CHARLES IVES AND A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF
HIS THREE PIANO SONATAS

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CHARLES IVES AND A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS
OF HIS THREE PIANO SONATAS

THESIS

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By

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PREFACE

This thesis has been written with several goals in mind. The first purpose has been to inform the reader about the life of Charles Ives and the influences he experienced that gave him the impetus to experiment and write music of a nature thirty years ahead of its time, while the rest of the world was basking in the waning light of Romanticism. The second purpose has been to describe in a short space general characteristics that may be found throughout the entire musical output of Ives. The third purpose has been to analyze in greater detail the major portion of his contributions to piano literature, the three piano sonatas, so that the student may better understand the complexities which will face him in performance of these compositions.

Perhaps the strongest motivation for the present study has been the hope that it might induce more students to be explorers themselves and become familiar with this music of Ives. Certainly there could be no harm in accepting the challenge presented by this music. The conquering of its manifold difficulties would broaden and deepen the understanding of any musician who might put forth the effort
which such a task entails. Finally, one might mention the joy which will surely be felt in having made the acquaintance of a composer who from the depths of his own mind and heart, created "modern" music which was as freely "twentieth century" as it was American.
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CHAPTER I

THE MAN

The first blows to the tradition of "gentility" in American letters and arts came from Walt Whitman in literature, Whistler in painting, O'Neil in the theater, Frank Lloyd Wright in architecture and Isadora Duncan in the dance. In addition, at the beginning of the twentieth century, Charles Ives, a composer, was breaking away from the iron of tradition and writing a type of music quite new in America. Until about 1940 it could have been said of Charles Ives that he was a "prophet not without honor save in his own country," for until that time his works were more likely to have been performed in Europe than in America. He followed only the dictates of his own intellect when he composed; no "school" formed around him. Over a period of twenty years he wrote music in which many approaches to this art, previously untried, were explored and consistently developed. Since Ives made but few attempts to publicize his works, his compositions remained comparatively unknown. Thus it happened that certain compositional features, initiated by Ives, were investigated and adopted by other composers at a slightly later period. These men, such as Schoenberg, Stravinsky and
Hindemith, not only achieved fame but were even credited (unjustly) with having influenced Ives.

The Ives family was founded in Connecticut by Captain William Ives who came from Dorchester, England, to Boston in 1635. In 1638 he settled in Quinnipak, Connecticut, which is now a part of New Haven. His signature may still be seen on the Quinnipak Civil Compact of 1638. The descendants of William Ives remained in Connecticut and were respected citizens of the community. Several were farmers while others became ministers, bankers or lawyers. The family of Charles Ives still lives only a few miles away from his ancestral home and birthplace.

One of Ives' ancestors did venture out of Connecticut, however, for the family records for the eighteenth century relate how this gentleman sold his farm which stretched along the East River near what is now Beekman Street in New York City. This locality was becoming too "fancy and crowded" for his taste.¹

Charles Ives' father, George Ives, was a musical "Jack-of-all-trades." He could perform on almost any instrument and he could direct either a band or a church choir with equal competence. During the Civil War he led the First Connecticut Heavy Artillery Brigade Band. President Lincoln

is said once to have remarked to General Grant that this band was a good band; whereupon Grant replied, "It's the best band in the Army, they tell me, but I know only two tunes; one of them is 'Yankee Doodle' and the other isn't."²

On January 1, 1874, George Ives married Mary Parmelee and their first son, Charles, was born on October 20, 1874. His mother was the daughter of a farmer and the leading church soloist of the village. She was, apparently, a typical New England housewife. She is remembered as a good neighbor and a staunch friend. Also, she must have approved of the interest her husband and son felt in music, although she could not enter into their activities as wholeheartedly as did they.

As an adult, Charles remembered vividly the many experiments his father had carried on with new sounds and complex rhythms. Perhaps one of his earliest memories is of his father standing in the backyard without a coat during a heavy thunderstorm listening to the ringing of the church bell next door. He tried to produce the same sound on the piano, running into the storm to listen and then back into the house to the keyboard again and again. Perhaps he concluded that the actual pitches produced by the bell were not attainable on the keys of a piano for not long afterwards he

began the construction of a mechanism that would play tones between those of the tempered scale.

The idea of such a device was not entirely new. As early as 1864 a professor at the Moscow Conservatory of Music, who was of an exploring turn of mind, built a piano which sounded quarter-tones. Also, at the Philadelphia Exposition of 1875, Karl Rudolph Koenig demonstrated a tonometric apparatus which divided four octaves into 670 parts. So when Ives built his instrument, which consisted of twenty-four violin strings stretched across a clothes-press and held in place by weights, he could not claim to be the first to invent or perform on such an instrument. This particular stringed instrument did not work very well. He found it easier to produce quarter-tones and other very small intervals by tuning water glasses; the slide cornet also proved very helpful in his persistent search for untraditional pitches.

In an article in a 1925 issue of *Pro Musica Quarterly*

Charles Ives wrote:

> My father had a weakness for quarter-tones—in fact he didn't stop even with me. He rigged up a contrivance to stretch 24 or more violin strings and tuned them up to suit the dictates of his own curiosity. He would pick out quarter-tone tunes and try to get the family to sing them. But I remember he gave that up, except as a means of punishment, though we got to like some of the tunes which kept to the usual scale and had quarter-tone notes thrown in. After working for some time he became sure that some quarter-tone chords must be learned before quarter-tone melodies would make much sense and become natural to the ear
and so for the voice. He started to apply a system of bows to be released by weights which would sustain the chords—but in this process he was suppressed by the family and a few of the neighbors. A little later on he did some experimenting with glasses and bells and got some sounds as beautiful, sometimes, as they were funny—a complex that only children are old enough to appreciate.

But I remember distinctly one impression (and this was about 35 years ago). After getting used to hearing a piano piece when the upper melody, runs, etc., were filled out with quarter-tone notes (as a kind of ornamentation), when the piece was played on the piano alone there was a very keen sense of dissatisfaction—of something wanted but missing. 3

In his youth Charles went with his father to both band and choir rehearsals. Since nearly every person in the community took an active part in these organizations, the environment in which Ives spent his youth was a truly musical one; he thrived in this atmosphere of much "music-making." In this same musical community young Ives heard dance-fiddling of varying degrees of skill. An occasional fiddler played with all the technic and polish of a concert artist. Also, Charles probably heard various types of hymn-singing, from the more sedate Psalm-setting brought to this country by the Puritans to the more robust revival hymn, and he knew all the songs written by his father's friend, Stephen Foster.

At home music was played by his father and his father's friends in the evenings. Sonatas, trios and quartets of

3Henry and Sidney Cowell, Charles Ives and His Music, pp. 19-20.
Handel, Bach and Beethoven were read. The works of Haydn and Mozart were never performed, however, because they were considered too "nice" by George Ives—and later by Charles Ives as well. "Nice," in the personal vocabulary of the Ives, father and son, was a derogatory term. Any composition referred to as "nice" was a composition which was too refined and perhaps a bit too effeminate for their taste.

The boy's father taught him drum, piano, violin, cornet, sight-reading, harmony and counterpoint. In this teaching the strict code of academic procedure was followed. His father said that experiment could come after Charles had learned the rudiments thoroughly; when the time came for experiment, he could then produce something "with a little sense to it."

By the time young Ives was thirteen years old he was a fluent arranger for his father's small ensembles. Also, after studying the organ for two years, he obtained the post of organist at the West Street Congregational Church in Danbury, a position which required him to play two services each Sunday; in addition, he frequently played short organ recitals. When he turned fourteen he received an even more important position as organist of the First Baptist Church. The Danbury News on October 20, 1888, marks the event by this statement: "Charles Ives presided at the organ at the
First Baptist Church yesterday. He is the youngest organist in the State."

In June of 1890 the Danbury News again boasted of their home-town musician:

Master Ives deserves and received great praise for his patient perseverance in his study of the organ, and is to be congratulated on his marked ability as a master of the keys for one so young. We predict for him a brilliant future as an organist. . . .

By this time he was composing many organ pieces and songs. His father looked over these compositions and made constructive criticisms giving Charles advice which he never forgot and which he highly treasured. Once his father complained that a piece did not end in the same key in which it started. Charles quickly replied, "Why should anyone feel he had to die in the same house in which he was born?"

In 1894 Ives made the decision to continue his study of composition at Yale. A month later his father died suddenly. Since Charles had intended to earn his own way through college, this event was not economically disturbing but he did miss his father intensely. George Ives' enthusiastic encouragement of his son's musical interests was a serious loss to the one who by temperament was little inclined to expose his most intense feelings to the outside world.

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4 John Tasker Howard, Our Contemporary Composers, p. 245.

In September, 1894, Charles Ives entered Yale University where many members of the family before him had also received an education. For four years he held the position of organist at the Center Church on the Green and lived with the pastor, Dr. Griggs. Dr. Griggs made up in some part for Ives' loss of his father.

In Horatio Parker's classes at Yale ideas of a musically exploratory nature were not so much suppressed as ignored. At the end of the third week Parker asked Ives not to submit any more compositions which he had written before entering Yale but to prepare the regular assignments made for the class. Ives obeyed but continued to develop his own ideas on the side, trying them out either with the little orchestra in the Hyperion Theater in New Haven or on the organ at Center Church.

His First Symphony was written under the academic eye of Parker. The result was that the first movement had to be rewritten, the slow movement to be started in F Major and not G-flat major, and the finale to be constructed in a conventional form.

While at Yale, Ives seems to have been a very active and sociable person. He was a member of various student clubs such as He'Boule', Delta Kappa Epsilon and Wolf's Head. Besides composing music for college and fraternity shows and playing a little ragtime with the Hyperion Theater orchestra, he played on various football and baseball teams.
After his graduation in 1898 Ives made another important decision. His father had always felt that a person could keep his interest in music stronger and freer if he did not try to make a living out of composing. Perhaps this influenced Ives towards a business career; or, perhaps the laughs and sarcastic comments which he doubtless had received in college helped persuade him against entering the music profession. At least he chose business and he chose the business of life insurance which at that time was just at the point of beginning its tremendous growth to the important position it holds today.

He obtained a position as clerk in the actuarial department of the Mutual Life Insurance Company of New York City with a salary of five dollars a week. He soon found a group of young men of his own age and economic level with whom to live. One of these was Dave Twichell, a brother of Ives' future wife. They rented an apartment on 59th Street and promptly named it "Poverty Flat." To supplement his meager income, Ives became organist and choirmaster of the First Presbyterian Church in Bloomfield, New Jersey, and, later of the Central Presbyterian Church on West 57th Street in New York.6

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6 Henry and Sidney Cowell, Charles Ives and His Music, p. 39.
Composition became Ives’ free-time occupation. He often worked at it until late at night. At first he attended many concerts in Carnegie Hall, crouching in the space between the last row of the balcony and the wall. However, he soon discovered that listening to other people’s music interfered with music of his own that was always taking shape in his mind. Hearing old pieces that he had known all of his life, such as the Beethoven symphonies, did not create this confusion. These facts might possibly explain why Ives never displayed much interest in concerts of music unfamiliar to him.

The completion of his Second Symphony was a project of the Poverty Flat days. The first movement had been played back in Danbury by George Ives’ orchestra in 1889. The Largo was revised a’la Brahms at Parker’s suggestion. Parker apparently thought the first version was not sufficiently dignified. This work was completed in 1902 and scored later, around 1910.

On February 22, 1951, Leonard Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic Orchestra gave the Second Symphony its first complete performance. Ives said of this work:

It expresses the musical feeling of the Connecticut countryside around here [Danbury and Redding] in the 1890’s, the music of the tunes they sang and played

then, and I thought it would be sort of a bad joke to have some of these tunes in counterpoint with some Bach tunes. . .8

At the same time he was working on the Third Symphony which he said was based on themes that came from hymns and organ-pieces he played in Central Presbyterian Church around 1901. The lead-pencil draft of this work was finished around 1901 and the orchestration of it about three years later.

Around 1902 Ives gave up his church position, since he felt that he should devote all of his time to the insurance business and to composition. He had recently been advanced to a more important position with the insurance company. It was in this new work that he met Julian Myrick, a man who was to become a life-long friend. In 1907 these two men became partners in a life-insurance business of their own.

About this time another change in Ives' life took place: he fell in love with Harmony Twichell and they were married in 1908. These new obligations compelled him to concentrate strictly on the business. The Ives and Myrick Agency grew and became one of the most important and prosperous branches of the Mutual Life Insurance Company of

8"Symphony No. 3," Instrumental Musician, XLIX (March 1951), 10.
New York City. Today it continues to function under the management of Richard Myer.9

Insurance men today remember Ives chiefly for two things. One is the organization of the Ives and Myrick training-school for agents which was imitated all over the country and became an indispensable part of every large insurance company. The other is the concept of "estate planning," which was Ives' own idea; it is now considered basic in the life-insurance business.

Around this time Ives and his wife adopted a little girl, Edith. In spite of this increase in his family, he insisted on accepting from the business only such a salary as would cover the needs of his household and his music ventures adequately. The business was thriving and could have paid Ives handsomely but he remained adamant.

During these years of intense business activity Ives wrote the majority of his works. Occasionally works were copied out in full but usually only in rough drafts since he knew what the notes should be and did not have the time to copy out full scores. There was no audience to make the man write more; only his own enthusiasm.

In 1914 he arranged some old quarter-tone pieces for two pianos. Then the next year he completed his best-known

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9 Henry and Sidney Cowell, Charles Ives and His Music, p. 49.
work, the *Concord Sonata* for piano. At intervals during this period (1911-1916) he worked on his *Universe Symphony*, which is a masterly composition. This he worked on for the rest of his life. He was still working on it when he died in 1954, but had actually never planned to finish it.

It about this same time Ives felt the need of hearing his music played and made some efforts to obtain performances. At some time during 1910 a business acquaintance of Ives persuaded Walter Damrosch to try over parts of the *First Symphony* at a rehearsal of the New York Symphony Orchestra. Ives thought he was taking sufficient precaution against too violent protests from the musicians by not offering the first movement to Damrosch. The result, as Ives remembered it, was a pleasant initial impression of the opening melody and Damrosch called out, "Charming!" Shortly thereafter, however, the orchestra found itself unable to continue. From time to time Damrosch would stop the orchestra to "correct" what he assumed, without consulting Ives, to be wrong notes.10

Ives experienced many such disappointments over a period of years. Actually, these periodic blows to his self-confidence had a kind of "sedative effect" and Ives withdrew even more into himself.

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The Fourth Symphony was one of the last works written during the First World War. It is full of the surprising effects in rhythm and harmony which we have come to associate with Ives and his compositions. Eugene Goosens remembers that when he conducted this work for the first time he wound up beating two with his stick, three with his left hand, something else with his head and something else with his coat tails.\footnote{Paul Moor, "On Horseback to Heaven: Charles Ives," Harpers Magazine, CLXXXVII (Sept. 1948), 70.} Actually, such a statement will be understood best if one looks at the opening bars of the second movement and observes that the various instruments carry quite different time-signatures: $6/8$, $5/8$, $7/4$, $2/4$ and $4/4$. The bar-lines do not coincide until the conclusion of three bars in $4/4$, which equal six bars of $5/8$ and two bars of $7/4$, all moving at different speeds.

The war was a shocking experience for a man who believed that humanity should progress towards peace. His first serious physical breakdown came a month before the war's end. This condition seems to have closed the door on future creative activity.

He had time now to think what he should do about his music. His decision was to "clean house," i.e. to prepare for publication all that he had written thus far before embarking on any new works. He decided to give the world a
free gift of his music by publishing it at his own expense and giving it to various people who he thought might be interested in it. Thus, copies of the Concord Sonata, Songs and other non-copyrighted, self-financed publications were sent to libraries, music critics, musicians and to anyone else who asked for them. He also began to have photostatic copies made of all his manuscripts, a project that continued over many years.

In a postscript to the Songs Ives remarks:

This book is privately printed and is not to be sold or put on the market. Complimentary copies will be sent to anyone as long as the supply lasts. As far as the music is concerned, anyone (if he be so inclined) is free to use it, transpose or arrange it for other instruments. 12 Some have written a book for money; I have not. Some for fame; I have not. Some for love; I have not. Some for kindlings; I have not. 13 In fact, I have not written a book at all--I have merely cleaned house. All that is left is out on the clothes line.

As pointed out previously, personal gain was not the motivation for Ives' composition. He states his reason for composing in one publication called Essays Before a Sonata. These Essays were designed to accompany the Concord Sonata. The music was written between 1905 and 1915 while the Essays were put in order during Ives' long convalescence. This was not a sudden attempt at writing about the transcendentalists. The idea had occupied his mind for many years--in

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13 Henry and Sidney Cowell, op. cit., p. 77.
fact, since his college days. During this early period he wrote an article concerning Ralph Waldo Emerson. A few years later he wrote an insurance manual which devoted the first two chapters to the transcendental philosophy of life. The *Essays* do not explain the music, but they reflect the mind that made the music.

The first words to catch one's eye stand alone:

"These prefatory essays were written by the composer for those who can't stand his music --- and the music for those who can't stand his essays; to those who can't stand either, the whole is respectfully dedicated."

In the chapter devoted to Emerson, Ives refers to him as a great poet and prophet; perhaps greater for being an invader of the unknown. Here he defends Emerson's writings with the same words he used to defend himself:

Nature dislikes to explain as much as to repeat. It is conceivable that what is unified form to the author, or composer, may of necessity be formless to his audience. . . . Initial coherence today may be dullness tomorrow, probably because formal or outward unity depends so much on repetition, sequence, antithesis, paragraphs with inductions and summaries.14

A good many pages in the *Essays* are devoted to the distinction between manner and matter in the arts, and in the course of this discussion there are fragments that reveal Ives' opinion of certain composers.

14 Charles Ives, *Essays Before A Sonata*, p. 27.
"Richie Wagner," according to Ives, had more or less of a good head for technical progress but put this knowledge to such "weak uses." Wagner liked instead "to dress up in purple and sing about heroism." Music has been, to too large an extent, "an emasculate art, and Wagner has done his part to keep it so."

In the Essays Ives compares Debussy to Thoreau:

Debussy's attitude toward Nature seems to have a kind of sensual sensuousness underlyng it, while Thoreau's is a kind of spiritual sensuousness. It is rare to find a farmer or peasant whose enthusiasm for the beauty in Nature finds outward expression to compare with that of the city man who comes out for a Sunday in the country, but Thoreau is that rare country man and Debussy the city man with his weekend flights into country esthetics.15

To Ives, while he was writing these essays, the position of the works of Bach, Beethoven and Brahms remained among the strongest and greatest. Whenever Ives heard music by one of these composers he felt as though he were meeting an old friend again and enjoyed that meeting even more than the time before.

The publication of the Sonata, Essays and Songs naturally led to a series of jokes about this method of composition in which connection many musicians heard of Ives for the first time. Ives cherished the idea that somewhere this would find its welcome if only he could get it into the right hands. He had hopes that the "law of averages"

15Ibid., p. 97.
would discover his audience for him if only he distributed his music widely enough. This eventually was to be proved right but he had to wait for another twenty years.

Meanwhile, Ives turned his literary efforts into economic and political as well as musical channels. Ives carried on a one-man political movement when he undertook to write of the beliefs he shared with Thoreau about building the nation on fundamental truths instead of the selfish ideas of a powerful minority. In fact, a long paper entitled "The Majority," begun in 1912 and finished about 1922, covers a wide range of such economic and political ideas.

One of the last songs Ives composed was written in 1920 when he discovered that the ideals of President Wilson had been defeated. In an upset, perturbed state he wrote an angry song entitled "November 2, 1920," the words of which read as follows:

Too many readers go by the headlines, party men would muddle up the facts, so a good many citizens voted as grandpa always did, or thought a change for the sake of a change seemed natural enough. It's raining, let's throw out the weatherman--Kick him out!--Kick him out!--Kick him out! 16

Finally, after a long period of years in business, Ives retired from every branch of his activity. One of Ives'

16Henry Cowell, American Composers on American Music, p. 191.
friends once asked him how he could reconcile himself to
a business career. Ives replied:

My business experience revealed life to me in many
aspects that I might otherwise have missed. In it
one sees tragedy, nobility, meanness, high aims, low
aims, brave hopes, faint hopes, great ideals, no
ideals, and one is able to watch these work inevitable
destiny. And it has seemed to me that the finer sides
of these traits were not only in the majority but in
the ascendancy. I have seen men fight honorably and
to a finish, solely for a matter of conviction or a
principle—and where expediency, probable loss of
business, prestige or position had no part and threats
no effect. It is my impression that there is more
open-mindedness and willingness to examine carefully
the premises underlying a new or unfamiliar thing, in
the world of business than in the world of music.
It is not even uncommon in business intercourse to
sense a reflection of a philosophy—a depth of some-
thing fine—akin to a strong sense of beauty in art.
To assume that business is a material process, and
only that, is to undervalue the average mind and
heart. To an insurance man there is an "average man"
and he is humanity. I have experienced a great
fulness of life in business. The fabric of existence
weaves itself whole. You cannot set an art off in the
corner and hope for it to have vitality, reality, and
substance. There can be nothing exclusive about a
substantial art. It comes directly out of the heart of
experience of life and thinking about life and living
life. My work in music helped my business and work in
business helped my music.17

Friends of Ives' music and writings were beginning to
gather. Most of these people were experimental composers
brought together by Henry Cowell's activities on behalf of
twentieth-century music: John Becker, Wallingford Riegger,
Carl Ruggles, Otto Luening, Nicolas Slonimsky, Bernard
Herrmann, Lehman Engel, Jerome Moross, Gerald Strang,

17 Henry Bellamann, "Charles Ives: The Man and His
Ray Green, Lou Harrison, Frank Wigginsworth and Vladimir Ussachevsky. Each felt that a blow struck for Ives' music was a step taken in favor of their own convictions.

Meanwhile Cowell and Slonimsky were introducing Ives to foreign audiences. Slonimsky played the Three Places in New England in Cuba where the regular conductor of the Havana Philharmonic became very enthusiastic about Ives' music. This enthusiasm resulted in numerous later performances of this work. The concerts of 1931 and 1932 in Europe created great excitement; this showed itself in the form of laughter, protest or enthusiasm. One of the press reviews from Paris had this to say about the Ives music programmed:

Ives is not imitative; he has something to say. He is a musical artist-painter, if such an expression may be used, an impressionist not without a mixture of naive realism; his art is at times awkward and raw, but in him there is a real power, true invention, thematically and rhythmically speaking, which does not follow either the fashion or authorities. Ives is, perhaps, the only one among the American composers whose art is truly national—in this he has something in common with Walt Whitman.18

The year 1934 saw the first recording of any music by Ives. This project was sponsored by the New Music Quarterly. In 1937 the 65th Psalm, sung by the Madrigal Singers of Lehman Engel, was recorded by Columbia, the first recording by a major recording company. The Ives audience

18 Henry and Sidney Cowell, Charles Ives and His Music, p. 108.
was growing beyond the small avant-garde movement in the arts in the United States.

The big breakdown of resistance to Ives' ideas in a major area of musical activity came in 1939 when John Kirkpatrick played the entire *Concord Sonata* in Town Hall. This recital caused a riot of enthusiasm. A second program was given as a result, proving to Ives that he had finally attained the dream he had had for years of getting across that barrier of misunderstanding to the "Majority Mind."

Now the battle was won; "the Majority" was listening and the critics were writing. The tendency of critics to blame Schoenberg or Hindemith for anything they did not understand in the music of Ives proved very irritating to the composer. In 1931 Ives declared he had, up to that time, neither heard nor seen any music of Schoenberg or of Hindemith. When a critic made the assumption that "Putnam's Camp" was influenced by Stravinsky's *Sacre du Printemps*, Ives emphatically replied:

> All of the music I have written, with the exception of twelve or fifteen songs, was completed before I had seen or heard any of the music of the European composers cited by Hale in Boston as influencing the American composers on Slonimsky's European programs. It is interesting to hear that I am influenced by Hindemith, who did not start to compose until about 1920, several years after I had completed the music, good or bad, which Hale says is influenced by Hindemith! It happens that the music of mine referred to (*Three New England Places*) was written before
Hindemith became a composer. Up to the present late in 1931 I have not seen or heard any of Hindemith's music.  

This music of Ives, which was written while the rest of the world was struggling with dated traditions, frightens away many prospective performers. The complex rhythms and the many awkward technical passages in the music appear unplayable. However, these works can be performed, especially when we know that Ives believed in the individual performer's taking as important a position as the composer himself. Within the score he gives the performer few limitations on interpretation; in fact, on many occasions he will suggest several ways of playing a certain passage. This fear of the crystallization of his works can readily be seen in the *Concord Sonata* in the last movement, *Thoreau*. Here, where a flute is suddenly called for, not having been heard before, Ives specifically labels the flute part as optional, leaving the decision as to its use (or omission) to the discretion of the pianist.

Many of the critics accepted this sonata as the greatest work produced by Ives. Lawrence Gilman wrote in the *New York Herald Tribune* after the first performance of the *Concord Sonata*:

This Sonata is exceptionally great music--it is, indeed, the greatest music composed by an American, and the most deeply and essentially American in

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impulse and implication. It is wide-ranging and
 spacious. It has passion, tenderness, humor,
simplicity, homesickness. It has imaginative and
spiritual vastness. It has wisdom, beauty and
 profundity, and a sense of the encompassing terror
and splendor of human life and human destiny—a
sense of those mysteries that are both human and
divine. . . . Charles Ives is as unchallengeably
American as the Yale Fence. . . .

The next milestone of success was marked by the 1947
performance of the Third Symphony by Barone's New York
Little Symphony, under the baton of Lou Harrison. This
symphony was awarded the Pulitzer Prize. That year Ives met
the awarding committee with the statement: "Prizes are for
boys. I'm grown up." One can be sure Ives was glad his
music was liked but he was unimpressed by all the "to-do,"
and he refused all requests from metropolitan and news-
service reporters for interviews and pictures. All prizes
were the "badges of mediocrity" as far as he was concerned,
and he gave the prize-money of $500 away.

Since his highly susceptible nervous system reacted in
various unfortunate ways to any surprise or stress, Ives, in
his later years, saw only old friends. Radios and record-
ings afforded no enjoyment since a hearing disability
brought about a wavy distortion of sounds that was intensi-
fied when he tried to listen to music. This same nervous

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20 Score of the Concord Sonata, 2nd ed., last unnumbered page.

21 Nicolas Slonimsky, "Musical Rebel," Americas, V
(September 1953), 8.
condition also affected his vision and hands. For this reason deciphering his early works from complicated abbreviations and cross-references was a very slow process. Sometimes his vision completely failed so that the work of reconstruction and edition had to be done by helpers and described to him note by note. His wife, daughter and many composer-friends helped Ives.

Many times he incorporated witty remarks in a score or in a preface describing his composition. An example of such witticisms is found in one of his string quartets. The three movements are marked Discussion, Arguments and Call of the Mountains. Ives programs this as a string quartet for four men who converse, discuss, argue (politics), fight, shake hands, shut up, then walk up the mountain-side to view the firmament. One passage of this work is marked Andante emasculato while another suggests the type of tone wanted: con scratchy. He also advises the player that this composition is "too hard to play--so it just can't be good music."  

Charles Ives had a lot of time to think about his music and its relation to his life. In the concluding lines of his Essays Before A Sonata he expresses to the reader what he feels to be the relation between life and music. This would be what he would say to every thoughtful artist:

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22Ibid., p. 41.
The intensity today, with which techniques and media are organized and used, tends to throw the mind away from a 'common sense' and towards 'manner' and thus to resultant weak and mental states—for example, the Byronic fallacy—that one who is full of turbid feeling about himself is qualified to be some sort of an artist. In this relation 'manner' also leads some to think that emotional sympathy for self is as true a part of art as sympathy for others; and a prejudice in favor of the good and bad of one personality against the virtue of many personalities. It may be that when a poet or a whistler becomes conscious that he is in the easy path of any particular idiom,—that he is helplessly prejudiced in favor of any particular means of expression,—that his manner can be catalogued as modern or classic,—that he favors a contrapuntal groove, a sound-coloring one, a sensuous one, a successful one, or a melodious one,—that his interests lie in the French school or the German school, or in the school of Saturn,—that he is involved in this particular 'that' or that particular 'this,' or in any particular brand of emotional complexes,—in a word, when he becomes conscious that his style is 'his personal own,'—that it has monopolized a geographical part of the world's sensibilities, then it may be that the value of his substance is not growing,—that it even may have started on its way backwards,—it may be that he is trading an inspiration for a bad habit and finally that he is reaching fame, permanence, or some other undervalue, and that he is getting farther and farther from a perfect truth. But, on the contrary side of the picture, it is not unreasonable to imagine that if he is open to all the overvalues within his reach,—if he stands unprotected from all the showers of the absolute which may beat upon him,—if he is willing to use or learn to use, or at least if he is not afraid of trying to use, whatever he can, of any and all lessons of the infinite that humanity has received and thrown to man,—that nature has exposed and sacrificed, that life and death have translated— if he accepts all and sympathizes with all, is influenced by all, whether consciously or subconsciously, drastically or humbly, audibly or inaudibly, whether it be all the virtue of Satan or the only evil of Heaven—and all, even, at one time, even in one chord,—then it may be that the value of his substance, and its value to himself, to his art, to all art, even to the Common Soul is growing and
approaching nearer and nearer to perfect truths—
whatever they are and wherever they may be. 23

CHAPTER II

THE MUSIC

Charles Ives saw social problems, his business and his personal life in the light of his "universalist" philosophy. Consequently, when he encountered problems in writing his music, he worked them out in accordance with the same philosophy. In his Essays he states that he feels that nature loves analogy and abhors repetition and explanation. Unity, he feels, is too generally conceived of, or rather, too easily accepted. Consequently, he feels that music should never be immediately understood. There should always remain some further element yet to be disclosed to the listener as well as to the performer.

To Ives the sonata-allegro form is based on the principle of unity. It deals with the resolution of two contrasting themes. Ives always seems to think of reality as having two sides, and even in small compositions he works from this point of view. Many times, because of this fact, his musical ideas make difficult reading and his statements become hard to follow.

To the Ives code of living, comfort, repose, sloth and easy acceptance of the obvious or the customary fall into the category of great sins. Therefore, to think hard, then
to say what one thinks, regardless of the consequences, is a man's obligation and duty.

Since he has this obligation to himself, we find that in his music he does not set up as the standard of beauty something which has been considered beautiful by other people. He has said many times that beauty in music is too often confused with something that lets the ears "lie back in an easy chair." On the contrary, as he has put it in the Essays, he wants to put the hearers' ears to work and he points out that the ear can understand much more than is customary, if it must. Besides, "dissonances," he says, "are becoming beautiful." "Don't mind the soft ears a-lolling around in the hall," he once wrote on a score of his music. "Knock 'em over the ropes. Make 'em work their ears like real men!"¹

The music which Ives wrote reflects many of his early boyhood experiences. For instance, the seed of Ives' concept of polyphony seems to have been sown at the time his father experimented with two bands which started at opposite ends of town and, coming together on Main Street, then moved away from each other again. These bands were assigned pieces in different meters and keys. Naturally as they approached each other the dissonance was more pronounced and each man had to play louder so that the music from the other

band would not disrupt his own playing. Ives has reproduced his recollection of this musical event—and others like it—in several ways. Many times in his orchestral works Ives will divide the orchestra into two units. Each part will then play different music resulting in a sound created by two orchestras playing simultaneously in different rhythms, meters and keys.

Another boyhood event produced another type of polyphony that Ives uses in his later compositions. It seems that on one occasion two rival fiddlers, by some mistake, had been invited to preside at a local square dance. Each stood his ground and each played at the same time his own version of the same tune that was announced. It seemed like chaos to the ear but actually was not since the two strands could be shown to be related.

Since Ives considered American music so important, he frequently used a phrase of some well-known song, such as "O Suzanna" or "The Capetown Races" as the main theme of a work. Ives saw no reason why a composer could not borrow a musical idea from another composer and then construct a new work based on this theme just as literary writers had been doing for generations. He not only quotes freely from American music literature but in one instance he uses the four-note motive which opens the Fifth Symphony of Beethoven. Ives did this out of no spirit of imitation or competition but from the feeling that such a great theme is
universal in nature and its implications should continue to grow and be incorporated into new music.

His music makes use of counterpoint but not counterpoint in the classical meaning of the term. The more familiar the melodic lines are, the more reasonable it seems to Ives to put them together with a special independence. By "special independence" he means that in such a combination of a familiar melody and its contrapuntal accompaniments each could have its own key and perhaps also its own individual rhythm.

Ives seems to have done his best work when creating new forms of his own as his musical conception demanded. Usually one finds that such traditional forms as the canon, the fugue and the other polyphonic forms involving imitation prove clumsy and unsatisfactory in his hands. On the other hand, he is a master of the canon treated in very free style. The freedom and independence from tradition everywhere evident in the compositions of Ives make his works a source of infinite vitality and invention.

There is also the presence of harmonic unity in Ives' compositions. True, he used extreme dissonance in creating new chords if he discovered he could not say what he heard with the traditional chordal vocabulary. However, the end result produced was always one of solid masonry.
Ives achieves an independence of dissonance in several different ways. He often retains the feeling of the key by keeping constantly sounding to the ear of the listener the relation of each chromatic tone to its tonal center. Sometimes he arrives at a given harmonic treatment through some kind of improvisational scheme.

Ives usually changes the number of voices in successive chords drastically. He may follow an eight-voiced chordal section by a passage in eleven-voiced chords, then move to some four-part harmony. Ives is a master of chord progression, however, fitting these connections perfectly into the framework of his musical intentions.

The melodies of Ives are not unusual in themselves; it is what he does with these musical ideas that is unusual. Ives may develop his melodic ideas by means of the various compositional techniques traditionally known as inversion, retrograde, augmentation and diminution. Again, in one composition a fragment of a melody may appear a hundred times and still never sound the same. Many times the melodies change their tonal implications so rapidly that they definitely suggest atonality. Usually we find that they plainly suggest major, minor or chromatic tonalities.

One of Horatio Parker's chief criticisms of Ives' First Symphony was the loss of key feeling in the first theme, which modulated six or seven times within the first eight bars. Parker apparently could not conceive of a D minor
symphony's having a first movement whose first theme spent so little time in the symphony's name-key and modulated so rapidly that tonality was completely lost.

Doubtless, Parker would have been quite shocked if he could have studied the final results of Ives' development: not only is Ives original in his treatment of thematic material but also he has become known for his simultaneous use of a great diversity of rhythms.

Many of the works for orchestra, e.g., the second movement of the Fourth Symphony, are written in a very complicated style. Consequently, conductors (being only human) take one look at these pages and immediately put them at the bottom of the stack labeled "learn in the future." In the second movement of the Fourth Symphony the rhythmic complexities appear very frightening. This movement opens with equal eighth notes in 6/8 meter for the solo piano, percussion, brass, flutes and piccolo; a 5/8 meter is assigned to the clarinets, second orchestral piano, triangle and bells; 7/4 to the bassoons, and 2/4 to the first orchestral piano. One thing which saves the whole affair is that Ives usually underlays the whole rhythmic framework with a constant unit of time such as the eighth-note or quarter-note.

The Fourth Symphony is also interesting orchestrally from another point of view. Ives makes use of a full orchestra plus two orchestral pianos and a solo piano. Ives
had a strong interest in the piano and in practically all of his works we find the piano performing its duties as a "binding" instrument. Perhaps the piano is used because it can combine the sound of harmony with a strong percussive effect, both of which are so very important to Ives' music.

Ives' whole approach to rhythm is an attempt to avoid the rigid rhythmic system to which the music of the nineteenth century has accustomed the music student. He is trying to induce the performer to play involved passages with greater freedom. In fact, Ives has expressed his regret over having had to write his music down on paper. He firmly believed that once this step in notation had been taken, the rhythms would become hopelessly crystallized and tied down to time-tested interpretation.

Ives considers the composer's task to be that of creating the "music." By this term he means the basic musical ideas underlying the composition. Therefore, any idea the composer may have had must not be subordinated to the restricting techniques of performance, and certainly it should never be changed for the sake of the player's inadequate performing skill. Naturally it is desirable to have the best possible effect in sound but never to sacrifice the "music" to the sound.

Ives felt very strongly about this principle. Once, when someone told him his songs were unsingable, he came back with an answer worthy of a son of the Constitution State:
A song has a few rights, the same as other ordinary citizens. If it happens to feel like trying to fly where humans cannot fly--to sing what cannot be sung--to walk in a cave on all fours--or to tighten up its girth in blind hope and faith and try to scale mountains that are not--who shall stop it?²

Today Ives' music can be met more adequately by singers who are now more advanced and by players who can play his difficult rhythmic patterns--most of the time, at least. When any special effect of orchestral balance is desired, electrical amplification can make audible any of the instrumental parts that do not normally sound out as specified in the score. At last, some thirty years after Ives first investigated the possibilities of these tonal effects, they are being realized.

However, this man was experimenting with sound, and an orchestra could produce these new sound combinations. Had Ives been forced to compose for economic reasons, the result of these experiments, which produced effects by unnecessarily complicated procedures, would doubtless have proved disastrous. Below is an example of such impractical scoring. The expense for rehearsal time alone for this score would certainly cost a fortune.

Fig. 1—Theater Set, "In the Night," first brace
CHAPTER III

STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE THREE PIANO SONATAS

The piano sonatas of Ives by no means make up the bulk of his total compositions; they do, however, compose the greater share of his total output in the field of piano literature. The author feels that the three piano sonatas are quite representative of his works as a whole. However, these sonatas were written at regular five-year intervals within a period of time in which Ives did his most intensive composing (1890-1920). The Three-Page Sonata, written first (1905), was followed by the First Sonata which was finished in 1910. The final work, the Concord Sonata, which seems to be the most imaginative and intense composition, was finished in 1915. Study of these sonatas in a chronological order should show a development of style which could not be seen so readily if a study were made instead of the more numerous orchestral works which use various orchestrations and present numerous other problems to the student making the analysis. Here in the piano sonatas we are dealing with works written for the same instrument. Also, attention is drawn to the piano works because it is evident, through study of the various scores of Ives' music, that the piano was his "first love" and therefore used in practically every one of
his compositions. If dissatisfied with the effect of only one piano in an orchestral work, he frequently scores for two pianos and, on occasion, as in the Fourth Symphony, makes use of three pianos.

The study of these sonatas does not pretend to be exhaustive. Upon first glance at these scores the student will probably be frightened by the sight of "too many notes" and the complex rhythmic patterns in which they are placed. This study has been made, therefore, with the primary purpose of helping the student better to understand the technique of composition encountered in the piano works of Ives. A second reason for its presentation is the hope that it may create enough interest in the music of Ives to result in an increasing number of performances of these sonatas in the future.

In the summer of 1905 Ives finished his first piano sonata. In the original manuscript this sonata covered only three pages of staff paper normally used for orchestral scores. Since no specific name was attached to the work by Ives himself, it has come to be known as the Three-Page Sonata in spite of the fact that the published edition fills twelve pages.

In this sonata Ives intends to poke fun at the long, complicated sonatas which were produced by the composers of the Romantic Era. In comparison with such long works, this Three-Page Sonata is a mere "infant." Although Ives
employs various traditional Italian terms indicating change of mood or tempo (Allegro moderate, andante; Adagio; Allegro—March time, piu mosso, Allegro, March time, piu mosso), these sections are so brief (roughly one or two pages in length) that they cannot stand alone as do the "movements" of the classical sonata. It is implicit that the sonata must be interpreted as a single unit with a continuous flow of sound.

For a period of forty years this sonata remained inaudible as far as the "public ear" was concerned. However, on April 25, 1949, it was given its first performance by William Mosselos at Town Hall in New York City. The critics referred to the sonata as being "slight," but having some "pleasantly syncopated" pages.¹ The author is inclined to agree with this criticism. The thoughts presented in this sonata are stated well but perhaps developed too economically. Since this was Ives’ first attempt at writing a piano sonata it is probably only natural that this work should be relatively slight in dimensions as compared with the later two sonatas. However, this sonata does make a contribution to piano literature and should not be neglected by the music student.

The opening *Allegro moderato* seems somewhat mechanical in its construction and its meaning is obscure. The general tonal effect is rather chaotic and in this respect foretells a style which was to be used often in later works such as the *Concord Sonata*.

In the contrasting *Adagio* section, which is presented on three planes of sound as evidenced by the use of three staves, Ives suggests that it would be better to have a second performer play the angular melody appearing on the highest staff. Whether Ives was indulging in irony or merely being practical one may judge for himself for the music is actually not playable by a single performer. More interesting is his suggestion that bells or a celesta be used for this top plane of sound, thereby obtaining a contrast in tone-color.

Fig. 2—Theme from *Adagio* of the *Three-Page Sonata*
The Allegro in March Time is introduced by a very bold theme which appears alone in the left hand. Within this opening statement one notices a link with the first movement through the use of similar intervals (minor and major seconds). The strong rhythmic force of this solo line in the march also resembles the general rhythmic characteristics which appear in the first section. Below in Fig. 3, the march theme has been reproduced, together with several passages taken from the opening Allegro moderato for comparison by the reader. Through the devices of using closely related small intervals in both

Fig. 3—a) March; b) and c) excerpts from the first section of the Allegro in March Time, Three-Page Sonata.
sections as mentioned above and the development of similar rhythmic ideas, this sonata acquires a tightly knit framework which makes it definitely a one-movement work.

The indication Allegro in March Time would seem to imply that a strict marching rhythm should be maintained throughout. The first three bars do appear in 4/4 meter; but following these appear measures in 2/4, 4/4 and even 3/4. Whether the appearance of a single measure of 3/4 in the middle of this march was another light touch of Ives' irony or whether the composer had in mind the schoolboy's habit of skipping a step while marching, the reader may discover for himself in his study of this movement. Whatever may have prompted this curious insertion, it seems certain that Ives, in labeling the movement "in March Time," was merely indicating to the performer the mood in which he should approach this particular section.

The piu mosso which follows the Allegro in March Time is very interesting rhythmically. In this 2/4 section there appears the use of a rhythmic pattern of a sixteenth followed by an eighth and then by a sixteenth. This rhythm appears in every measure of the top voice which also shows two main accents per measure, while a lower voice employs three accents per measure (six eighth notes). The resultant effect, of course, is that of the well-known "two opposing
three." However, here, through the device of constant repetition of the syncopated figure, Ives achieves the same robust, perhaps even primitive, feeling that one encounters in similar passages in Bartok.

![Musical notation]

Fig. 4—Two measures from the piu mosso of the Three-Page Sonata.

Now the March theme, which previously appeared alone in the left hand, reappears but this time with a countermelody for the right hand consisting of a series of full chords sounding in contrasting rhythmic patterns thus producing a full thick texture in this section. Upon study of the score one notices that the treble passages are made up of many nine-voiced chords and near the end of both March sections "tone clusters" are used to give added resonance.

Just as the second March section is similar to the first so the second piu mosso, which follows, is a fairly exact repetition of the first piu mosso. These four sections seem to make up one unit consisting of two "verses," each followed by a "chorus" which is the same both times. A
brief coda which echoes the ending of the Allegro in March time follows the second piu mosso. After all the dissonance and rhythmic complexities are spent the sonata closes with a highly consonant and welcome C Major triad. It might be remarked that such a procedure is typical of Ives. Since he rarely uses key signatures he appears to feel that he is working about the tonal center of C.

Fig. 5--Ending of the Three-Page Sonata

In 1910, after nearly seven years of writing and rewriting, Ives finally completed the First Sonata. At that time Ives listed this work as having seven movements. However, during the period when the composer carried out his project of photostating his manuscripts, for some unknown reason only five movements were reproduced by this process and the manuscript apparently was destroyed. In any case, the other two movements had not been found by Ives before

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2In the Concord Sonata, "Alcotts" ends on a C Major triad, as do some of the orchestral works as well.
his death and, according to his close friend Henry Cowell, these movements are still lost. Consequently, this sonata was published, and later recorded, as in only five movements. These are as follows:

I  Adagio, Andante con moto, Allegro risoluto
II Allegro moderato ("Danbury 1902"), Allegro moderato ("In the Inn").
III Largo, Allegro, Largo
IV Andante, Allegro
V Andante maestoso, Adagio cantabile, Allegro, Allegro moderato ma con brio

At a later date Ives wrote Cowell that the first movement, Adagio con moto, Andante con moto, Allegro risoluto, should be played at the start "with a certain kind of poise and dignity, but not exactly slower," then "agitato," followed in a "kind of furious way (hit hard!)" and "finally ease down to adagio cantabile." This whole movement is unified by the continuous presence of one motive which is first stated early in the movement.

Fig. 6--Brace 4 of page 1, main motive of first movement of the First Sonata.

Several braces later this same motive develops into a theme (appearing in an inner part) which ascends to an octave above its starting point and then descends
immediately. A variation of this theme follows. For the several measures required by this variation the accompaniment in the left hand is in extended arpeggios which are based primarily on the triad of C-sharp major, with a predominance of open octaves and fifths, but with occasional B's and A's appearing as the figure turns at the top. This effect seems somewhat impressionistic.

Fig. 7--Brace 2 of page 3, thematic variation of first movement of First Sonata.

The more agitated Andante con moto which follows develops new thematic material involving new rhythmic patterns into the Allegro risoluto which contains the climax of this movement. The motive which originally ascended (see Fig. 6) now appears in an inverted form and descends in a different rhythm. Previous to this Allegro risoluto Ives has maintained a free style of melodic
development which has been unhampered by the strict feeling of a "metronome beat." However, in this section which leads to the climax of this movement he changes style and uses a strong strict beat which has a very brittle, percussive effect in performance.

Within the framework of this movement striking contrasts in mood may be observed. The mood established in the opening is an expansive one, each phrase being carefully molded and played at a moderate tempo. The Allegro risoluto, in contrast, requires a more percussive approach. Following this, the original mood is caught again with a melody that seems to have developed out of all the preceding material, including the first motive. As this motive is developed for the last time (in the brief passage in 6/8 which ends the movement) it could be mistaken for a theme by Chopin, but this resemblance is felt for only an instant and then forgotten. Nevertheless, it remains a fact that Ives does borrow many melodic ideas from other composers, working with these in such a way as to produce a complete metamorphosis of the original outline.

![Musical notation]

Fig. 8—Page 10, melody of the last brace of the first movement of the First Sonata.
The second movement definitely shows the influence of Ives' earlier years in college when he was accustomed to act as a substitute for the regular pianist of a dance-band. He must have had a keen interest in popular music, for a strong influence of the "ragtime" rhythm of his day is noticeable in this second movement, as well as in the third and fourth movements to be discussed below.

In the printed edition of this Sonata, the opening section of the second movement carries only the tempo indication Allegro moderato, while the second section (again Allegro moderato) is prominently titled "In the Inn." According to Henry Cowell, Ives named the first section "Danbury, 1902," although the reason for its omission from the published score is unknown.

One of the outstanding characteristics of Ives' method of composition is his borrowing of material, either from other composers or from other works of his own. In this second movement we find a good example of this practice.

The form of the entire movement might be analyzed as A B [Danbury, 1902] A' B' ["In the Inn"]. Again Ives has made use of the form observed in the Three-Page Sonata, that of two "verses" with each verse being followed by a "chorus." The word "chorus" was attached to each of the B sections of this movement by Ives himself, and the main theme is the same in both, though its accompaniment and general treatment are quite different in each. "In the Inn" is not only a
more elaborate version of "Danbury, 1902," but might also be called a transcription for piano of the second movement of Ives' earlier work, the Set of Pieces for Theater Orchestra and Piano. Once this identity is established, it may be seen that "Danbury, 1902" is actually a simplified version of "In the Inn." Figure 9 shows parallel passages from the two "verses." Similarity will be observed in the direction

![Musical notation]

Fig. 9—a) Theme "Danbury, 1902;" second movement of the First Sonata; b) theme from "In the Inn," second movement of the First Sonata.

of the melodic lines, in the intervals employed and in the rhythmic patterns. Many other such similar passages could have been quoted.
In the parallel passage from "Danbury, 1902" and "In the Inn," shown in Fig. 10, Ives seems to foretell a passage which appears in the last movement of the Concord Sonata. Massive chords moving chromatically in two lines which progress in contrary motion are common to all three situations and appear to give an effect which was pleasing to Ives.

![Music notation image]

Fig. 10--Page 12, brace 4: a) pattern of chords in contrary motion, "Danbury, 1902" b) pattern of chords in contrary motion, "In the Inn," from the First Sonata.

The "chorus" following each of these "verses" is exactly the same with the exception that the melody is thicker in the second version. Ives makes various
suggestions concerning the performance of this chorus. On the second chorus he writes:

The chorus is an impromptu affair (as is also the rest to some extent)—and may be varied according to the tempo taken. The second and fourth measures of the chorus may be changed each time, as suggested below, and also in the other measures the left hand may change, 'shifts' ad lib. The last measure may be extended in similar fashion.

In many instances throughout this movement the listener becomes conscious of a style of writing which has since become known as "Blues music." The resemblance of the 'chorus,' in particular, to the music of such a composer as George Gershwin is very striking. However, it may be said for a certainty that this style of writing originated with Ives and was not borrowed by him.

Fig. 11--Chorus from the second movement, First Sonata.
After the "jazz-like" second movement a third movement follows in the form of a Largo. After "tuning-up" with a series of fifths, the movement begins a series of variations and developments of the first phrase of the well-known "What A Friend We Have in Jesus." Nearly the entire movement concerns itself with this fragment, the entire melody being stated only at the end of the movement. Throughout this whole movement one cannot help but see a revival meeting going on with an "old-time" revival pianist doing a set of free variations on the hymn while the congregation struggles along as best it can, committing all the errors in hymn-singing commonly made by such a group.

Fig. 12--Theme of the third movement, First Sonata

One of the few times in which Ives makes use of the trill is found in this movement. As a rule every bit of ornamentation in his music is written out; however, in one of the transition passages between variations in this
movement he indicates several trills by the usual sign (as shown in Fig. 13) which, when performed, are actually obscured by the higher melody.

Fig. 13--Trills, page 25, second brace, from the third movement of the First Sonata.

Movement four is marked *Andante-Allegro* and includes a study in "ragtime" with quintuplets, triplets and duplets in various different combinations. Following this there is a *Presto* which, according to Ives, should be played as fast as possible. This movement again follows the classic sonata tradition in presenting a fast *scherzo*-like movement to afford contrast within the framework of the sonata form. As in the previous movement, Ives again gets his basic idea for the movement from the revival hymnbook. This time the hymn is "Bringing in the Sheaves," and it is treated in a typical "revivalistic" ragtime style. The introduction seems unduly long, for it is fully half the length of the entire movement. In addition, this introduction has nothing to do with the hymn tune which follows; instead, it is very percussive
and rhythmic, reminding one of the opening of the second movement. Materials used in the second movement again appear in this movement, as can be seen in Fig. 14. Also, in this section, in order to produce more "noise," Ives makes use of four-tone clusters which keep hammering away in the top voices.

Fig. 14--a) Second movement, page 14; b) fourth movement, page 32, 1st brace, of the First Sonata.
Fig. 15--Tone clusters, page 29, last brace, fourth movement, First Sonata.

A startling effect is produced when the next section of this movement begins and once again demonstrates Ives' love for the unusual and for surprising the listener. In this instance the effect is achieved by a sudden change from the popular rhythms of the previous movement to the slow hymn-like theme which appears in the second section of this movement. This is easily heard and seen in the score. Ives marks clearly the voices of his works which he thinks should be heard above others; he does this by means of accents and each of the tones of this hymn-melody carries this mark of accentuation. The hymn is stated in full approximately three times. The first time it appears in G minor and the other times in F major--or nearly F major (a few accidentalas are inserted).
Fig. 16--Full statement of theme, page 35, third brace, fourth movement, First Sonata.

The themes of the fifth movement, Andante maestoso, are developed out of the ideas stated in the previous movements. Especially noticeable is the similarity between the thematic developments in the first and last movements. Below is an instance of this thematic development taken from the first movement. (See Fig. 17, a). A comparison of this with the theme of the fifth movement (see Fig. 17, b) provides clear evidence of their striking similarity.
Fig. 17--a) First movement; b) fifth movement, first theme, First Sonata.

This powerful descending theme of the fifth movement is handled with much less padding than is normal in Ives' style. At first glance this movement appears less frightening than the others, for its notation shows many half-notes. Also, Ives handles the voices with greater economy, many times doubling a voice at the octave, but otherwise avoiding complicated chordal structures in the accompaniment. After a somewhat long development which contains a fughetta-like treatment of this theme, relief appears in the form of a very soft Adagio cantabile. As the Italian term suggests, the new effect is very singing in style and offers great contrast to the preceding part of the movement as well as to that which is to come later.

Ives must have been impressed by the volume of tone which some of the composers of the later nineteenth century were able to get out of both the piano and the orchestra. This sonata, especially in the last movement, builds up an
abundance of sonorities which have come to be associated with the era of Schumann and Liszt. The development of Ives' skill in producing sound can easily be seen in these sonatas. The First Sonata, as compared with the earlier Three-Page Sonata, demonstrates more advanced techniques in achieving the greater tonal complexities which Ives was obviously imagining. Whether this advance in sound-making was a wise path to follow seems debatable, especially after a reading of the last sonata which he wrote for the piano.

The First Sonata is more advanced than the earlier Three-Page Sonata. In this First Sonata the five movements are written in simple song-forms and are thus more closely related to the movements of a classic sonata-form. Even though the dimensions of this sonata's movements seem small and rather insignificant in comparison with those of other sonatas, these movements are closely related to each other. The first and last movements, as well as the second and the fourth are closely related in the thematic material used and the rhythmic patterns which are explored. Ives seems to have been groping for some form which would meet the qualifications of the larger work on which he was still working at the time this First Sonata was being finished. In Ives' ambitious development he has moved from the less complicated and shorter one-movement work to a five-movement work and then progresses to the most complex
sonata written by a modern composer, the *Concord Sonata*.

Lou Harrison, in his preface to the *First Sonata*, describes this sonata as ranking with some of the greatest works written for the piano over the period of the last century.

Only the bare feeling-nature of the several movements of a sonata remain; not the forms (excepting only the cyclic idea of thematics and the multiplying refrains of the scherzi) but the kind of music we know in the sizable piano sonatas of a few major composers is here, and it is on this direct substance that the interpretation must rest. In the tradition of the *Hammerklavier* (of Beethoven) and the Liszt B-minor, this is probably the penultimate romantic sonata (*The First Sonata*) the same composer's *Concord* probably the last, for it is almost unthinkable that a work of this kind might be written now or in the near future. And it should be performed in the manner fitting; making full use of the weighted, full sound of the large grand piano, rich in tone and warm in resonance. . .

The *Second Pianoforte Sonata*, "Concord, Mass., 1840-1860", was the product of many years of work and thought. Even in Ives' college days the idea of creating a musical composition of this type must have entered his mind many times, for at this time he was industriously studying the transcendentalist school (the followers and their philosophies of life as seen in their writings) thereby giving himself the complete understanding with which to attempt such a masterpiece in later years. In this memorial to the New England School of literary writers the
individual movements carry the names of four of these men respectively: Emerson, Hawthorne, Alcott and Thoreau.

The four movements of this sonata were first conceived by Ives in various other media than the piano, the one in which the work was finally realized. For instance, the first movement, Emerson, was begun as a concerto for piano and orchestra but never completed as such. Later it was planned as an Emerson Overture (1909-1911). However, the published version for piano has retained two measures for viola ad lib. as a carry-over from the earlier scoring of the overture. The other movements have similar stories. Hawthorne was first imagined by Ives as being played by a piano or a "dozen pianos" whereas Alcott was to be a composition for organ or piano with one line taking the voice. Thoreau was planned in terms of strings with possibly the added color of a flute or horn. As a result, this reduction of such big dreams to the limited range of the eighty-eight keys of the piano has produced a work of immeasurable difficulty for the ten fingers of the pianist. This indeed becomes a challenge to the performer.

At first glance, and even more so upon first hearing this sonata, the general impression obtained is that of one chaotic mass of sound, one moment characterized by thick chords and the simultaneous use of several rhythms and then the next by an almost irritating simplicity. This "noisy" technique of writing had been developing continuously
throughout Ives' career as a composer. In the Three-Page Sonata there is some evidence of such a technique of composition and the First Sonata provides even more plentiful examples. However, even these sections strike the ear as very conservative when compared with certain passages in the Concord Sonata.

Emerson, the first movement of the Concord Sonata, represents an advance over the movements of the two earlier sonatas as regards complexity of form. Ives constructs this movement about a motive which he borrows from the Fifth Symphony of Beethoven. (See Fig. 18). Throughout the whole movement this theme appears repeatedly, sometimes obscured by an overabundance of sound and at other times handled in a bold style of complete simplicity. Ives borrows the rhythmic structure of this famous theme and the idea of a threefold repetition followed by a downward leap, but he varies the interval of this leap as suits his convenience. The opening of Emerson is so loud, and its harmonic texture so thick, that the ear rebels against the resultant effect. However, after a brief development (about three pages) of this deafening sound-complex, this thins out the texture and simplifies the rhythmic situation in a passage serving as transition to his second "mood." This borrowed "idea" serves largely as a rhythmic skeleton, appearing periodically in the background more as a rhythmic "control" than as a
Fig. 18—Four-note motive of the Emerson movement, Concord Sonata.

"theme." In lieu of themes in the traditional sense of the word Ives creates "moods."

![Musical notation]

Fig. 19—Contrasting rhythmic pattern of the Emerson movement, Concord Sonata.

Following this transition in which a simple melodic line prevails comes a section marked Slowly and Quietly (see Fig. 20); this produces a striking effect because of the very obvious contrast between the mood it evokes and that produced by the opening passages of the movement. In his presentation of two such contrasting ideas Ives appears to have had in mind the thematic requirements of the first movement of the classic sonata, i.e. the "sonata-allegro" form, yet one finds no actual "first" or "second" themes,
Fig. 20—Beginning of *Slowly and Quietly* from the Emerson movement, *Concord Sonata*.

merely divisions of the music which evoke strikingly different moods.

Another development section which resembles the first in the sounds produced follows this brief interlude of a lyric melody. Then Ives presents still another idea which he develops in the space of three pages—a comparatively longer space of time than that required for the earlier lyrical section. This idea seems more fragmentary in construction and gains its interest through the use of repetition involving variations in time values in the lower voice and the change to disjunct intervals in the top melody. Fig. 21 presents the theme as first stated, then as it appears two braces later and finally as it appears the last time. Here, in the final appearance, Ives attempts to all but play the music by writing it in a very descriptive notation suggesting the *maestoso* interpretation with which it should be performed.
Fig. 21--a) First appearance of the third theme, b) second appearance of the third theme, c) third appearance of the third theme, Emerson movement, Concord Sonata.
Again it is felt that this section, like the previous section, is purely developmental in character.

Here follows a loud section which is closely related to the first section of the movement in that both use the same thematic material. In this section Ives incorporates a use of counterpoint which is greatly suggestive of a fugal writing. The entrance of several voices stating the theme (see Fig. 22) represents the only fugal technique employed in this passage.

Fig. 22—Fugue theme of the Emerson movement, Concord Sonata.

From this point Ives again "cuts his own trail," but it is evident he is more concerned with the voices and their movements than with horizontal chord blocks. A brief passage brings back the melody which appeared in the first contrasting section of the movement. In contrast to the first appearance of this theme, the melody is now truncated and transposed one-half step higher. Nevertheless, because of its prominence, it can be considered a part of the recapitulation.
Finally, the four note "Beethovenian" motive boldly appears in thick chordal style (see Fig. 23) as compared with previous entrances where it is subtly introduced in an inner part surrounded by more prominent chromatic lines. From this point on to the end of the movement Ives dissolves the complexities of sound until only a pianissimo motive remains. The movement ends with the "Beethovenian" motive on the notes A, A, A, F.

Fig. 23--Recapitulation statement of the theme, Emerson movement, Concord Sonata.

The second movement of the Concord Sonata is entitled Hawthorne. Recalling Hawthorne's imaginative disposition, Ives attempted to make this movement more fanciful than any of the other three movements of this sonata. This therefore explains the fast "scherzo-like" movement in which appears a series of interruptions which represent a church choir, a marching band and once again the church choir.

The first part, marked "very fast," occupies four pages in the printed score and reappears in essence, if not
exactly "note-wise," three more times. This section is characterized by the appearance of few-note motives, each note separated by several extraneous notes. These motives are discernible by the ear because of the speed of the composition and the accent given to each note of the motive. (See Fig. 24.)

Fig. 24—Excerpt from the Hawthorne movement of the Concord Sonata.

Other sections which make up this movement provide contrast to the fast section discussed above. First is a representation of the "Celestial Railway" with an attempt at duplication of the imagined sound of such a railway. This is accomplished by the use of a board 14 3/4 inches long with which the pianist depresses an area of keys so easily
as not to produce sound. This procedure allows over-tones produced by lower voices to sound. This possibly has aroused more comment from the critics than any other device Ives has ever used.

The second contrasting section, appearing quite unexpectedly, after some four or five pages of thick sound, appears in the form of a simple chorale which assumes the melodic and harmonic characteristics of the hymn "Nearer My God to Thee." (See Fig. 25) The clean style of this writing which appears here provides great contrast to that style of writing used in the introduction of the first movement.

![Musical notation](image)

Fig. 25--Hymn entrance from the Hawthorne movement of the Concord Sonata.

The third section represents still another side of Hawthorne's character, that of his love for the circus and its music. In very bold style Ives embarks upon a march which is reminiscent of a pep-rally song. (See Fig. 26.)
Fig. 26—March from the Hawthorne Movement of the Concord Sonata.

In the last score the hymn tune appears once again for a duration of four chords. After seven pages of almost unfathomable sound this sudden relief is quite welcome and is remembered for its very sudden and surprising contrast.

The scherzo is usually followed by an adagio movement in traditional sonatas. In this respect this sonata is traditional. The third movement, The Alcotts, is in a large three-part song form. There seems, however, to be several procedures employed within this movement which are not quite traditional. First, an odd key signature of two flats in the treble clef and four flats in the bass clef appears in the second brace of this movement. Second, this movement contains several pages on which there are no meter signatures indicated or bar lines employed. The eighth note, consequently, becomes the beat and the phrase becomes more of an important performance factor. The exact effect which Ives wanted for this particular passage of music and consequently the whole movement has been achieved through the omission of traditional notation aids.
This movement is closely related to the first movement of this sonata in its use of the four-note motive which was borrowed from Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. Ives treats this motive in several interesting ways. Fig. 27a demonstrates the achievement of a climax through the use of a syncopated form of this motive. This same motive (see Fig. 27b) takes on a silvery impressionistic quality through the use of bitonality.

![Musical notation]

Fig. 27—(a) Syncopation in climax of four-note motive; (b) impressionistic treatment of four-note motive, The Alcotts movement, Concord Sonata.

The middle section of The Alcotts is based on a melody resembling a Scotch air or possibly a hymn. This middle section offers quiet relief within the movement just
as the whole third movement offers the same relief to the rest of the sonata. The four-note motive once again appears for the closing section. This movement ends on a C major triad similar to the ending of the Three-Page Sonata.

Ives seeks to achieve many effects based on boyhood reminiscences. These effects may resemble impressionistic or ultra-romantic devices. However, Ives used his own initiative in such instances where the similarity is so pronounced—there is no question of borrowing from other composers.

In Thoreau the introduction is based on a repetitious motive. (See Fig. 28.) This section does not reappear in the movement until near the end when repetition seems very fitting and proper.

Fig. 28--Introduction motive, Thoreau, Concord Sonata

Meanwhile, various new ideas appear, the first being developed in a question and answer style. The question is repeated three times and is answered each time by a much longer answer. Each of the answers, though basically the same in musical material, varies as to actual notes present
and each becomes more complicated rhythmically, melodically and harmonically.

This section is then followed by a secondary theme under which a *basso ostinato* is sounded. (See Fig. 28.) This theme is developed in a very logical manner thereby leading directly to a climax. It gains its excitement through the procedures of raising pitch levels and use of syncopation along with the constant repetition of the bass. A chord sequence in contrary motion finally brings the development section to a climax after which the secondary theme (see Fig. 29) reappears in the original state accompanied by the same beating *basso ostinato*.

![Notation](image)

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Fig. 29--Second theme, Thoreau from the *Concord Sonata*.

The last two pages of this sonata are samples of what would seem to be the best writing of Ives. Within these two pages Ives has, in a coda, captured the mood of the second theme, treating it in a free altered fashion through the addition of a flute part. The first theme also reappears and the movement ends on the same arpeggio patterns which were used to introduce the movement. Even on the last score
the last four chords repeat the four-note motive rhythmic pattern of $\text{III}$ thereby unifying the whole sonata.

Many notes have been set down on paper in this sonata. Possibly many of these notes are not needed in the score since they are masked out in performance. Nevertheless there seems to be some purpose for every note set down and it "little behooves" the performer to deviate at his will from the score because of various difficulties encountered. This work is a solid unit and should not be destroyed by "ill-tutored" study.

Ives' creative genius is demonstrated in the wide range of melodic construction used in these sonatas. The themes vary in length from a four-note motive such as that borrowed from a Beethoven symphony in the first movement of the Concord Sonata to hymn quotations such as those found in the third and fourth movements of the First Sonata. Ives also leaves no stone unturned as regards width of melody by using the eighty-eight piano keys in these sonatas.

Many times these melodies are based on simple diatonic harmonies such as those in the first brace of the third movement of the Concord Sonata. Then again he changes his simple themes to very complicated atonal utterances. However, it can be safely assumed that, whether Ives realized it or not, when he wanted contrasts his unusual procedure was to use a thick sounding section as opposed to a cleaner sound such as a simple melodic line.
In such contrasts harmonic tension, a principle explained by Hindemith in the *Craft of Musical Composition*, changes in proportion to the complexity or simplicity of the texture, thus giving the ear more than it can grasp or offering relief as the case may be. Fig. 30 shows an example of these varying harmonic tensions.

The term "harmonic tension" is used here as meaning a new way of making an analysis of music. Hindemith has found that the traditional method of analysis (that of dealing with major and minor tonalities) was useful but did not explain satisfactorily the construction of many modern compositions. He therefore devised this method of harmonic analysis in which he divides chords into approximately six groups. The table below shows these chord groupings and their relation to each other. This takes care of every possible type of chord and eliminates many harmonic analysis problems which arise when earlier analytical procedures are used. The appearance of more I and II chords in the Emerson second theme and both excerpts of *The Alcotts* (see Fig. 30 c, d) shows these passages to have less harmonic tension than the first example (see Fig. 30a). Therefore the abundance of sound in the Emerson introduction is based on chords containing seconds and sevenths and has more tritones within its construction. Ives achieves contrast
Fig. 30—\( a \) Analysis of introduction, Emerson;  
\( b \) Analysis of the second theme, Emerson; \( c \) analysis of the introduction, The Alcotts; \( d \) analysis of the second theme, The Alcotts, from the Concord Sonata.
by writing chords without seconds and sevenths, sub-
ordinating the tritones in such instances, thus relieving
the listener of great harmonic tensions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chords without Tritone</strong></td>
<td><strong>Chords containing Tritones</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Without seconds or sevenths</td>
<td>II. Without minor seconds or major sevenths---the tritone subordinate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Root and bass tone are identical</td>
<td>a) With minor seventh only (no major second)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Root lies above the bass tone</td>
<td>1. Root and bass tone are identical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Containing major seconds or minor sevenths or both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Root and bass tone are identical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Root lies above the bass tone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Containing more than one tritone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Containing seconds or sevenths or both</td>
<td>IV. Containing minor seconds or major sevenths or both---one or more tritones subordinate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Root and bass tone are identical</td>
<td>1. Root and bass tone are identical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Root lies above the bass tone</td>
<td>2. Root lies above the bass tone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Indeterminate</td>
<td>VI. Indeterminate--tritone predominating</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The melodies in general are tightly constructed and based on intervals no larger than a fifth. These intervals tend to give the ear a strong feeling of tonality. However, where an abundance of tritones are present, such as in the fugue subject (see Fig. 22), establishment of tonality becomes a more difficult task.
There are many evidences that Ives enjoys stirring up "musical cocktails" with his melodies. This is especially noticeable in the orchestral works in the simultaneous employment of instruments of different tone-color characteristics. Many times he uses several familiar melodies in counterpoint with each other. Perhaps they have nothing in common, or perhaps they share the same key; it makes no difference to Ives. This causes the listener to wonder and perhaps to shake his head, making remarks concerning the confusion caused by such melodic treatment.

An abundance of sound harmonies also contribute to a tendency towards pure sound-making. As has been stated above, his harmonies can appear quite dissonant. Whatever "end" is needed, Ives seems ready and willing to explore a new "means" for achieving that end. Consequently, he found many new chords such as the chord based on the simultaneous sounding of a scale or scales. In the First Sonata, fourth movement, Ives makes use of a pattern of tone clusters which achieves a lively rhythmic effect. In other passages he uses the same harmonic device but achieves a sound which is impressionistic in nature.

Rhythm in Ives' music is the most complex characteristic. Here briefly are some of the rhythmic devices he uses in these piano sonatas. It is to be noted, however,
that only performance would clarify some of these rhythmic patterns.

First, Ives often uses a bar line as a phrase marking. To a student who depends on bar lines and traditional metric markings, the problem of doing without these "props" may lead to confusion. Many times when bar lines are incorporated into the score the meters thereby defined become complex. Occasionally one finds a $3\frac{1}{2}$ mixed in with a $4/4$, $7/8$ or $2/2$ all of which follow each other in the space of a page or two. The Three-Page Sonata and the First Sonata are more traditional in utilizing time signatures and conventional bar lines. The Concord Sonata is more radical in its omission of such devices.

In the discussion of form in the earlier part of this chapter remarks were made concerning the development of a theme through its rhythmic pattern development. As a whole, use of this device is one of the strongest points in Ives’ music. If the ear finds itself lost in the harmonic sound or melodic counterpoint the rhythm will usually clarify the development. In fact Ives’ "rhythmic counterpoint" can be considered as being just as important as melodic counterpoint.

Ives seems to have experimented with almost every compositional device. The question then arises whether a
man who writes music in so many varied styles could possibly have written music which will last through the ages. This is a question which will only be answered by time. But whatever the judgment of time the music of Ives is well worth study and is a novel contribution to American music literature.
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