

FEBRUARY 19, 1968ROGER W. CLARK

It was Memorial Day in Danbury, Connecticut, in the year 1888. Danbury was being invaded. A neighboring town was sending its team to Danbury to engage the Danbury nine in the great American game of baseball. In those days people took their baseball much more seriously than they do today. Among other festivities, it was customary for the town band to be on hand to give their players additional encouragement. This, of course, was long before the time of Ronnie Dale and his organ at Crosley Field.

On this occasion Danbury was being invaded by more than just a neighboring baseball team. Danbury's opponents were also bringing their band to insure that their team would be equally supported. This innovation brought about another unpremeditated contest which was, as things turned out, to have a much more lasting effect--After all, no one today remembers who won the ball game.

Upon entering town, the neighboring band lined up in marching order and proceeded to parade down Main Street in a westerly direction playing Marching Through Georgia. Meanwhile, the Danbury band was finishing up its morning Memorial Day exercises which were to terminate in a parade through town. Leaving the parade grounds in the western part of town, the Danbury band proceeded to march over Main Street to the east playing The Battle Hymn of the Republic. As the two bands approached each other marching along Main Street in opposite directions, it became apparent that neither intended to yield. They met and passed each other in the middle of town, each going full blast. The din of clashing discords and strident dissonances was terrific. It jarred the nerves of all those who chanced to be present--or more accurately, of all those save one. A young lad, fourteen years of age, who happened to be loitering near the point where the two bands met was much impressed. In the place of harsh discords he heard in this conflict what he thought was a fascinating combination of melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic possibilities. He was to remember this experience for many years. His name was Charles Edward Ives.

The Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, in its program to be given on this coming March 15th and 16th, is scheduled to include an orchestral work composed by Charles Ives that is entitled Three Places in New England. This composition, sometimes called the New England Symphony, is in three movements. The second movement, entitled Putnam's Camp near Redding, Connecticut, is said to have been inspired by that orchestral contest that the composer witnessed on that distant Memorial Day in Danbury. In this movement the orchestra frequently clashes in a melodic conflict, in which two earlier compositions of Ives are interwoven with occasional snatches from The British Grenadiers, There'll be a Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight, and other familiar melodies. It may be that the Cincinnati symphony goers will find this movement a bit too raucous for their taste. This will be the second time that our orchestra has performed a work of Charles Ives.

Charles Edward Ives was born in Danbury, Connecticut on October 20, 1874. His father, George Edward Ives, was a professional musician. During the American Civil War he had been the band leader of the Brigade Band of the First Connecticut Heavy Artillery. President Lincoln is alleged to have referred to this band as the "best band in the army", to which remark General Grant is said to have replied that you couldn't prove it by him, since he knew only two tunes, one of which was Yankee Doodle, and the other wasn't.

Following the war George Ives returned home to Danbury to take up his profession of music, and later was married to Mary Parmelee, the daughter of the leading church soloist. It was said that he could teach any instrument that any pupil might wish to learn to play. He was particularly interested in experimenting with harmonic combinations and attempted upon several occasions to construct an instrument that would produce quarter tones. His influence upon his son, Charles, was tremendous.

Inspired by his father, young Charles, as a boy, displayed unusual interest in music, particularly in composition. In this respect he was unlike his father. Let it never be said, however, that he was a "sissy". He attended Danbury Academy, Danbury High School, and then went on to attend Hopkins Preparatory School in

New Haven, in all of which places he engaged extensively in athletics. At both Danbury Academy and at Danbury High School he was captain of the football team, and at Hopkins he pitched a ten inning victory over the Yale freshman, a feat which resulted in the whole school receiving a "holiday hour".

Finally, in 1894, just shortly after his father had died, he was ready to enter that great institution of learning, Yale University. Three uncles, a grandfather, and a great-grandfather had preceded him in that worthy institution. Just why he waited until he was almost twenty years old to enter college is not clear--It is possible that the Danbury Schools did not give him adequate preparation, so that some time at Hopkins was necessary before he could meet the entrance requirements. Even at that distant date it seems to have been difficult to get into Yale.

While at Yale Charles Ives did play some football and other sports, but always strictly at the class level. He is not listed as being a member of the varsity football team during any of the four years that he matriculated. It is little wonder that such should be the case, since during this era Yale dominated college football. During the four years that Ives was enrolled, Yale had a football record of fifty-one victories, four ties, and only one defeat, a loss to Princeton in 1896 by the overwhelming score of 24 to 6. Would that Notre Dame, Michigan State, Duke, Alabama, Texas, Oklahoma, or Southern California could boast such a record for any current four year period.

In a sense, modern football had its beginning at Yale. Walter Camp, the director of Yale football activities for more than thirty years, propounded two of the rules that are most vital and essential to the game that we know today: namely, the concept of putting the ball in play by having it passed by the center to a member of the backfield and the idea of the team in possession of the ball having a given number of downs to make a stated yardage--It originally was three downs to make a five yards, shortly thereafter to be changed to the present four downs to make ten.

During Ives's freshman year the varsity football team was captained by Frank Hinkey, often referred to

as the "living flame", who was chosen for the all-American team four times and was one of the greatest defensive ends in all college football history, although he weighed no more than 154 pounds. The Yale-Harvard game that year, which Yale won 6 to 0, was a real blood bath that resulted in such intense feelings that Yale and Harvard severed relations and did not play each other for two years. So great was the carnage that across the sea a German newspaper reported the game as follows:

The football tournament between the teams of Harvard and Yale, recently held in America, had terrible results. It turned into an awful butchery. Of twenty-two participants, seven were so severely injured that they had to be carried from the field in a dying condition--Both teams appeared upon the field with a crowd of ambulances, surgeons, and nurses. Many ladies fainted at the awful cries of the injured players.

But the Yale-Princeton game that Charles Ives probably witnessed during his senior year, since it was played in New Haven, was a real thriller. In that year Yale as the underdog, having been tied by both Army and Harvard, and having been disastrously defeated by Princeton the year before, faced a Princeton team that was undefeated and had not been scored on. The Yale team scored early and then dug in to hold the Tiger scoreless, winning by a score of 6 to 0. During this game Yale made no substitutions the victory being achieved by eleven iron men alone and unassisted. Interestingly enough, this procedure was to be repeated thirty-seven years later in 1934 when Yale as the seven to one underdog, journeyed down to Princeton and defeated Princeton 7 to 0 in one of the greatest upsets in the history of college football. In this game also Yale made no substitutions. Since it was only a few years later that the platoon system was first introduced, this well may have been the last time that a major college team played a game of football in which it used only eleven men. I wonder what our good Princetonian secretary will insert in the minutes about this particular phase of this paper.

During his stay at Yale, Charles Ives says that he lived at 76 South Middle, the nineteenth century name for the present Connecticut Hall, which was built before the American Revolution and is the only old building that is still standing on the campus today. At this time great changes on the campus were taking place. The old Brick Row, which consisted of some seven assorted brick buildings facing on College Street from some fifty yards back and which had served as the center of Yale for the past hundred years, had all but disappeared, except for Connecticut Hall, to be replaced by what were then the more modern buildings of Vanderbilt, Lawrence, Welsh, Durfee, and others which were placed right on the streets instead of being set back, so that they surrounded the campus and isolated it from the town. These buildings that replaced the Old Brick Row and were so new in Ives's time serve today as the antiquated quarters for the incoming freshman classes.

During the 1890's the number and variety of courses offered by Yale to undergraduates was somewhat limited compared to present standards. The emphasis was primarily on Latin, Greek, and Mathematics, and Charles Ives pursued each of these studies in each of his four years of attendance. As a modern language he studied German for four years, although he may have supplemented this with a little French. All the English he took during his entire college career was one hour during his Freshman year and one hour of English Rhetoric during his Sophomore year. During his Junior year he took a course in Christian Ethics and during his Senior year a course in the Theory and History of Ethics. He also appears to have taken electives in Law and History, though just what his studies in history covered is not clear. During each year he added to the regular curriculum a course in music: Harmony and Instrumentation during the Freshman year, Counterpoint during his Sophomore year, and Composition during his Junior and Senior years.

It so happened that in the same year that Charles Ives entered Yale an eminent musician and composer by the name of Horatio Parker joined the Yale faculty. One might suppose that young Charles would learn much from such an eminent source, but such was not the case. He and Parker rarely saw eye to eye.

Parker, having been trained in Europe and having the more traditional approach to composition, did not look with sympathy upon the innovations that Ives sought to bring into the classroom. During his sojourn at Yale Charles Ives composed his First Symphony. He had to redo the second, third, and fourth movements to meet the academic requirements that Parker imposed, although Ives staunchly maintained privately, and perhaps with justification, that this symphony would have been much better as he originally composed it. This work gives only the barest hint of things to come.

While music was his prime interest, it became increasingly evident to Charles Ives as the years passed at Yale that it could never provide an adequate living for him to support a family. This was particularly the case as his prime interest was composing rather than teaching or performing, and it was apparent that the type of music he like to compose simply would not sell. Some music that he composed for a fraternity show won very little acclaim. He was in no frame of mind to compose solely for the public taste, so that it was essential that he find some other way to earn a living. This was provided by life insurance, which seemed to offer the sort of challenge he was seeking. Accordingly upon his graduation from Yale he proceeded immediately to fill a position at five dollars a week in the Actuarial Department of The Mutual Life Insurance Company of New York.

At the time that Charles Ives joined the Mutual Life the life insurance industry was in the throes of more accurately appraising mortality. At this time the American Experience Table of Mortality served as the basis for all life insurance computations. This table was constructed from rather inaccurate data obtained from the experience of the Mutual Life Insurance Company of New York over a period of twenty years around the time of the Civil War. Needless to say, it was highly inappropriate for twentieth century underwriting, and yet it served as the basis for the computation of all mutual company life insurance premiums up to the year 1947, when, at long last, it was superseded by a more modern table. For a mutual company, the fact that an inadequate table was used to calculate premiums was not a matter of really great consequences as long as the table was adequate to cover losses, since

any excess in the premium paid would be refunded to the policyholder as a dividend. But a more realistic mortality table was necessary to determine what share of the profits each policyholder was to receive. To assist in the construction of such a table was one of Charles Ives's first assignments.

One year later he was transferred to one of his company's sales agencies, because, it was said, his handwriting was so poor and illegible that the actuaries couldn't keep him. Here he made the acquaintance of Julian Myrick, who was to be one of the country's outstanding life insurance men for over sixty years and one of the founders of the American College of Life Underwriters. Several years later in 1907 these two men decided to form a partnership and establish their own general agency for the selling of life insurance. After an attempt with another company, which, unfortunately, was soon terminated because of that company's reorganization, they obtained a contract from The Mutual Life Insurance Company of New York to maintain an agency for them in New York City. The agency that they established prospered under their joint guidance for the next twenty-five years.

It was indeed fortunate that they were able to obtain this satisfactory arrangement, because Charles Ives had just been married to Harmony Twichell, and one must have good prospects when one undertakes the serious business of matrimony. The father of the bride happened to be a close friend of Mark Twain. An amusing anecdote is told of the time when Miss Twichell took her fiance to call on the great man. The latter, believing that Ives was being submitted for his approval, is said to have remarked after looking him over, "Well, the fore seems to be all right; turn him around and lets see about the aft!"

The formation of the partnership of Ives and Myrick followed almost immediately upon the completion of the Armstrong investigation. This investigation, called by Senator Armstrong of the New York State Legislature to look into and correct certain questionable practices, has set the pattern for the governmental regulation of life insurance down to the present time. The United States Supreme Court had previously held that insurance was not interstate commerce and so not

subject to federal regulation, which decision has never been reversed. The result is that insurance is one of the few industries that is regulated solely by the states and not by the federal government. During the past fifty years the insurance business has been regulated primarily by the Insurance Department of the State of New York, because it was the largest state. By requiring that all companies licenced in New York comply with its rulings in all states, The New York Insurance Department and the New York Legislature have prescribed on a national level for the industry such matters as premium rates, policy reserves, contract provisions, the selection of officers, the computation and payment of dividends, and the permissible types of investments. Even today, believe it or not, the federal government does not run everything.

The firm of Ives and Myrick was to witness many drastic innovations. Such modern commonplace items as premium waiver disability, double indemnity, settlement options, juvenile insurance, group insurance, term riders, retirement income policies, and pension plans were then still a thing of the future.

In those days the primary emphasis was on family protection with particular stress on funeral and other death expenses. The selling of life insurance was done strictly on a "hard sell" basis. The sales organization was exclusively general agency where a general agent was given a franchise to a territory in which he was given absolute freedom in his manner of operation in hiring agents and producing sales. The agent was given no training by the general agent and was turned loose to obtain applications for insurance in any manner that would produce results. As one general agent of the time expressed it, "I just give a new man a rate book and tell him to go to it. The rate book costs me forty cents, so that if one man out of every ten so favored completes just one sale, I probably will have a good return on my four dollar investment".

Charles Edward Ives was one of the very first insurance men to recognize the need and desire to train agents. Also, he was one of the first to recognize the necessity of having life insurance provide fully for all family needs such as education, mortgage, protection and family income. He was one of the originators of

estate planning. The booklet he prepared for use in his agency on these subjects entitled The Amount to Carry is a classic. In its centennial history, published in the 1940's, The Mutual Life Insurance Company of New York gave Charles Ives particular recognition as a pioneer in these matters. The firm of Ives and Myrick rapidly became one of the leading life insurance agencies of the country. The name is remembered today.

Such a busy man needed some form of relaxation. How did Charles Ives obtain this? He did not fish; he did not hunt; he rarely attended the theatre; and he never went to the bawdy night clubs of that era. What did he do for relaxation? He composed music. Night after night he would return home from a busy day at the office to sit down at his desk and compose, turning out page after page and tossing each one in turn over his shoulder to form a confused pile on the floor. For some twenty years he carried on in this manner from 1896 while he was still at Yale until 1916. During this period he was so busy composing that he made no effort to organize his compositions. During the twenty year period of active composition, Charles Ives composed four symphonies, three other major orchestral works, four sonatas for violin, two sonatas for piano, over two hundred songs, and eleven volumes of chamber music, organ music, choral music, and other miscellaneous items.

Aside from his composing and his musical studies under Horatio Parker at Yale, the only other important contact that he had with the musical world was in his capacity as organist at various churches from time to time during his earlier years. While still at Danbury and just fourteen years of age he accepted a job as organist for the First Baptist Church. While at Yale he served as organist for the Centre Church on the Green. While in New York he played the organ first at the First Presbyterian Church in Bloomfield, New Jersey, and later at the Central Presbyterian Church in New York, but he discontinued all this sort of activity long before his marriage. At first he would occasionally attend concerts at Carnegie Hall, but he found that the music of Bach and Beethoven interfered too much with his own, and so in later years he gave it up. While plying in his various organ assignments he frequently became bored with the dull routine harmonies

of the various hymns he was required to play and would occasionally inject a dissonant note to spice things up a bit. Needless to say, this practice, if carried on too flagrantly, would invoke the wrath of the congregation, but one man was sympathetic. Dr. Griggs of the Centre Church on the Green in New Haven is said to have remarked to Ives on one occasion, "Never you mind what the ladies' committee says; my opinion is that God must get awfully tired of hearing the same thing over and over again, and in his all-embracing wisdom he could certainly embrace a dissonance--might even positively enjoy one now and then".

Ives's period of composing came to an abrupt end with the entry of the United States into World War I in 1917. At that time, in addition to his regular insurance duties, he became so involved in Red Cross work and Liberty Loan drives that little time was left for composition. And then, following World War I he suffered a serious heart attack which rendered him totally incapacitated for over six months and which left him with no stamina for outside activity upon his return to active business. He continued his association with Ives & Myrick until 1930, when he retired completely.

During the period of his active composing, he naturally, as would any composer, wanted to hear his music played to hear how it sounded. All early attempts to have his works performed, however, met with utter failure. Either the performing artist found the work too difficult, or if he was able to play it, the listeners were wholly unimpressed--in fact they received the performance of his works with derision. An illustration of this was the Pro Musica's International Referendum Concert held in Town Hall on January 29, 1927.

Among the works to be played on this occasion was the second movement of Ives's Fourth Symphony. The conductor, Eugene Goossens, remarked when he first witnessed the score that it was impossible to conduct because it involved the use of different beats simultaneously. It was only by winding a towel about his head, drinking gallons of coffee, and sitting up night after night that he was able to find a way by which he might be able to conduct it successfully in public.

The concert, however, was not a success, for, although the two leading New York critics did not receive the work unfavorably, the audience is said to have literally rioted. And as for the conductor, he apparently found the whole experience so harassing that not once during his long tenure as maestro of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra did he dare to introduce a work of Charles Ives. It remained for his successor, Thor Johnson, to do this when in 1958, he directed our orchestra in the performance of a very interesting and dramatic work of Ives entitled The Unanswered Question, which deals with nothing less than the eternal question of existence. And as for the conducting of the very difficult second movement of the Fourth Symphony, a happier solution was found by another former conductor of our orchestra, Leopold Stokowski, when he, at the age of eighty-two, recently led the American Symphony Orchestra in a recorded performance of this symphony. On this occasion he employed two assistant conductors, each to conduct a particular section of the orchestra in competition with the main conductor.

In the place of further composing after recovery from his illness, Charles Ives organized, catalogued, and published all his musical manuscripts and made them available to anyone who wished to use them by offering them to any musical library that would accept them. He sought no gain or other compensation ever for any of his compositions.

Three men, Henry Ballmann, Nicolas Slonimsky, and John Kirkpatrick are mainly responsible for the fact that Ives's music is known and played today. Henry Ballmann, a poet and author of some reputation, gave a series of musical lectures in the south during the 1920's based largely upon Ives's Piano Sonata No. 2 known as the Concord Sonata. Nicolas Slonimsky, an overwhelming musical personality, included many of Ives's works, particularly Three Places in New England, in several concerts that he conducted during the 1930's. But it was at the Town Hall performance of the Concord Sonata on January 20, 1939, by John Kirkpatrick, a gifted pianist, that a New York audience, for the first time, received a work of Charles Ives with enthusiasm.

During the 1940's various works of Charles Ives were attempted by different orchestras from time

to time with modest success. The greatest achievement came in 1947 when the composer, Lou Harrison, conducted Ives's Third Symphony with Barone's New York Little Symphony Orchestra. As a result of this performance, this symphony was awarded the Pulitzer Prize fully forty years after it was composed. It seems, however, that this recognition had come too late to give Charles Ives any real satisfaction, because, when informed of this honor, he commented tersely, "Prizes are for boys. I'm grown up". He died in 1954.

And so at long last the music of Charles Ives has won acceptance. So be it! His music is original, daring, and intricate. As a composer Charles Edward Ives was far in advance of his time. But, creditable as they may be, these facts are not the most significant. Is his music great? Or is it even good? These are the important questions!

What is music? Music is a combination of pleasing sounds put together concurrently through harmony and consecutively through melody and rhythm so as to give delight and satisfaction, if not real emotional stimulation, to whoever is listening. What is great music? Great music penetrates more deeply, leaves a more profound impression, and ultimately affords a greater measure of pleasure. Great music, however, is determined by the magnitude of its effect rather than by the number of people affected. It does not reach all persons.

In their approach to music, people can be classified in four groups: There are those who do not like music at all because, like the General of the Grand Army of the Republic, they simply cannot tell one tune from another; then there are those who like only the so-called popular music; third, there are those who like the so-called classical music if it was composed some time before 1900; and finally there are those who find some merit in all music. In discussing great music we are concerned only with the latter two groups. While Irving Berlin or Richard Rogers might overwhelm Bach or Beethoven in a popularity contest, the music of the latter is considered as superior because it is more profound.

All classical music, which includes symphonic,

choral, operatic, and above all chamber music, which by many is considered the finest of all, is greater than popular music because its structure is more intricate. Its appreciation requires a more sophisticated ear. One rarely can fully grasp the beauty of a great classical number upon the first hearing. Only after it has been heard many times can one begin to realize its true greatness. But, if the listener has the patience and is fortunate enough to achieve this objective, he will be much more richly rewarded.

But many find no such reward in the music of the twentieth century. There are those who are deeply moved by the music of Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms, Wagner, or Puccini; who might accept, but only with many reservations, the music of Debussy, Ravel, or Stravinsky; but who cannot abide the music of Shostakovich, Schoenberg, Bartok, Britten, Milhaud, Sessions, Copeland, Barber, or Hanson. Why should the music of the twentieth century be so unacceptable to many who otherwise love great music?

The answer is that it is so much more difficult to understand. It seems that, if music is to survive as a dynamic art, it must always change. This necessity is indicated by an observation that John Stuart Mill made in his Autobiography just one hundred years ago: I quote:

The octave consists only of five tones and two semi-tones, which can be put together in only a limited number of ways, of which but a small proportion are beautiful: most of these, it seemed to me, must have been already discovered, and there could not be room for a long succession of Mozarts and Webers to strike out, as these had done, entirely new and surprisingly rich veins of musical beauty.

But Mill does not seem to have appreciated that Mozart was great and his music has survived that of most of his contemporaries not because he discovered an unusual number of beautiful combinations, a truly creditable achievement, but rather because, bound in a virtual composer's straight jacket as he was because

of the rigorous limitations imposed by the Classical era in which he lived, he, none the less, had the courage to break the rules. The history of music has always involved the breaking of rules through the expansion of the media of expression and experimentation in new fields. Monophonic music was replaced by polyphonic; the whole tone scale was replaced by the major and minor; harmonic fifths have been expanded to sevenths, then ninths, elevenths, and even thirteenth, producing richer but more dissonant harmonies. If music is to live and expand, new modes of expression must constantly be found, lest the prediction of John Stuart Mill come to pass.

The twentieth century has witnessed the introduction of many new concepts in an effort to achieve this end. Composers have branched out in many directions simultaneously. The introduction of new modes other than the familiar major and minor, the introduction of atonality, which employs all twelve tones with no emphasis on any one of them, so that there is no key, and the introduction of polytonality, the use of two or more keys simultaneously, all have been attempted with this end in view. Quarter tones and scales with entirely different compositions have also been attempted, but have not as yet met with much success, principally because our ear has not yet become educated to such devices.

All of these concepts, new modes, atonality, and polytonality, introduce new and exciting elements into musical composition, but, because of their complexity, it requires a more experienced ear to grasp their significance. While it requires more listening to appreciate a Beethoven symphony than it does to appreciate a song of Cole Porter's, it requires even more listening to grasp a twentieth century work. I am not at all sure that this extra effort brings proportionate rewards. Musically speaking, we may have reached the point of diminishing returns. Complexity does not necessarily lead to greater emotional stimulation. The other arts have all shown a trend toward ever greater simplicity--or in any event, the appearance of ever greater simplicity. Perhaps music should try to follow suit.

Furthermore, the strain that its complexity

puts upon the composer will reduce the amount of contemporary music that is composed by any one man. More time and effort is needed to develop a composition, so that modern composers are not nearly so prolific as those of earlier times. No contemporary composer could begin to approach the output of Bach, Mozart, Beethoven or Schubert.

We have strayed a long way from Charles Ives and the question I originally propounded as to whether his music is good. In partial answer to this question, I would unhesitatingly place him among the best of the twentieth century composers that have appeared so far. He did experiment with new devices, especially polytonality. The fact is that he was dabbling in polytonality long before he went to college, and he was making extensive use of this device in many of his compositions fully ten years before it was first publicly introduced by Stravinsky, who is popularly considered as polytonality's inventor. These facts hardly qualify Ives to be rated with the great composers from the era of one hundred to two hundred years ago. Or do they?

As a matter of fact, I personally am not so impressed with Ives's polytonal effects as with the lovely melodic arrangements that he creates so often and that are so distinctively Ives. His many years at the church organ afforded him a wealth of material. For his melodic effects he does not hesitate to draw voluminously upon college songs, marches, folk tunes, and above all hymns. The results are sometimes amazing. For example, there is a sublime pastoral development that occurs in the middle of the second movement of his Second Symphony. And what is the basic theme of this development? It is none other than a well known Dartmouth drinking song entitled Where, oh where, are the pea green freshmen. The sons of Dartmouth did not know what they were perpetrating upon the world.

Charles Ives, I would say, reaches his greatest heights in his symphonies. His First Symphony is more in the classical style and displays some evidence of immaturity, but it is nevertheless quite pleasing. His Second Symphony includes a veritable plethora of Americana--hymns, marches, folk tunes--You name it and the chances are you'll find it here--and ends with a perfectly glorious dissonance. His Third Symphony, the

Pulitzer Prize winner, is a quiet meditative work based mainly on hymns that he played as church organist and is considered by many to be his greatest contribution. His Fourth Symphony is supposed to reach the heights in its second movement, the one that gave our erstwhile conductor so much trouble, but I feel that the third movement, which is a beautiful rendering based on the hymn All Hail the Power and works up to a grand conclusion based on Joy to the World is more in the great Ivesian tradition and is much to be preferred to the jarring, harsh, and untuneful interweaving of confusing melodies, harmonies, and rhythms of the long second movement. Could it be that I like the music of Charles Ives for the wrong reason?

Charles Ives probably considered his greatest work to be his Second Piano Sonata, Concord, Mass., 1840-1860, which is commonly referred to as the Concord Sonata. It is a complicated sonata requiring much intense listening and a truly sophisticated ear to grasp its full significance. After listening to it many times I think I am beginning to have some real comprehension of it, and I hear different things each time I listen. It was aptly described by one critic as being a "terrible hard taste in music".

This sonata was dedicated to the famous writers of Concord and has four movements which are entitled Emerson, Hawthorne, The Alcotts, and Thoreau respectively. It is accompanied by a literary work of some 124 pages written by Charles Ives and entitled Essays before a Sonata. This treatise is intended as a sort of elaborate program note, but it does nothing to explain the music. It explains only the author's feelings about the men of Concord. It would have been all the same to me had this sonata been dedicated to the Civil War, the settlement of the West, or even the trials and tribulations of Antony and Cleopatra. Great music, it seems to me, needs no explanation. When Beethoven became disenchanted with Napoleon, he was able to eliminate him as the subject for his Third Symphony without changing one note of the symphony itself.

Because Charles Ives alone of all American composers was so completely lacking in that European background that has affected so many others, and because

he drew so heavily on American songs, he has been considered by many as the first truly American composer. Some, however, it appears, take issue with this view: Mary Wood, recently had this to say in the Cincinnati Post and Times-Star about a performance of Leonard Bernstein:

But, last night, Maestro Bernstein and I fell out -- Musically speaking. We fell out because he chose, for his Young Peoples' concert, the music of Charles Ives, an American composer whose music is not heard too often--and for good reason. It's a crashing bore and even the fascinating Mr. Bernstein couldn't make it anything else, although he touted Ives as a pioneer of modern American music. Pioneer, my foot! Ives cribbed every piece of music he could lay his hands on and then loused it up, even the good old American folk songs.

All that I can say in refutation is that I would infinitely rather listen to an Ives symphony than I would to a medley of hymns or folk music, no matter how well the latter was executed.

Charles Ives has one unique distinction which no one can take away from him. Whether his music is great, good, or even poor, he did it alone! He was totally unfamiliar with the contemporary music of the time during which he did all his active composing. Most great artists have enjoyed the benefit of contact with other great artists in their fields, and, while they each may have had their distinctive styles, they have learned much from each other. Ives had none of this. He was, in fact, the lone wolf, or perhaps, more appropriately, the lone eagle, of musical composition.

At Yale he acquired an education. In life insurance he earned his living--in fact he acquired a modest fortune--and he made a modest contribution to the profession. But, for better or for worse, this much too long paper would not have been written, had not Charles Edward Ives dared to experiment with polytonality.

Roger W. Clark