwin Church, *Twilight in the Wilderness*,1860, oil on canvas
Cleveland Museum of Art, Mr. and Mrs. William H. Marlatt Fund 1965.233

Fig. 7: Wallace Nutting, *Between Sunlight and Firelight*, c.1910-1920, hand tinted photograph

Historic New England PC039

Fig. 8: Tamar Horton Harris North, *Quilt (or decorative throw), Crazy pattern*, c. 1877

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Generations of American painters, from Thomas Cole through Frederic Church to Winslow Homer, carried Turner's project into the New World. When Ives described a natural scene in sound, it was with pictorial concerns in mind—pictorial concerns defined by this tradition. "The Housatonic at Stockbridge" would become the final movement of Ives's first orchestral set, *Three Places in New England*. It was rooted, like landscapes of the American sublime, in a particular moment of intense observation; in Ives's case, a walk by the river with his new wife, Harmony Twichell Ives, in 1908. "The grand old River," Ives recalled in old age, "is one [of] nature's masterpieces, and has been an inspiring friend of Mr. I. from his boyhood days." The short orchestral piece "could reflect ... the moving River, its landscapes & Elm trees on its way to the adventurous sea." The muted upper strings should, he added, "be heard rather subconsciously as a kind of distant background of an autumn sky and mists seen through the trees over a river valley." These words evoke a sketch in watercolor made on the spot, worked up in the studio into a finished composition, as was the practice of Turner, Cole, and Church, whose early canvas *Autumn, 1856* in Figure 5 captures something of the same effect. The hues of Ives's opening are those of a hushed picturesque, in a land of timeless stasis. Long drawn out and tonally ambiguous lines in the strings give a sense of the slow-moving river's muddy path, a vision of horizontal progress through space. There is none of the Gallic iridescence that Claude Debussy or Maurice Ravel would bring to their depictions of watery depths. A solemn melody emerges in the second violas, horn, and English horn, and is harmonized with triads in the lower strings and brass, hinting at the distant sound of a hymn. Subtle shifts in the soundscape suggest, first, the gentle rippling and, finally, a move into more turbid waters.

As the movement rises to a climax, we enter the realm of the sublime, defined in American art by Church's blood-red and brimstone-yellow canvas *Twilight in the Wilderness*, shown in Figure 6. "The Housatonic at Stockbridge" likewise insists on a distinctively American kind of sublimity, fashioned from local materials. As Ives reaches a climax, we move from past to present. In many of Turner's defining essays in the sublime, such as *Rain, Steam and Speed* (1844), in which a locomotive crosses a viaduct, spitting fire, technology represents both a violation of the natural landscape and a bringer of new energies. Ives, too, was acutely aware of the intrusions of technology, setting in 1913 his own text for a song "The New River":

> Down the river comes a noise!
> It is not the voice of rolling waters;
> It's only the sounds of man:
> Phonographs and gasoline, dancing halls and tambourine,

[Human beings gone machine.]
Killed is the blare of the hunting horn;
The River Gods are gone.

In 1911, *The New York Times* could write of the "calamity" that would result from plans to build a dam at the Zoar Bridge, a key water catchment area for the Housatonic. The dissonance and pandemonium that swiftly overpower Ives's picturesque idyll in "The Housatonic at Stockbridge" surely portend not merely a journey downstream, but the transformative and fatal powers of the modern.

Aunt Sarah and the Modernity of Vernacular Objects

Something like a photographic negative of Ives's preoccupations and dilemmas can be found in the peculiar figure of Wallace Nutting, who graduated from Harvard in 1887, and whose early career as a Congregational minister came to a sudden end with the onset of "neurasthenia," the form of neurosis that also afflicted Ives. Recovering from mental illness, Nutting turned to photography in the picturesque tradition, with a focus on small-town rural New England, which he described as "old America." Ives's recourse to the local past generated works of exceptional formal originality and poetic intensity, and he strictly separated moneymaking work from creative practice. Nutting, by contrast, cashed in on nostalgia and claimed to have sold 10 million hand-colored prints. His "Colonials" were staged in historic interiors with models wearing gracious 18th-century costumes, as in Figure 7. Restoring historic houses in Wethersfield, Connecticut, he pioneered the "period room" display, in which historic spaces were dressed with colonial furniture, often reproduced using modern techniques. Period rooms were central to the Metropolitan Museum of Art's new American Wing, which opened in 1924. The galleries emphasized an elite Anglo-Saxon and Protestant lineage, a formulation of nostalgia that easily shaded over into the reactionary, anti-immigrant politics shared by some of the museum's wealthy patrons. Unlike Nutting's slick presentation of American history as genteel kitsch, or the American Wing's paean to Georgian gentility, Ives's rough-hewn formal innovations emerged from local knowledge and lived experience.

This revival of interest in historical American objects at the moment of Ives's artistic maturity also produced a different narrative. New materials came to the fore at this time, under the influence of the Arts & Crafts Movement, and in particular, of William Morris's revival of interest in what became known as folk art or craft. Simple American rural farmhouse furniture and architecture inspired Gustav Stickley to create a new line of unadorned wooden furniture, which he promoted in *The Craftsman* journal, first published in 1901. Collectors suddenly discerned

aesthetic value in functional objects from farms and homesteads, lovingly made by their owners. Hooked and sewn rugs with bold geometric patterns, like so-called "crazy quilts," could seem authentically American while also appealing to the burgeoning taste for the "primitive" in modernist circles. Formally innovative, these works broke all the rules of genteel decorative comportment. It was in this sense that Leonard Bernstein could describe Charles Ives as a "greatly gifted primitive."

A "crazy quilt" now at the Metropolitan Museum, shown in Figure 8, is, like Ives's works, full of direct references to the life of its maker, in this case Tamar Horton Harris North of North's Landing, Indiana. Commemorating the death of her 20-year-old daughter, Grace Gertrude North, the quilt consists of pieces of silk and silk velvet, with additional swatches of cotton and cotton lace, some of which may have been taken from Grace's clothes. Its simple memorial iconography features an angel and Grace's name with a calla lily to either side. The work is one of dizzying sophistication and vibrant formal energy, unique and specific to its time and place. Whereas a quilt and a symphony or tone poem are palpably different, and the life of a farmer's wife may be completely unlike that of a university-educated insurance executive, there is nonetheless a kinship between Ives's music and a wild, innovative textile like this one.

In "Essays before a Sonata" Ives makes a similar point:

> If the Yankee can reflect the fervency with which "his gospels" were sung—the fervency of "Aunt Sarah," who scrubbed her life away for her brother's ten orphans, the fervency with which this woman, after a fourteen-hour work day on the farm, would hitch up and drive five miles through the mud and rain to "prayer meetin'," her one articulate outlet for the fullness of her unselfish soul—if he can reflect the fervency of such a spirit, he may find there a local color that will do all the world good. If his music can but catch that spirit by being a part with itself, it will come somewhere near his ideal—and it will be American, too.

Quilting might well have been one of the activities an "Aunt Sarah" would undertake, and the "spirit" expressed in rural American crafts might align with Ives's compositional practice. Certainly the local color is present in Grace's memorial quilt; it is an inalienably American object. Here, too, is a refusal to follow established patterns, to conform to preordained canons of taste and procedure. And here is a fierce originality. These are, surely, the essential characteristics of the work of Charles Ives.

Charles Ives's Civil War

ALLEN C. GUELZO

Surely one of the most peculiar letters ever written by an American composer came from the hand of Charles Ives in July 1913. For one thing, it was written on the letterhead of the Eagle Hotel in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania—the same Eagle Hotel that, 50 years before, had been the temporary headquarters of Major-General John Buford at the outset of the fighting in the greatest of all battles of the American Civil War. But there was more oddness to the letter than just its heading, beginning with the fact that Ives arrived in Gettysburg just as massive celebrations marking the battle's 50th anniversary were beginning. The little crossroads town was playing host, from June 29 until July 6, to 44,713 Union veterans of the battle, alongside 8,694 Confederate veterans, in a great reunion celebration whose most famous participants were Union General Daniel Edgar Sickles (who lost a leg at Gettysburg) and President Woodrow Wilson. Moreover, Ives was there in the company of his father-in-law, a Union veteran who had served at Gettysburg. And it only got stranger from there. Writing to his business partner, Julian "Mike" Myrick, Ives related how "[w]e're having a wild, busy, and hot time of it." Ives even found himself "appointed bodyguard to Gen. Sickels, as his cussing keeps the ladies away." After a few days of this, Ives was itching to escape back to his home in West Redding, Connecticut, where he would then "try to settle down."

All of which begs the obvious question: What was Charles Ives doing at the Gettysburg 50th reunion, and especially as a "bodyguard" for the notorious Dan Sickles?

A large part of the answer to that question lies in correcting a basic misperception of Ives's place in American music. In the seven decades since his death, Ives has frequently been pigeonholed as "the first major American modernist," and even Aaron Copland would describe Ives's *Central Park in the Dark* (1907) as "musical cubism." Yet no one would have rejected—and did reject—the modernist label with more curmudgeonly vigor than Charles Ives. Modernist pretenses to live in abstractions left Ives cold (just as Ives's music left many of the modernists cold). Instead, his music (said the violinist Jerome Goldstein after playing the premiere of Ives's Second Violin Sonata in 1924) was the echo of New England "in all its glory and bigotry," brimming with "pages of revival

meetings, Boston Tea Parties, boiled dinners, and those innumerable inrushes of the soul which Emerson received—or said he did." Amelia Ives Van Wyck remembered that her cousin

> would sit down and play something, and he'd say, "What is that?" I remember once I said, "it sounds like Sunday in the country." And he said, "That's just what it is." It was part of the Concord Sonata, I think. To another one I said, "That sounds like a storm at sea." And he said, "No it's in the mountains."

Much as Ives deployed all manner of experiments in polytonality, polyrhythms, and dissonance, he did so, as Goddard Lieberson shrewdly noticed, "not out of a sense of modernism or out of a sense of avant-gardism … but out of a kind of necessity," a necessity generated by his passionate longing to re-create the small-scale, slow-speed, golden-filtered memories of his youth, a youth in which no event had more power than the American Civil War. Within that longing, Ives would build musical tributes to his father, a Civil War bandmaster; to the Union cause whose everyday music permeates his songs and his violin sonatas; and to the moral imperative of emancipation, which he celebrated in his Second Symphony and, at its highest pitch, the first movement of *Three Places in New England*. Far from an oddity, Ives in 1913 could have been in no more significant place than Gettysburg.

Charles Edward Ives was born in Danbury, Connecticut, in 1874, almost a decade after the close of the Civil War. But the memories, influence, and impact of the war hung thickly in the atmosphere of small-town western Connecticut, as indeed it could hardly have been otherwise. Overall, Connecticut sent some 55,000 men into the Union ranks during the Civil War, almost a quarter of its white male population; 1,100 of them enlisted from Danbury in just the first two years of the war, including Ives's father, George Ives. When Nelson White, the lieutenant colonel of the 1st Connecticut Heavy Artillery, returned to Danbury on recruiting duty in September, 1862, he signed up the 17-year-old George Ives as bandmaster for the regiment, and Ives built it into what Ulysses Grant once called "the best band in the army."

George Ives went on to become Danbury's principal town musician, and he inculcated into his son Charles a taste for experimenting with sound—with the cacophony of rival bands marching past each other, with songs sung to accompaniments in a different key, with amateur singers whose earnestness was more valuable than the steadiness of their intonation—and Sidney Cowell was not far from the mark when she wrote that "the son has written his father's music for him." But George Ives's

Civil War career held a special place of honor in the younger Ives's mind. Lehman Engel, the Broadway conductor and composer, remembered that Ives "always talked about Pa and Lincoln as though they were two people that one met every day on the street," and especially about "what Lincoln said to Pa and what Pa said to Lincoln."

Still, as vital as George Ives was to his connections to the Civil War, Charles Ives had another, almost as important, connection to the war through his father-in-law, Joseph Hopkins Twichell, "a fighting chaplain of the Civil War," and it was the Twichell connection that brought Charles Ives to Gettysburg in 1913. Fifty-two years before, as a 23-year-old divinity student at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, Twichell had signed himself up as chaplain to the 71st New York Volunteers, one of the five regiments of the so-called "Excelsior Brigade" in the Union's Army of the Potomac. The brigade's chief recruiter and overall commander was the raffish New York politician Daniel Edgar Sickles, who only three years before had shot to death his wife's lover, Philip Barton Key. Sickles had beaten the murder charge on a plea of temporary insanity, and in a bid to restore his tarnished political fortunes, crossed the political aisle to support Abraham Lincoln's Republicans in the Civil War.

When Sickles wangled a commission as brigadier-general of the Excelsior Brigade, Twichell was at first suspicious of him. But when he heard Sickles address the brigade in May 1861, every doubt about Sickles's innocence and sincerity unwisely vanished. Even though Sickles nearly cost the Union army the battle by thrusting his troops far to the front of the Union position at Gettysburg, Twichell was convinced that Sickles "had been the master-spirit of the day and by his courage, coolness and skill had averted a threatened defeat." Fifty years later, the elderly Twichell arranged to rendezvous with his 93-year-old one-time commander in New York City, and travel from there to Gettysburg for the great reunion. Fearful for her father's health, Harmony Ives beseeched her husband to accompany her, Twichell, and Sickles to Gettysburg, and as a group, they set up temporary residence at the Rogers house, within view of the spot on the Trostle Farm where Sickles had been shot. And Charles Ives became Sickles's unlikely "bodyguard."

But it was not just Ives's family connections that attracted him to the Civil War: his four years at Yale in the 1890s also surrounded him with the shadows of the conflict. Yale gave more than 700 of its alumni to the Union cause (and 114 of them died), and as early as 1865, Yale was tinkering with plans for a Civil War memorial on campus. The anti-slavery Hartford parson, Horace Bushnell, spoke then of how the war had not merely reunited a divided nation, but had also become "the tide swing of a great historic consciousness" that would aid Americans to "define our own canons of criticism" and yield "incident enough to feed five hundred years

of fiction." And with what might have been an anticipation 30-years-on of Charles Ives, Bushnell asked, "Are there no new singers to meet that great era? None who shall do it full justice?"

It was a question Charles Ives would spend much of his life answering, in music. His composition teacher at Yale, Horatio Parker, gave him the basic tools and skills of composing. But Parker was also dismissive of the thematic materials with which Ives had grown up in Danbury—marches, camp-meeting hymns, ragtime—and Ives would remember that, by the time he graduated from Yale, "he was in open revolt against the Yale music department." It would become Ives's mission instead to use unusual "sound and rhythm combinations" from the American vernacular to capture the spirit of the camp meeting, or "the excitement, sounds and songs across the field and grandstand" at a football game—something "you could not do … with a nice fugue in C." Those "combinations" would also shape the way he rendered the Civil War into sound.

To Charles Ives, the Civil War would never be less than what Stuart Feder called "Ives's War of Wars." It became "the most important event in history," a shining moment of moral truth, sanctified by the memories of his father (who died just after Ives departed for Yale and who left Ives with nothing "to fill up that awful vacuum"), the energies of New England abolitionists, and Lincoln's emancipation of three million slaves. The compositions he wrote to remember it are all lavish demonstrations of a determination to use the American past to understand its present.

The *114 Songs* offers the broadest entrance into Ives's remembrance of the Civil War, since so many of the songs reach for the raucous and unrefined music of Civil War military bands. "He Is There!" is an unapologetic tribute to the American doughboy of World War One who "fifteen years ago" had marched "beside his granddaddy / in the decoration day parade"— which was as much as to say that the grandfathers who served in the Union Army had exemplified the military virtues the grandsons would need in 1917. If the words were insufficient to make that point, the music would. In Ives's imagination, "the village band would play those old war tunes, and the G.A.R. would shout … as it sounded on the old camp ground"—all to the tune of Walter Kittredge's "Tenting Tonight on the Old Camp Ground" and George Frederick Root's "The Battle Cry of Freedom." It was an important way of connecting the American past with the crisis of the Great War in the present, as the "boys" marched off to ensure that Lincoln's old motto of "liberty to all" was still carried forward as "Liberty for all."

"He Is There!" in 1917 is only the most obvious of Ives's messages from the Civil War. He had already composed (and at approximately the same time as his visit to Gettysburg) "Old Home Day," which after a

dreamy introduction, begins a 4/4 march beat "along Main Street" of a "'Down East' Yankee town." The pace is set by "the '3rd Corps' fife"—and was it an accident that Dan Sickles had commanded the 3rd Corps of the Army of the Potomac at Gettysburg? Snatches of Julia Ward Howe's "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" now "rouse the hearts of the brave and fair," while the repeat adds another "fife, violin or flute" obbligato with "The Girl I Left Behind Me" and the Irish Brigade marching tune "St. Patrick's Day in the Morning." But nothing else in the *114 Songs* quite rises to a pitch of Civil War enthusiasm as much as the solemn "Lincoln, the Great Commoner" (a setting of Edwin Markham's 1900 poem "Lincoln, the Man of the People"). The introduction brings forward phrases from "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" (which are then repeated six measures from the end), but also "My Country, 'Tis of Thee," "Hail, Columbia, Happy Land," "Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean." At the end, the final cadence is a phrase from "The Star-Spangled Banner"—as though Lincoln was summation of American identity in general.

If the *114 Songs* contain the widest samples of Civil War musical echoes, it is Ives's instrumental and symphonic works that contain the clearest intellectual and cultural messages from the war. Some of this was surely tied to his memories of George Ives, "memories of an old soldier, to which this man still holds tenderly," as he wrote in the epilogue to *Essays Before a Sonata*. But another part served as Ives's endorsement of what Barbara Gannon has called "the Won Cause," the persistent loyalty of both white and black Union veterans to the memory of a war that was caused by slavery, fought over slavery, ended with the destruction of slavery, and pointed all Americans toward a society that erased the "badges of slavery or servitude." And it was surely no accident that Ives, as the son of a Connecticut veteran, caught more than a little of the close connection that Connecticut veterans like George Ives made between their wartime service and emancipation. As Gannon has shown us, Connecticut's 20-odd volunteer infantry regiments spent most of their time on battlefields outside the large-scale campaigns of the war, and, significantly, in close contact with the peripheral battles fought by the new Black volunteer regiments at Olustee, Charleston, and Port Hudson. And in the years after the war, Connecticut veterans organized Grand Army of the Republic posts with no color lines: "We have no separate posts here," reported one newspaper, "as colored and white are united."

The particular accents of this kind of memory can be seen clearly in the movement Ives entitled "Decoration Day" (the modern Memorial Day) from the orchestral set *New England Holidays*, most of which he likely composed between the Gettysburg reunion and 1915. From its languorous, quadruple-piano opening, the dream world of that "early

morning" emerges slowly, until the flute, the bassoon, and then the horns introduce Henry Clay Work's "Marching Through Georgia":

> Bring the good old bugle boys, we'll sing another song
> Sing it with a spirit that will start the world along ….

Then, a low, steady marching beat begins, under a distant quote from "The Battle Cry of Freedom" and "Tenting Tonight," as a memorial parade to the town cemetery forms up. When the cemetery is reached, the trumpets introduce "Taps" (along with "Nearer, My God, to Thee" in the strings) as a reminder that this is intended as a tribute to fallen Union soldiers. The band that led the procession to the cemetery now strikes up the 6/8 rhythm of David Wallis Reeves's "Second Regiment Connecticut National Guard March," and with the march's final cadence, the band stops, the strings return to the mood of reverent quiet, "and the sunset behind the West Mountain breathes its benediction upon the day." And as if to leave no doubt about the particular message "Decoration Day" was intended to highlight, Ives originally added "Abolitionists" to the title. The marches remind the listener of George Ives the bandmaster; as specifically *Union* marches, they also single out the "Won Cause" as the object for which George Ives and his peers struggled.

Civil War tunes also have a role in Ives's smaller instrumental works (especially the first two violin sonatas, where Ives set himself the task of "trying to relive the sadness of the old Civil War days") and even more, in his largest symphony, the Second, which Ives probably composed, for the most part, between 1902 and 1909, drawing at times on older material. The echoes of the Civil War are audible in the symphony's first movement with "Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean." But much more dramatic is the quick introduction, at the outset of the second movement, of Henry Clay Work's 1864 abolitionist song "Wake Nicodemus," where the powerful slave character, Nicodemus, foretells the coming of freedom:

> But he long'd for the morning which then was so dim—
> For the morning which now is at hand.

"Wake Nicodemus" is only slightly more prominent than Stephen Foster's tune "Massa's In The Cold, Cold Ground" (at a time when Foster's writing was still thought to be a record of real plantation songs of the slaves), followed by hints of "Columbia" (in the brief fourth movement), a faint reference to "The Battle Cry of Freedom," and finally another Foster lament, "Old Black Joe" (which Ives believed embodied "the Days before the Civil War" and "reflects this country's days of fret storm & stress for liberty," as well as Foster's "sadness for the slaves"). What should also not

be missed is the consistent message of the wartime themes he uses: the awakening from slavery to freedom, the burial of the Old Massa in the "cold, cold ground," the celebration of "Liberty's form" in "Columbia."
Nothing, however, in Ives's oeuvre captures so thoroughly Ives's fascination with the Civil War as the first of the three movements of *Three Places in New England*, which he began working on in 1912 and scored in 1914—on either side of the Gettysburg reunion. That movement is clearly devoted to a musical portrait of Augustus Saint-Gaudens's famous 1897 monument on Boston Common to Colonel Robert Gould Shaw and the 54th Massachusetts Volunteers—the first Union regiment to be recruited from Black state volunteers once the Emancipation Proclamation had sanctioned Black enlistment in the Union armies.

The movement, which Ives entitled "The 'St. Gaudens' in Boston Common (Col. Shaw and his Colored Regiment)," carries a brief poetic preface, written by Ives himself:

> Moving,— Marching— Faces of Souls!
> Marked with generations of pain,
> Part-freers of a Destiny,
> Slowly, restlessly—swaying us on with you
> Towards other Freedom!
> The man on horseback, carved from
> A native quarry of the world Liberty
> And from what your country was made.
> You images of a Divine Law
> Carved in the shadow of a saddened heart—
> Never light abandoned—
> Of an age and of a nation.
> Above and beyond that compelling mass
> Rises the drum beat of the common-heart
> In the silence of a strange and
> Sounding afterglow
> Moving,—Marching—Faces of Souls!

The "Saint Gaudens" begins with slow-moving figures, mostly in the strings, followed by a hint of the Stephen Foster song "Old Black Joe" and its repeated promise, "I'm coming, I'm coming," in the oboe—which, if the Shaw Memorial is any guidance, describes the oncoming column of Black soldiers who parade nobly and intently alongside Colonel Shaw on the monument. The lower strings march up the scale, and amid other wisps of melody, "I'm coming" is heard in the oboe and the clarinet interjects a syncopated tune. Then, the first clear fragment of "The Battle Cry of Freedom" is heard in the flute (and especially the phrase "the Union forever").

The pizzicato beat becomes more agitated, then settles into a slow march, signaled by a steady pattern in the percussion. Above them, the violins play the chorus of "Marching Through Georgia" ("Hurrah! Hurrah! We bring the Jubilee! Hurrah! Hurrah! the flag that makes you free!"). The pace picks up (with what Ives calls "a lithe springy step") as the strings play ragtime figures over the march rhythm, bringing to life what Ives imagined as the songs of the Black soldiers of the Union army. With rising figures from "Marching Through Georgia" punctuated by a fanfare, the music builds to a peak, falls away, then builds again to a climax. The violins burst out with a cry joined by an eruption from the brass, as though Ives wanted the trumpets to sound the charge for the 54th Massachusetts' courageous but ultimately unsuccessful attack at Battery Wagner on July 14, 1863.

And then, the strings and timpani return to their somber, dark march, and—in one of the most heartrending musical evocations of the suffering of the war—the flute joins them, softly playing the chorus of "The Battle Cry of Freedom" ("While we rally round the flag, boys, we rally once again / Shouting the battle cry of freedom!"). A few more wisps of Civil War melody, and the marching rhythm slowly fades to a close.

Over the course of approximately nine minutes, Ives manages to assemble a portrait of ineffable sadness and nobility, of a great cause whose costs were beyond the imagining of those who had marched so gaily to war in 1861. Saint-Gaudens's monument, as David Blight has written, "is a narrative of tragedy." Shaw and his men, resolute and forward-bending, are headed toward a sacrificial denouement at Battery Wagner, and Ives catches the moment with the use of "The Battle Cry of Freedom," set above mournfully dissonant D major chords in the strings. The monument is not about wistfulness, or a triumphal celebration of eventual Union victory; and neither is Ives's "Saint Gaudens." They march forward together, and their message is sacrifice, uplift, and emancipation.

Charles Ives's Civil War was about three issues, beginning with his homage to his father, and perhaps even to his father-in-law, Joseph Twichell. The second of these issues was the legitimacy Ives lent to the use of American vernacular music in serious composition. But the third issue was Ives's conviction that using the vernacular had to serve more than a merely decorative purpose. In *Essays Before a Sonata,* Ives granted that "a composer born in America … may be so interested in 'negro melodies' that he writes a symphony over them." The problem with mere usage of "negro melodies" was, for Ives, that composers might dabble in such usage as dilletantes, rather than being "interested in the 'cause of the Freedmen.'" If a "composer isn't as deeply interested in the 'cause' as Wendell Phillips was, when he fought his way through that anti-abolitionist crowd at Faneuil Hall, his music is liable to be less American than he wishes."

The Civil War was for Ives a living cause, the cause of emancipation. This at a time when American writers were either glamorizing the Confederacy and Jim Crow (from Augusta Jane Evans to Thomas Dixon), politely accommodating Southern sensibilities (the American Winston Churchill in *The Crisis*), or feeling sorrowful for the price northerners had paid (in William Dean Howells's *The Rise of Silas Lapham*) and pretending that the Civil War had been about something other than slavery. In Ives's use of Civil War songs and marching music, the war served as both the substance for musical development and as a symbol of certain eternal verities—about freedom, about race, about the American experience itself. The Civil War music he embedded in his songs and symphonic works were starting points, not afterthoughts, much less amusement. Especially in the "Saint Gaudens," his uses of Civil War music are not meant to entertain or impress, but to draw the listener into the ideals of the conflict itself, the world of Danbury in the full bloom of abolitionist energy, a world that, through his music, he could ensure would never be lost.

A Boy's Fourth

Listening to Ives in an Age of Political Division

SUDIP BOSE

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Charles Ives's fertile period roughly corresponded with the first two decades of the 20th century, and as America hurtled through that turbulent and transformative era, Ives sought to preserve in his scores certain memories from his past: bands belting out patriotic tunes as they marched down Main Street, a congregation singing on a Sunday morning, the sounds of a church bell ringing or a fiddler fiddling or a crowd cheering on a village green. This was the world of Danbury, Connecticut, in the late 1870s and '80s. It was the world of his father, George Ives (who had led a band during the Civil War and later became the town's bandmaster), and that of his distinguished grandparents, who had kept company with the Transcendentalists. Ives's style allowed for a generous amount of quotation—of hymns, marches, popular songs, and other kinds of American vernacular music. Thus was he able to evoke, in a manner unlike any composer before him, a world that had seemingly been lost.

It's important to remember, for example, that Ives's *Holidays* Symphony, comprised of four movements that each depict a different seasonal American celebration, was not meant as a celebration of the present but of the past. The movements—*Washington's Birthday*, *Decoration Day*, *The Fourth of July*, and *Thanksgiving*—were composed independently of one another and were intended to be performed either alone or as an orchestral set. They were, Ives wrote, "based on something of the memory that a man has of his boy holidays, rather than any present-day program of such." Parts of the work are iconoclastic, so rhythmically and harmonically complex, that you could never say that Ives was trafficking in mere nostalgia. This is music that combines memory and radical innovation, nowhere more so than in the symphony's third movement, *The Fourth of July*.

The Independence Day celebrations of Ives's youth were wild affairs, to say the least, raving drunkenness and altercations being the order of the day. On July 4, 1874, the year of the composer's birth, several

fights broke out in Danbury. One man was stabbed, another suffered injuries during a fireworks mishap, and a fire broke out in town, one of four in the region that day. The typical Fourth would also have included quite a bit of oratory, with speakers intoning the glories of the Founding Fathers and touching on other patriotic topics. Ives's musical *Fourth of July* preserves all of the tumult but none of the sober high-mindedness. "It's a boy's Fourth—no historical orations—no patriotic grandiloquence by grown-ups—no program in his yard," Ives wrote, shortly after completing the work in the summer of 1912.

> But [the boy] knows what he's celebrating—better than some of the county politicians—and he celebrates in his own way—with a patriotism nearer kin to nature than jingoism.
>
> It starts in the quiet of the midnight before and grows raucous with the sun ... cannon on the green, village band on Main St., firecrackers under tin cans, shanks mixed on cornets, strings around big toes, torpedoes, church bells, lost-finger, fifes, clam chowder, a prize-fight, burnt shins, parades (in and out of step), saloons all closed (more drunks than usual), baseball game (Danbury All-Stars vs. Beaver Brook Boys), pistols, mobbed umpire, Red White and Blue, runaway horse—and the day ends with the sky-rocket over the church steeple, just after the annual explosion sets the Town Hall on fire.

In classic Ives fashion, he goes on to suggest in this program note that the piece may not really be about any of these things—that the music could have no program at all—but what is never in doubt is the ingeniousness of a work that is jarring and discordant, jubilant and sly.

It's a brief piece, lasting no more than six minutes, and it does indeed seem to begin in the dark hours after midnight, with the strings playing a hushed melody vaguely, distantly related to "Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean." This patriotic tune, so pervasive in 19th- and early-20th-century America, lies at the heart of the piece. It was an important melody for Ives, who would quote from it 15 times over the course of his compositional career, perhaps most famously, and in full-throated bombast, in his magnificent Second Symphony. Here, the mood is somnolent, but then the double basses enter, and though they attempt to tease out "Columbia" in a more coherent fashion, it all amounts to fits and starts, a few bold but aborted attempts.

Now the raucousness begins in earnest, as Ives renders the Independence Day parade—a drunken, lurching revel with horses on the loose and church bells clanging and a fife-and-drum corps playing intentionally off-key (recalling those lusty if decidedly amateurish New

England bands Ives knew so well from his youth). There are quotations galore, some 15 of them, from such popular tunes as "Battle Cry of Freedom," "Battle Hymn of the Republic," "Yankee Doodle," "Reveille," "Marching Through Georgia," and "Dixie," in addition to "Columbia, Gem of the Ocean," which the trombones deliver with gusto, though many of the tunes are distorted, distended, or truncated. All of these fragments furiously collide with one another, creating an exhilarating swirl, a feeling of polyrhythmic, harmonic chaos. The underlying philosophy here is a democratic ideal, that everything has its place in a piece of music: high art and low, consonance and dissonance, simplicity and mind-boggling complexity—everything goes. So complicated is the score that a second conductor is needed (in some performances, even a third). And in truth, Ives himself never knew if he'd ever hear this work performed. As he would later write,

> I remember distinctly, when I was scoring this, that there was a feeling of freedom as a boy has, on the Fourth of July, who wants to do anything he wants to do. ... And I wrote this, feeling free to remember local things, etc, and to put [in] as many feelings and rhythms as I wanted to put together. And I did what I wanted to, quite sure that the thing would never be played, and perhaps *could* never be played.

After the parade comes a moment of respite, and then Ives gives us the sound of a rocket being launched and the full blazing glory of a fireworks display, with glissandi in the strings, the percussion section hammering discordant rhythms, and the pianist banging out clusters of notes with the forearms. "In the parts taking off explosions," Ives wrote, "I worked out combinations of tones and rhythms very carefully by kind of prescriptions, in the way a chemical compound which makes explosions would be made." After a climactic bang, the fire and smoke begin to dissipate, and we hear the strings play two brief measures: phrases like dying sparks, a final quiet flickering.

I listen to this piece every Fourth of July, along with Ives's Second Symphony and usually one of his sonatas for violin and piano—one of several seasonal musical rituals at my house. (There's also the *Symphonie fantastique* on Halloween night and *Die Fledermaus* on New Year's Day—traditions that have lingered from my childhood.) But in the past several years, with our nation divided, with whispers of civil conflict growing louder and more insistent, with a general anxiety that seems never to relent, I have been hearing in *The Fourth of July* something far more harrowing, menacing even, than I ever have before. That great cacophonous cloud at the center of the movement seems less like an outpouring of joy than

a vision of a nightmare, all those quotations of Americana suddenly sounding like snarling, angry taunts, each fragment crying out to be heard above the others, brash and brutal and bullying. I can't help imagining this terrifying chaos as an apt metaphor for today's America, one in which the distorted lines of "Columbia" or the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" suggest not nostalgia but something far more sinister. Even the work's final two measures—which once seemed to me like America's answer to the Mahlerian *ewig,* a statement on earth everlasting and our place on it—have been transformed in my ears. Those phrases in the strings, hesitant, unresolved, enigmatic, conjuring up a last trail of dying light in the evening sky—they seem to ask an unsettling, unanswerable question: Where do we go from here?

But then, in *The Fourth of July,* nostalgia and nightmare have always been present. It is telling that the piece was inspired not just by memories of Independence Days past. Ives also had in mind the fire aboard the *General Slocum,* near Randall's Island on June 15, 1904. More than 1,000 people perished that day, mostly congregants from St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church who had boarded the steamboat for a pleasure outing—the deadliest disaster in New York City prior to 9/11. Perhaps it is a measure of a piece's greatness that it allows us to read into it all of the fears and anxieties of our own times. In this way, Ives in his 150th year seems more necessary than ever, not just as an exquisite composer, but also as a visionary and a prophet.

The Power of the Common Soul

Diversity, Music-Making, and Hope in Charles Ives's Music

J. PETER BURKHOLDER

When I first encountered Charles Ives's music as a teenager in college, some 50 years ago, I was struck by how I could not anticipate, when listening to several works in succession, what the next piece—or even the next moment within a piece—would be like. In class, we heard an excerpt from the Fourth Symphony that imitated the sound of a steam locomotive. Intrigued, I listened to the Third Symphony, which sounded late Romantic in style—nothing like the Fourth. *The Unanswered Question* was strange: it began with calm, flowing harmonies for strings, then suddenly a second, atonal layer appeared in the trumpets and flutes, as if two completely unrelated pieces were being played at once. Other pieces juxtaposed modern dissonances with fragments of popular music, from a band march to ragtime. The experience was both exhilarating and unsettling. The diversity of Ives's music seemed messy, chaotic, even undisciplined, and my teachers did not know how to explain it.

Aaron Copland had a similar reaction when he encountered Ives's self-published collection of *114 Songs* (1922). In a retrospective 1934 review, Copland wrote that in it

> almost every kind of song imaginable can be found—delicate lyrics, dramatic poems, sentimental ballads, German, French, and Italian songs, war songs, songs of religious sentiment, street songs, humorous songs, hymn tunes, folk tunes, encore songs; songs adapted from orchestral scores, piano works, and violin sonatas; intimate songs, cowboy songs and mass songs. Songs of every character and description, songs bristling with dissonances, tone clusters and "elbow chords" next to songs of the most elementary harmonic simplicity.

For Copland, this variety was clearly not a strength; he would have preferred a more focused collection of songs in modern styles, omitting those written in Romantic or popular idioms. But for Ives, this stylistic

diversity represented his own musical experience. However different from the others, each of his songs was an honest expression of its time and context and had value of its own, earning a place in the book. As he wrote in the postface to the collection, "a song has a *few* rights the same as other ordinary citizens."

Ives was on to something neither Copland nor I understood: you miss a lot of valuable music—and people and experiences—if you narrow the range of what you find acceptable. We now live surrounded by the wildest, widest variety of music ever, from hip hop to electronica, from world music to postmodern operas, all available in an instant on our phones, computers, and smart speakers. Somehow Ives seems to capture for us the art of paying attention to all these competing voices, giving them their due, while keeping a firm sense of one's own center, one's own hometown, musically speaking. In his music, Ives models for us a world that is varied, complex, diverse, and contradictory, and his embrace of all of it can show us how to listen to every voice and see the good in everyone.

His diversity of style reflects his background. As a child and young man, he experienced many strands of American popular music, Protestant church music, and classical music, learning how to perform and compose in those traditions while also experimenting with new techniques. In his mature works, he blended elements from these traditions to create music unlike anything ever heard before. That mixing took place in the genres of the classical tradition that he assimilated in his studies at Yale with Horatio Parker, one of the leading American composers of the day. For Parker, music was a spiritual and moral force, with intuition being the surest guide for a composer. Ives absorbed Parker's ideals, but he transcended his teacher and all his American predecessors by incorporating American melodies and styles and innovative new procedures into pieces in the classical tradition, creating a synthesis that spoke to his time and still speaks to us today.

A core part of that synthesis, and of Ives's message, is his celebration of the music and music-making of common people in his region of New England and New York City. In his music, he upends the hierarchy of taste in which European classical music is more valuable than the everyday music of the United States. He asserts through his compositions that music from America is of equal value to its continental counterparts and bears witness to something precious.

His scores are full of people, represented through the music they make, hear, and love, and he finds in their lives and their music "a strength of hope that never gives way to despair—a conviction of the power of the common soul." Hope is one of the great themes of Ives's music: a celebration of the past, not as a place to return to, or to feel nostalgia for, but as inspiration for the future, with the struggles, triumphs, and endurance of previous generations serving as guides to the forward progress of

humankind. In this time of war, pessimism, political polarization, and conflict over class, religion, gender, and diversity, Ives's music remains remarkably relevant.

Ives's celebration of America's music began with songs like "Memories" (1897) and "The Circus Band" (c. 1899), which capture what it is like to hear music in a theater or on the street and be swept up by the associations it carries. In his First String Quartet (c. 1897–1900) and Second Symphony (c. 1902–1909), he adapted American hymn tunes and popular songs as themes, bringing them into the most prestigious genres and forms of European chamber and orchestral music. But he found a new depth in his Third Symphony (c. 1908–1911) and four violin sonatas (c. 1908–1917).

In the middle movement of Ives's Fourth Violin Sonata, for instance, we hear fragments of melody in the piano and then in the violin: an idea that moves mostly by skip; a faster, sinuous line that alternates descending steps and upward skips; and a louder, hammering figure. The first two ideas are developed until the second of them becomes a gorgeous flowing melody in the violin over a rolling piano accompaniment. When that reaches a cadence, the hammering figure takes over in the piano, loud and aggressive. After this contrasting middle section, the violin varies the flowing melody, then states it whole again, while the piano adapts the skipping idea into a more regular tune. Finally the two instruments switch material, the sinuous, flowing melody now in the piano over rolling accompaniment, the violin playing the slower tune full of skips. Only at this point—if we know the tune—are we likely to recognize this as the refrain of the children's hymn *Jesus Loves Me*. Listeners in Ives's day might have turned up their noses at the piece, or laughed out loud, if the violin had played that tune at the beginning of the movement. At the end, it is beautiful, a culmination. We may notice in retrospect that the flowing melody that emerges halfway through the movement and serves as a countermelody to *Jesus Loves Me* at the end is itself derived from the hymn tune, featuring similar contours, and that the hammering figure of the contrasting middle section is derived from it as well.

By developing these rich ideas from the hymn tune he borrows as a theme *before* he lets us hear it plainly, Ives makes us listen to the tune, when it finally arrives, with fresh ears, hearing in it new beauties and possibilities we never suspected were there. In the First Quartet and Second Symphony, Ives fixed up the American melodies to make them fit the context of inherited European forms. In the Fourth Violin Sonata, however, the developmental procedures Ives learned from European sonatas and symphonies *lead to* the American melody in all its beautiful simplicity, teaching us to listen with equally close attention to American music as we would a Beethoven symphony.

What is precious here is not just the tune itself, but the associations it brings. The Fourth Violin Sonata is subtitled "Children's Day at the Camp Meeting." It is not programmatic, not a picture of events, but instead is a kind of character piece in which the way Ives develops the hymn tunes he uses as themes helps to reflect the meanings those tunes carried for those who sang them in church and at revivals. Music has always been a kind of social glue, a connection between those who share it, whether performers, listeners, dancers, or worshippers. When Ives incorporates into a composition a hymn tune or another recognizable bit of music, it comes with some of that "social glue" attached, inviting us to be a part of a community that knows and uses this music.

That sense of community itself brings meaning and has value. As Ives wrote in *Essays Before a Sonata*,

> if the Yankee [composer] can reflect the fervency with which "his gospels" were sung—the fervency of "Aunt Sarah," who scrubbed her life away for her brother's ten orphans, the fervency with which this woman, after a fourteen-hour work day on the farm, would hitch up and drive five miles through the mud and rain to "prayer meetin'," her one articulate outlet for the fullness of her unselfish soul—if he can reflect the fervency of such a spirit, he may find there a local color that will do all the world good.

Ives highlights here the life and spirit of a woman, in whom he finds a spirit to inspire all of us. What is important is not the specific religious content of the hymns and gospel songs she sings but their role in the lives of those who sing them. By making these tunes the crucial element in sonatas and symphonies, Ives asserts that this music of rural or small-town, middle- or lower-class, less educated, common but sturdy folk is as valuable as the works of classical music enjoyed by urban patrons. Indeed, blending the two traditions in this way makes for an even stronger music than either alone: a distinctively American music that asserts the value of both everyday music and the classical tradition of which Ives's music is a part.

In piece after piece, Ives represents the music-making of common people, and thus the people themselves, their experiences, their lives, and what they hold most dear. Ives puts all of that front and center in his symphonies, tone poems, chamber works, sonatas, and art songs, works in classical genres performed for audiences whose class, culture, and life experiences may be vastly different.

Movements of the Fourth Symphony, Second String Quartet, First Piano Sonata, and Second Orchestral Set also culminate in camp-meeting

hymns, as do several songs. The finale of the Second Orchestral Set (c. 1915–1919) is especially moving, capturing an event Ives witnessed on the day in 1915 when the *Lusitania* was sunk. In Ives's telling, as a large crowd gathered on the northbound elevated train platform at the Hanover Square station in downtown Manhattan, waiting for the next train,

> a hand-organ or hurdy-gurdy was playing in the street below. Some workmen sitting on the side of the tracks began to whistle the tune, and others began to sing or hum the refrain. A workman with a shovel over his shoulder came on the platform and joined in the chorus, and the next man, a Wall Street banker with white spats and a cane, joined in it, and finally it seemed to me that everybody was singing this tune … as a natural outlet for what their feelings had been going through all day long.

The tune was "In the Sweet Bye and Bye," "an old Gospel Hymn that had stirred many people of past generations." Over a bed of repeating, overlapping figures in constant motion, representing traffic and other city noises, Ives presents portions and variants of the tune, which gradually come together until the whole refrain appears, loud and dynamic, "as though every man in New York must be joining in it." The hymn, with its impassioned hope that "we shall meet on that beautiful shore," was appropriate to the memory of those who died on a ship torpedoed at sea in wartime. But what gave the event such deep meaning for Ives, and led him to immortalize it in this movement, was that the diverse crowd of New Yorkers of all classes who did not know one another was able to express its shared feelings of grief by joining together in song. His unwieldy title for the movement captures what was most important: "From Hanover Square North, at the End of a Tragic Day, the Voice of the People Again Arose."

Other pieces dwell on memories of amateur music-making from Ives's youth in Danbury, Connecticut, especially of the band led by his father, George Ives. *Decoration Day* is a sound picture of the predecessor of Memorial Day as commemorated in Danbury in the decades after the Civil War, with George Ives's band leading the procession to the town cemetery and back, and a lone bugle playing "Taps" over the graves of those who died in the war. *The Fourth of July* captures festivities in a small town, mixing patriotic and popular songs with dance tunes and firecrackers, as snatches of "Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean" build up to a thunderous climax, the complete tune played by an amateur brass band accompanied by a swirl of other sounds and songs. *Country Band March*, later incorporated into *Putnam's Camp* (the second movement of *Three Places in New England*), captures the misadventures of an amateur band playing a concert on the Fourth of July. Bands march across the landscape

in the Second and Fourth Symphonies and several other orchestral works, piano pieces, and songs. *Washington's Birthday* has nothing to do with George Washington, but centers on a barn dance held on that holiday, the dance band playing a mix of American, Scottish, and Irish fiddle tunes. Here is an evocation of the growing Irish community in Danbury and New England, fiercely discriminated against in the mid-19th century (when job postings often said "No Irish Need Apply") but becoming more accepted in Ives's day. In all of these examples, what matters is the spirit of the music, the enthusiasm of the players, and the ways music provides opportunities for the community to gather and share common experiences, from mourning to dancing.

Ives's music is deeply meaningful for those who recognize the tunes he borrows and know the culture they were a part of and the time they represent. But his music is still meaningful for those unfamiliar with these tunes. That was me, when I first started listening to Ives. Growing up with no religious training, I knew none of the hymns and only a few of the popular songs and fiddle tunes. I learned them all from listening to Ives, and by studying the informative program notes and secondary literature. But even without knowing specific tunes, I could tell a hymn tune from a dance tune, a patriotic song from a Stephen Foster song, and a march from anything else. Ives gives us these familiar things, drawing us into his music, inviting us to become part of the communities he celebrates, or at least to ask, "Why is this happening? what does this music mean?" The types of music he incorporates into his works are so well known worldwide that I believe almost everyone can catch the references to some extent and hear some of the associations such music carried for the people who made and enjoyed it.

Understanding those associations can add unexpected levels of meaning to the listening experience. For example, Ives's mammoth Piano Sonata No. 2, titled *Concord, Mass., 1840–60* (c. 1915–1919), is most famous for its tone pictures of male literary figures who lived in Concord in the decades before the Civil War: Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Henry David Thoreau. Yet the cyclic theme that binds all four movements together is the theme of the third movement, "The Alcotts," the one movement that celebrates women.

Ives described the movement in *Essays Before a Sonata*, writing that he did not try to depict in it "the philosophic raptures of Bronson Alcott," the transcendentalist teacher and writer. Rather, Ives sought to capture "the memory of that home under the elms" where Alcott lived with his wife and four daughters, among them Louisa May Alcott, whose novel *Little Women* portrayed their domestic life. In particular, the movement evokes music-making at home by the women in the family: "the Scotch

songs and the family hymns that were sung at the end of each day," "the little old spinet piano … on which Beth [one of the sisters in *Little Women*] played the old Scotch airs, and played at the *Fifth Symphony*." Indeed, throughout the movement, hymns are transmuted into the motto from Beethoven's Fifth Symphony and vice versa, while in the middle we hear what sounds like part of a sentimental Stephen Foster parlor song followed by snatches of a Scotch air, Wagner's wedding march, and a popular song. The movement culminates in a climactic full statement of its theme that blends hymns with Beethoven, played loudly over pounding chords like the beginning of the *Hammerklavier* Sonata.

The blend of the commonplace with the transcendent is the point. In *Essays Before a Sonata*, Ives calls the theme "that human-faith-melody—transcendent and sentimental enough for the enthusiast or the cynic, respectively—reflecting an innate hope, a common interest in common things and common men—a tune the Concord bards are ever playing while they pound away at the immensities with a Beethoven-like sublimity." In the music-making of these women, Ives finds "a strength of hope that never gives way to despair—a conviction in the power of the common soul." This movement's theme appears in fragments in the "Emerson" and "Hawthorne" movements, becomes a whole melody before our ears during "The Alcotts," and then is recollected as "a transcendental tune of Concord" sounding over Walden Pond at the end of the final movement, "Thoreau." All the men are singing the tune Beth plays on the little old spinet piano.

"A strength of hope that never gives way to despair—a conviction in the power of the common soul." These words are applicable not just to "The Alcotts" and the *Concord* Sonata, but broadly to all of the movements and pieces in which Ives celebrates the music and music-making of those around him, past and present, in New England and New York City. In his words for the song "Down East" (1919), a rumination on "songs from mother's heart" that culminates in "Nearer, My God, to Thee," he says it plainly: "With those strains a stronger hope comes nearer to me." We need that hope today, and we can find it in Ives's music.

Charles Ives ca. 1913

Photo from the Charles Ives Papers in the
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