CHARLES IVES: THE VIOLIN SONATAS, A LECTURE RECITAL, TOGETHER WITH THREE RECITALS OF SELECTED WORKS OF L. V. BEETHOVEN, J. BRAHMS, E. CHAUSSON, C. DEBUSSY, W. LATHAM, G. TARTINI,

AND A. VIVALDI

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the North Texas State University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

> For the Degree of Doctor of Musical Arts

By

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1978

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Gabbi, Marianna Paone, <u>Charles Ives</u>: <u>The Violin Sonatas</u>, <u>A Lecture Recital</u>, <u>Together With Three Recitals of Selected</u> <u>Works of L. v. Beethoven</u>, <u>J. Brahms</u>, <u>E. Chausson</u>, <u>C. Debussy</u>, <u>W. Latham</u>, <u>G. Tartini</u>, <u>and A. Vivaldi</u>. Doctor of Musical Arts (Violin Performance), August, 1978, 25 pp., bibliography, 29 titles.

A lecture recital was given on July 14, 1975. The violin sonatas of Charles Ives are a unique and innovative addition to the violin repertoire and capture the New England Transcendental movement of the early twentieth century. The "Largo" from <u>Sonata No. 4</u>, "Children's Day at the Camp Meeting," and <u>Sonata No. 2</u> were performed during the lecture.

In addition to the lecture recital, three other public recitals were performed, including solo compositions for violin and chamber works including violin.

The first recital was on December 2, 1974, and included works of Tartini, Beethoven, and Brahms.

The second recital, on September 26, 1977, included works by Vivaldi, Chausson, Latham, and Debussy.

The third recital, on June 19, 1978, consisted of chamber music by Beethoven and Brahms.

All four programs were recorded on magnetic tape and are filed with the written version of the lecture material as a part of the dissertation. Tape recordings of all performances submitted as dissertation requirements are on deposit in the North Texas State University Library.

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NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MUSIC presents

Marianne Gabbi, violin Pierrette Mouledous, piano

Monday, December 2, 1974

5:00 P.M.

Recital Hall

PROGRAM

Sonata in G minorTARTINI (Didone Abbandonata) Adagio Non troppo presto Largo Allegro Commodo

Sonata in G major Op. 30 No. 3BEETHOVEN Allegro assai Tempo di Menuetto, ma molto moderato e grazioso Allegro vivace

INTERMISSION

Sonata in D minor Op. 108BRAHMS Allegro Adagio Un poco triste e con sentimento Presto agitato NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MUSIC presents

Marianne Gabbi, Violinist

assisted by

Joyce O'Bannion, Pianist

in a

LECTURE RECITAL

Monday, July 14, 1975

5:00 p.m.

Recital Hall

CHARLES IVES: THE VIOLIN SONATAS

"The time is coming, but not in our lifetime, when music will develop possibilities inconceivable now - a language so transcendent that its heights and depths will be common to all mankind."

C. Ives, Essays Before a Sonata

"LARGO" from Sonata No. 4

"Children's Day at the Camp Meeting"

SONATA NO. 2

1. Autumn

TH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY PRINTING OFFICE, DENTON, TEXAS

- 2. In The Barn
- 3. The Revival

This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Musical Arts.

North Texas State University School of Music presents

Marianna Gabbi

Violinist

Audrey Brown

Pianist

in

RECITAL

Monday, September 26, 1977

8:15 p.m.

Recital Hall

PROGRAM

Sonata in A majorA.Vivaldi Preludio a Capriccio Corrente, Allegro Adagio Giga, Allegro Vivace

Poeme, op. 25 E.Chausson

INTERMISSION

Allegro Vivo Intermede, fantasque et leger Finale, Tres anime

> This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Musical Arts

North Texas State University School of Music presents

Marianna Gabbi, violin

Scott Neumann, cello

William Leland, piano

Monday, June 19, 1978

5:00 p.m.

Recital Hall

PROGRAM

Trio No. 4 in Bb Major, Op. 11.....Beethoven Allegro con brio Adagio Tema con Variazioni

Trio No. 1 in B Major, Op. 8Brahms Allegro con brio Scherzo: Allegro molto Adagio Allegro

> This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts

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CHARLES IVES: THE VIOLIN SONATAS

On March 18, 1924, at Aeolian Hall in New York City, a performance of the Charles Ives Second Violin and Piano Sonata brought strong protests from the audience. There were cat-calls and boos, and some people even shouted no, no, and got up and stalked out of the room. Today, fifty years later, audiences are much more sophisticated and will invariably sit through any work, and politely applaud at the end of any performance; therefore there is actually no way of knowing truthfully whether a work is accepted, understood, merely tolerated, or a total flop!

In 1974, Ives's hundredth anniversary was celebrated throughout the United States; both amateurs and professionals performed his works, countless articles were published, books and studies were written. The <u>idea</u> of Charles Ives, the first truly American composer, <u>support</u> for Charles Ives, the Father of American music and what he stood for is found everywhere, yet his music remains relatively unknown.

The Debussy Violin Sonata, the Hindemith Violin Sonatas, and the Prokofiev Violin Sonatas are a vital part of the violinist's repertory; the Ives Sonatas are all but neglected. With this in mind, I wish to speak today of Charles Ives, the man, of the paths he was so earnestly trying to pursue, and of his contribution to the violin literature.

Ives was a pioneer in techniques of new music well before similar experiments were begun by the composers customarily accredited with early twentieth-century music. Ives, in fact, <u>established</u> an American music, one totally outside of the esthetic paths of the European tradition. With the exception of the early music of the New England singing schools, under William Billings and his contemporaries, the development of early American music was almost wholly dominated by European thought. In H. Wiley Hitchcock's words, "American music of the cultivated tradition from the end of the Civil War to the end of World War I was largely dominated by the attitudes, the ideals, and modes of expression of 19th century Europe, particularly Austria and Germany."¹ It is from this climate that the singular music of Charles Ives emerged.

The well-known fact that the innovations of Ives pre-date those of Stravinsky, Schoenberg, and Bartok is not nearly so important as the basic American philosophical concepts that supported Ives's music. His early use of polytonality, poly-rhythms, and a proto-atonality stems not from a need for musical development, but from the demands of a musical expression. Where Stravinsky inherited the work from Rimsky-Korsakov and the French school, and Schoenberg, that of

¹Hugh Wiley Hitchcock, <u>Music in the United States: A</u> <u>Historical Introduction</u>, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1974), p. 127.

Wagner and Mahler, Ives had to dig his musical material from the American people, the transcendentalist philosophies of Thoreau and Emerson, and the literature of Hawthornes and Alcotts. It is in this light that Ives's pioneering spirit must be appreciated, and it is with this knowledge that his music must be approached. One, as a listener, must, indeed, lift the tyranny of two thousand years of music history as Ives did as a composer.

Ives's heritage goes back to 1635, when Captain William Ives came from Dorchester, England, to settle in New Haven, Connecticut. Descending from a long line of country gentlemen, farmers, lawyers, bankers, and ministers, George Ives, the composer's father, became the center of the community's musical life, conducting choirs, bands, orchestras, and the camp meeting concerts throughout Fairfield County, Connecticut. Charles Ives wrote:

My father had the belief that everyone was born with at least one germ of musical talent, and that an early application of great music (and not trivial music) would help it grow. He started both the children in the family and most of the children in the town for that matter, on Bach and Stephen Foster, quite shortly after they were born, regardless of whether they had or would have or wouldn't have any musical gifts or sense," etc. . .²

Music lessons with the elder Ives covered nearly every aspect of music-making: violin, piano, organ, woodwinds, brass, harmony, counterpoint and fugue, sight-singing, and

²Charles E. Ives, <u>Autobiographical Memos</u>, ed. John Kirkpatrick (New York, 1972), p. 237.

ear training, especially ear training. George Ives spent a great deal of his time experimenting in accoustics, constantly searching for new sounds. An amateur violinist, he was more interested in mastering the sound effects than in technique: natural and artificial harmonics, timbres of sound at various points of the bow, at various points of the string. He started to apply a system of bows to be released by weights which would sustain the chords, but in the process he was supressed by the family and the neighbors.

Young Charlie inherited this great curiosity for the unlimited possibilities in the world of sound. While in his teens, Ives was already beginning to experiment with polytonality. In "Song for Harvest Fair," he has four instruments playing in four different keys. Ives later recalled the experience of its first performance: "this piece [he said] was played about when the new Baptist Church in Danbury was opened, either the summer of 1893 or 1894. Father played the cornet, Mrs. Smyth tried to sing and I played the lower parts:"³ But these were not experiments in polytonality, and not a conscious investigation of abstract To Ives, it was simply ear-stretching. Goddard theories. Lieberson cleverly draws our attention to the climate in the world of music at the time Charles was experimenting in composition, so far ahead of his time.

³Ives, <u>Memos</u>, p. 176n.

In the year 1894, Debussy heard the first performance of his "L'après-midi d'un faune"; Richard Strauss had plans for a tone poem to be called "Till Eulenspeigel's Lustige Streiche"; Arnold Schoenberg was twenty years old and had not yet written "Verklärte Nacht"; Igor Stravinsky was twelve years old and was not to begin serious study of music for seven more years; Alban Berg was doing the things that other nine-year olds did in Vienna . . . and in England, the Gilbert and Sullivan repertory, still not quite complete, kept the later Victorians in a In the same year, a constant state of amusement. twenty-year old American composed a song called "Song for Harvest Season," the words being a stanza from an old hymn, and the music being written for voice, cornet, trombone and organ pedal, simultaneously, in the keys of E flat, B flat, F and C.4

The first phase of Ives's musical education, the thorough grounding in instrumental playing, counterpoint, fugue, and harmony, came abruptly to an end with the premature death of his father in 1894.

That same year, Ives carried out his father's wish and entered Yale University, taking up his music studies with the reigning pedagogue, Horatio Parker. The studies were in complete contrast to his father's teachings, in that Parker had no appreciation for experimental music, and after examining Ives's polytonal fugue, uttered his conservatorial criticism: "Hogging all the keys at one meal?"⁵ To appease Parker, Ives kept his experimental pieces to himself and fulfilled Parker's assignments, writing traditional fugues

⁴Goddard Lieberson, "An American Innovator, Charles Ives," <u>Musical America</u>, LIX (February 10, 1939), pp. 22, 322-23.

⁵Ives, Memos, p. 49.

and sonatas, suffering four years of almost neglect instead of gaining the self-confidence he so needed. Fortunately there was Dr. Griggs, the choir master at Center Church on the New Haven green where Charles served as organist during his Yale years. At times, Ives

got so tired of playing the same old tunes the same old way, with nothing but the tonic, to the dominant, to the sub-dominant, that occasionally, his fingers would slip in a dissonant note of their own here and there. This was complained of, naturally, but Dr. Griggs stood by him: "Never you mind what the ladies's committee says," he told Charlie, "my opinion is that God must get awfully tired of hearing the same old thing over and over again, and in His allembracing wisdom He could certainly embrace a dissonance . . might even positively enjoy one now and then!"⁶

Finally, in 1898, Ives graduated from Yale, writing a symphony no. 1 in d minor as his bachelor's thesis. Here, the hard-nosed Parker softened a bit and allowed his student the eight modulations of the first movement, so long as he promised to end in d minor! Reflecting on his association with Parker, Ives later wrote, "Parker had ideals that carried him higher than the popular, but he was governed by the German rule. . . Parker was a bright man, a good technician, but perfectly willing to be limited by what Reinberger had taught him."⁷

The musical set-backs encountered in the academic environment of Yale, together with his image of the New

⁶Henry and Sidney Cowell, <u>Charles Ives and His Music</u> (New York, 1955), p. 35.

⁷Ives, <u>Memos</u>, pp. 115-116.

England male and abhorrence of writing music that goes ta ta for money, it is not difficult to understand his decision to pursue a career in business. The next ten years were a period of intense music making and at the same time, a businessman's story of success. He went from Poverty Flat, the apartment he shared with his Yale Fellows, to become head of one of the world's largest insurance companies, Ives and Myrick.

Ives's most active years in business coincided with his most productive years in music. He worked by day in the insurance office and composed in the evenings and on week-During this period, Ives heard few of his compositions ends. in performance, but he continued working in isolation with encouragement only from his wife, Harmony, whom he married in 1908. Occasionally he presented his compositions to professional musicians, usually with very unhappy results. Once he played over the second violin sonata, which he called a "harmless little piece," for the violinist Reber Johnson, assistant concertmaster of the New York Symphony Orchestra, who reacted: "Stuff like that. . . . If you consider that music and like it, how can you like Brahms and any other good music?" Ives countered with "This is as much to say: 'If you look out this window and enjoy the mountains, how can you possibly look out of this window and enjoy the ocean? "8

⁸Cowell, <u>Charles</u> <u>Ives</u>, p. 67.

These were lonely years for Ives, who stayed much of the time to himself. He was forced to supply his own foundation for his art since support was not forthcoming from other quarters. This self-support makes up the bulk of his <u>Essays Before a Sonata</u> and other writings. To quote one which illustrates his congruent ideas in both business and musical matters:

My business experience revealed life to me in many aspects that I might otherwise have missed. . . . 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. 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 my work in business helped my music.⁹

The pursuance of dual careers in business and music was to take its toll, and Ives's health failed in 1918 when he was 44, forcing him into semi-retirement. Happily, some recognition came to him at this time, but ironically at a point after he had stopped composing. It was during the earlier period of productivity that Ives desperately needed to hear his works performed, to help shape and confirm his musical thinking. When the performances finally came, Ives was understandably despondent. The Pulitzer Prize was awarded

⁹Henry Bellaman, "Charles Ives: The Man and His Music," The Musical Quarterly, XIX (1933), pp. 45-58.

him in 1947 for the third symphony; Ives's reaction was typical of him at the time. "Prizes are for boys; I'm grown up."10 In 1951 Leonard Bernstein programmed the second symphony with the New York Philharmonic. The idea of hearing this largescale work some fifty years after it was composed was too much for Ives, and he declined Bernstein's offer of a private hearing at Carnegie Hall. The only complete performance Ives ever heard of this major work was on his maid's kitchen radio in Danbury. On the other hand, it is known that Ives did little in an active way to further his career in music. Perhaps he realized that his music was too far from the music of the time and knew that work in the direction of publicity would be futile. This attitude of resignation can be sensed in the preface he wrote to the 114 Songs, which he had published himself, one of his quiet efforts to promulgate his art.

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. . . 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. . .¹¹

The Violin Sonatas

Between 1903 and 1915, his most creative years, Charles Ives completed four violin and piano sonatas. A very early

¹⁰Cowell, <u>Charles</u> <u>Ives</u>, p. 115.

¹¹Cowell, p. 77.

sonata was started while he was still a student at Yale, of which only eight measures remain, the rest of the score having been lost. A pre-first sonata of four movements was also written around 1903. Ives reused three of the four movements in the later violin works, a technique which was common practice with him. A fifth sonata, which was to be an arrangement of his "New England Holidays," unfortunately was never completed.

His first sonata, written between 1903 and 1908, Ives lists in his pieces of "retrogression," a kind of mixture of the older way of writing and the newer way. After some of the frustrating experiences he had with the musicians unable to play his works, he sometimes returned to conventional ways of writing. "Most of these pieces written in this state of mind, I can spot every time I look at the first measures,"¹² Ives remarked. The third sonata was another in this category. Begun as an organ piece in 1901 and finished finally in the fall of 1914, Ives said of it that "the older it got, the worse it got! The last movement especially shows a kind of reversion; the themes are well enough, but there is an attempt to please the soft-ears and 'be good.' The sonata on the whole is a weak sister."¹³

In order to present an example that I believe illustrates the quintessence of Ives's style, musical thinking, and

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¹²Ives, <u>Memos</u>, p. 49.

¹³Ives, p. 71.

philosophy of art, as embodied in his music, I have chosen to play for you the second movement of the fourth violin sonata. Although the fourth sonata is entitled "Children's Day at the Camp Meeting," it is no programmatic piece in the sense of "A Sorcerer's Apprentice" or "Ein Heldenleben," which are the musical telling of a story or narrative. Ives's music here is more like a Debussy prelude, a "Des pas sur la neige" or "La Cathedrale engloutie," but not exactly. Whereas Debussy's music is more specific, creating a certain scene and mood, Ives goes beyond this specific, imbuing his work with the whole of humanity as he knew it in New England, and capturing the aura of transcendental philosophies.

To those whose temperament causes them to find inadmissible a correlation between music and literature, music and painting, music and philosophy, Ives's work for the most part can stand with the best of so-called abstract or absolute music, yet the extra musical associations are in evidence in the fourth sonata. Ives wrote extensive notes on some of the old manuscript pages which were published with the music in 1942. Incidentally, this is the only one of the four sonatas which Ives himself prepared for publication. About the second movement he wrote:

The second movement is quieter and more serious, except when Deacon Stonemason Bell and Farmer John would get up and get the boys all excited. But most of the movement moves around a rather quiet, but old favorite hymn of the children, while mostly in the accompaniment, is heard something trying to reflect

the out-door sounds of nature on those summer days ••• the west wind in the pines and oaks, the running brook ••• sometimes quite loudly ••• and maybe towards evening, the distant voices of the farmers across the hill, getting in their cows and sheep.14

The form of the movement is a large A B A; the A sections are quiet, mystical, and employ the tune "Jesus Loves The B section, marked Allegro con Slugarocko, brings Me." the human element into fare, representing the rowdiness of the boys, the play of children at the camp meeting. It is a section where Ives eschews the pre-made hymn tunes and invents his own motive. An examination of the motives that make up this movement will be helpful. As stated, the A sections use the children's religious song "Jesus Loves Me" by William Bradbury. The original scarcely skirts the pedestrian with its fundamental harmonious refrain, chorus form, and simplistic melodies. To illustrate what Ives has done with such weak material, I would like to play the hymn as Bradbury originally wrote it. Should any of you know the words or not know the words, I invite you to help me along.

It must be understood that an important aspect of Ives's approach to music is that, although he himself with his musical sophistication undoubtedly saw "Jesus Loves Me" as a weak folk hymn, it was not the music itself that interested him, but what the hymn stood for; the music, that is the

¹⁴Charles Ives, "Children's Day at the Camp Meeting," Fourth Violin Sonata (New York, 1942).

syntax, transcends itself. It is what the hymn meant to plain New England folk, not what the music meant to musicians. Ives felt that it was what remained behind the notes that was art, and he sets this tune in a way that makes us very much aware of this duality. Listen to this passage; the hymn tune is combined with one of Ives's sweetest countermelodies.

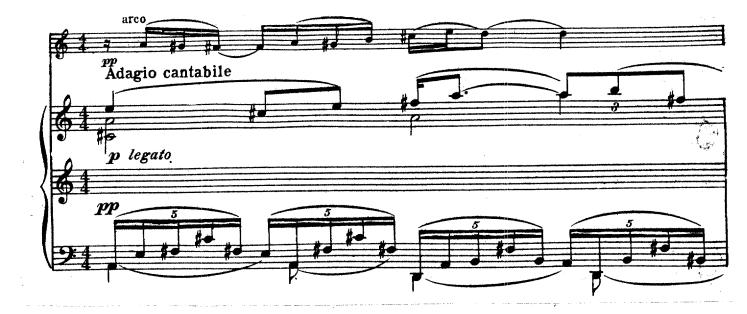


Fig. 1--Countermelody, <u>Sonata No. 4</u>, Largo, Adagio Cantabile section.

Another point, more in detail, in the quieter A sections, is the specific distortion of the tune. Where we expect C A C D F, on "Yes, Jesus loves me," Ives changes the pitches on the words "loves me."



Fig. 2--Pitch change, Sonata No. 4, Largo

It is as though Ives wants the listener to realize that the essence of the hymn does not rest in the musical material, that the listener's imagination must be active, must indeed transcend what he is listening to.

The B section dissolves this mystic mood and brings all thought down to earth. Here Ives depicts the human element with the development of his own motive: the boys play, stone-throwing at a creek bed. As shown in Figure 3, Ives's Allegro con Slugarocko is rhythmically destructive and harmonically savage.

One final point is the Amen at the end of the movement, played by the piano over the sustained E in the violin part. What can a composer do to a fundamentalist Amen, a plagal cadence, to bring forth the transcendental nature that it had for Ives? For starters, it comes at the end of a long fermata, as though it really does not belong to the movement itself. It is marked with four p's and decrescendo, and most subtle is the voicing. The root tone is in the



Fig. 3--Allegro con Slugarocko, Sonata No. 4, Largo

violin and not in the bass; the piano plays parallel sixths with the two parts separated an octave and individualizes the alto and tenor voices as they might stand out in a country church choir, a disembodied, distant echo of perhaps all the Amens that Ives ever heard.

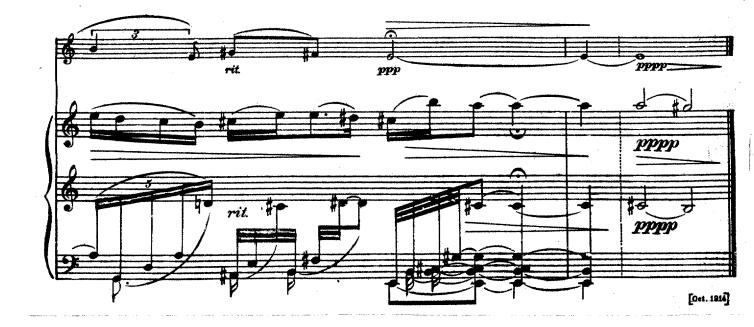


Fig. 4--Plagal cadence, Sonata No. 4, Largo

There is a story that once, when Ives's father was asked how he could stand to hear old John Bell (who was the best stone-mason in town) bellow off-key the way he does at camp meetings, his answer was, "Old John is a supreme musician. Look into his face and hear the music of the ages. Don't pay too much attention to the sounds. If you do, you may miss the music."¹⁵ Perhaps this quotation will also come to my defense.

The second sonata was of singular importance to Ives. He was disposed to present this work to professional musicians as an example of his craftmanship, and it is staggering to

¹⁵Ives, <u>Memos</u>, p. 132.

us today that this well-made piece was so often rejected by Ives's performing contemporaries. No doubt, they heard the piece as very bad traditional concert music instead of perceiving in Ives a new musical voice stemming from a new musical aesthetic.

The piece does not seem to be about themes as a traditional sonata might be about them. Someone who listens with traditional ears hears these tunes in the same light as he hears thematic material in the mainstream of sonata writing. But Ives's music is not at all about thematic development; it is about music, or music-making. It is about the situations from which these folk tunes are drawn: folk fiddling, revival singing, town bands, dance orchestras, and hymn singing. Support for this is found in the titles given to the various movements. One might ask what this theme is doing in a piece entitled "Autumn."



Fig. 5--Sonata No. 2, "Autumn," measures 10-13

If it is not too farfetched, one could speculate that Ives heard this as the stand-up fiddler in a band at a harvest moon dance (thus the title "Autumn" is not so far removed). An extension of this idea can be sensed in the abrupt changes of mood that these juxtaposed contrasting themes bring forth. This dance theme which traditionally would be developed is abruptly truncated and interrupted by a theme of almost cloying sentiment.



Fig. 6--Sonata No. 2, "Autumn," measures 44-48

This represents so much formal nonsense in the practice of the usual sonata allegro construction, but to Ives, it represents another aspect of the whole aura of autumn. The fact that Ives did choose to title these movements, employ folk themes, folk harmonies, and allude to amateur fiddling, must be taken at face value as a phenomenon and not be compared to the previous sonata development.

On the other hand, Ives was in no way ignorant of nineteenth-century European music-making, such as that cultivated in the New England polite parlor music and taught in the conservatories and by Horatio Parker at Yale, where Ives got copious doses of the idiom. One might ask what a Chopinesque turn is doing in the second movement, "In the Barn," in company with a number of themes that appear to be vulgar and unrefined.



Fig. 7--Sonata No. 2, "In the Barn," measures 134-139

But these polite preciosities, the turns, the secondary dominant harmonies, and the banal progressions are a part of the same culture as the barn dances, the marches, and the hymns.

The last movement, "The Revival," begins with the mystical side of religion, depicted by unstable tritones and augmented harmonies (see Figure 8) and progresses to the worldly physical event of the revival meeting itself (see Figure 9).



Fig. 8--Tritones and augmented harmonies, <u>Sonata No. 2</u>, "Revival."



Fig. 9--Sonata No. 2, "Revival," measures 34-41

The movement ends with thumping fundamentalist tunes, using fundamental progressions, syncopated rhythms, and an echo of steeply bells, represented by tonal clusters. (See Figure 10.)



Fig. 10--Tonal clusters, Sonata No. 2, "Revival"

The close of the sonata is a brief return to mysticism, one of those Ives endings that does not end, a retrograde plagal or amen cadence, the inconclusive plagal amen, the IV-I in C, rather than the IV-I in F.



Fig. 11--Plagal cadence, Sonata No. 2, "Revival"

The true formal genius of Ives is in the unification of all the disparate elements into a metaphysical whole; barn dances are not barn dance themes, hymn tunes are not hymn tunes, marches are not marches, but all is transcendentalized to become the world of Charles Ives.

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