

Charles Ives: Symphony No. 2 The Things Our Fathers Loved

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Movement 1 The Old House on Main Street

ME 1 ***'The Things Our Fathers Loved', bars 1-5, voice/piano, the piano quietly continuing under following VO until the actors have sat down 27"***

VO 1

IVES *quoting his own song lyrics, dreamily, Harmony joining in. The pianist quietly ghosting in some scraps of the accompaniment.*

"I hear the organ on the Main Street corner...

Aunt Sarah humming Gospels... Summer evenings...

The village cornet band, playing in the square....

The town's Red, White and Blue, all Red, White and Blue!"

straight out to the audience, as though explaining what he has just said

I was born in Danbury Connecticut... October 20th, 1874...

My Father was a musician and teacher in the town...

violin, piano, brass and wood instruments,

harmony, sight-reading... everything!

Brass band and orchestra, church choirs,

and music at Camp Meetings...

He started me when I was 5 years old...

piano, violin, cornet, counterpoint...

all on strictest academic principles...

Experiment, he said... experiment could come later!

One day - I was 8 - he found me banging drum-rhythms on the piano...

"It's all right to do that, Charlie...

but only if you know what you are doing."

And he marched me to the barber, Mr Schleyer...

(he'd played drums in Father's band in the Civil War...)

and Schleyer gave me an upended tub... and a couple of sticks

and sat me under the shelf with the shaving mugs,

and taught me the double-roll

and all the stuff a drummer has to know.

I went to study organ when I was 11...

and by 14, I was the organist at Second Congregational...

HARMONY

The youngest salaried church organist in Connecticut!

ME 2 Sonata for Organ (reconstructed) 40"

attacca

ME 3 Sym 2 mvt 1 bars 1-11 35"

VO 2

IVES

If I have done anything good in music, of one thing I am certain:

it was, first, because of my father, and second, because of my wife...

HARMONY

Charlie...

IVES

What she has done for me, I won't tell you, because she won't let me...

But what he did for me...

He had a reverence, a devotion for music...

and a belief that everyone was born with at least one germ of musical talent...

And he started all the children of the family

- and most of the children of the town for that matter -

on Bach... and Stephen Foster.

ME 4 begins; Ives continues speaking over the music

That way he put a love of music into the heart of many a boy

who might have gone without it but for him...

ME 4 "Massa's in de Cold Ground", piano and voices 48"

attacca

ME 5 Sym 2 mvt 1 bar 7 to 3rd beat of bar 24 53"

VO 3

IVES

When my younger brother Moss was born - I was less than 2 years old -

Mother didn't want confusion,

so she sent Father out back to the barn... to practise his fiddle!

And I went up with him...

ME 6 "Pig Town Fling" on fiddle and piano, first 8 bars 12"

VO 4

IVES

I sat there in Uncle Joe's buggy, playing with the whip...

HARMONY

Aunt Amelia said you'd sit for hours at a time!

ME 7 **Bars 9-16 of "Pig Town", fiddle and piano 14"**

attacca

ME 8 **Sym 2 mvt 1, from bar 23 to the end of 32 28"**

VO 5

IVES

I wrote this symphony long long ago, some of it even in college...

[to the conductor and the orchestra]

and for that reason you'll find it can be played quite readily

and will take but little rehearsal...

which can't be said of some of my other scores.

The themes sometimes suggest Gospel Hymns... and Old Steve Foster...

ME 9 **Sym 2 mvt 1, from bar 33 to second beat of bar 36,
bassoons, cellos and basses only. 12"**

attacca

ME 10 **"Old Black Joe", piano and voices, 9 bars 23"**

VO 6

IVES

Now some 'nice' people,

when they hear the words "Gospel Hymns" or "Stephen Foster",

say "Mercy Me!"...

and a little high-brow smile creeps over their brow!

ME 11 **Sym 2 mvt 1, from bar 30 to 42** **38"**

VO 7

IVES

"Imagine, in a symphony, hearing street tunes...

Marching through Georgia or a Moody and Sankey hymn!"

That's what one routine-minded old professor at Yale told me!

Well, I'll say two things here:

(1) That nice professor of music is a musical lily-pad...

And (2), his opinion is based on something

he probably never even heard, seen, or experienced.

He knows nothing of how these things sounded

when they came "blam" off a real man's chest...

"like the rocks were grown".

ME 12 ***"Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean", A flat version, first 5 bars, piano and unison voices*** **22"**

attacca

ME 13 **Sym mvt 1, from bar 64 to 78** **43"**

VO 8

IVES

Sounds like Brahms? And why not?

It seems to me, as it did then and ever...

that still today Bach, Beethoven and Brahms

are among the strongest and greatest in all of art...

ME 14 **Brahms Sym 1, mvt 4, end of bar 271 to end of bar 278** **14"**

VO 9

IVES

Brahms! And Beethoven! And Bach!

Father filled me up with the best of classical music!.

And I had to practise... and practise right... and know my lesson...

And then, he'd let us roam a little.

He kept a good balance.

He said: It was good for our minds and for our ears.

ME 15 **Sym mvt 1, bar 89 to 95** **24"**

attacca

ME 16 **Bach, 3-part invention in F minor, piano, bars 16-19** **18"**

Movement 2 The Cornet Band on Main Street

VO 10a

IVES

Bach! And it wasn't only Bach...

When I was a boy, I played in Father's brass band...

usually one of the drums.

Practising was done on a rubber-top cheese box...

thoughtfully

And for the rest of my life, in 'thinking up' music,

I've usually had some sort of brass band with wings on it

in back of my mind.

Recorded music 1

*The United States Marine Band, playing The Red,
White and Blue, 1897*

VO 10b

IVES *[entering over the music, after the second phrase of the tune]*

In those days no New England village
could hold its own without a brass band...
a Cornet Band, they called it!

[The music has now faded]

And when Father came back to Danbury from the Civil War,
he found there was no band!
So he undertook to produce one!
He rounded up candidates, and he taught the instruments...

ME 17 begins

and in a short time, the 'Danbury Band' was distinguishing itself
at ball games and on holiday parades!

ME 17 Sym, bar 109 (2nd 8th) of mvt 1, to bar 7 of mvt 2 36"

attacca

**ME 18a "Wake Nicodemus", for men's voices and piano,
starting with piano at bar 4, beat 3, continuing to 3rd beat of bar 8 and
breaking suddenly on the 3rd beat ('gold') 14"**

VO 11

IVES *interrupting*

Father had a gift. He'd take a familiar tune...
one of the things he played back then, during the war...
and make it mean more than something just usual...

**ME 18b resuming "Wake Nicodemus", for men's voices and
piano, starting with piano on 3rd beat of bar 8 (men entering on 4th beat
with 'He was reckon'd'), and continuing to 3rd beat of bar 16 and
breaking suddenly on 3rd beat ('tree') 20"**

attacca

ME 19 Mvt 2, bars 8-28 39"

VO 12

IVES

There was something also about the way Father led the hymns in church.
Even if the choir could read music readily at the rehearsals,
he liked to play each part over with his horn,
and that way, he'd have them get it through listening, through the ear...

**ME 20 "Bringing in the Sheaves", in A flat, refrain only (8 bars),
SATB + organ (or piano) 16"**

attacca

ME 21 From bar 42 to 60 (minus new voices on last beat) 36"

VO 13a

IVES

When I went to college...

[to Harmony]

and Father suddenly died...

[back to audience]

and I took 'strict composition' classes with Professor Horatio W. Parker,

I felt more and more what a remarkable background and start

Father had given me in music.

Parker was a composer, widely known, a good technician but... limited...

After the first two or three weeks in Freshman year,

I didn't bother him any more with the experimental ideas

which Father had encouraged...

Instead, I wrote and had things played
by the Hyperion Theater Orchestra, led by 'Professor Fichtl'!
Brass band pieces, overtures, and marches...

Recorded music 2 Ives playing March No.6 for piano

[let the music flow for a bit then come in over the top]

VO 13b

IVES

'Here's to Good Old Yale!'

[after the music]

And I'd put college tunes in the trios...

and 'Professor Fichtl' would get the students in the audience
whistling, and beating time...

ME 22 *"Where oh where are the verdant freshmen?", men's
voices, gently breaking off at top of bar 7, holding the word 'Safe' and
with the orchestra starting over the top 14"*

attacca

ME 23 **From bar 69 (1st time = oboes) to 81 (3rd beat) 33"**

VO 14

IVES

You know, there's a thing I've often wondered about...

I always seemed to have worked with more natural freedom,
when I knew the music wasn't going to be played before a concert public,
or rather before people who couldn't get our from under,
as is the case in a church congregation...

Even after giving up the organ position at Central Presbyterian in New York,

I went on substituting for an occasional Sunday service...

and on those occasions,

I would take the opportunity of trying things out that I was working on...

I might take a couple of hymns by Lowell Mason...

HARMONY

Mr Ives's favorite composer of hymns...

IVES

I personally (this is a personal remark) think that...

the repose and reputation of a successful pianist ...

a nice celebrity of world fame who plays Chopin...

is offset by the truth and obscurity of a village-organist

who plays Bach and Lowell Mason with such affection

that he would give his life rather than lose them.

[the music starts]

Lowell Mason!... 'Hamburg'!...

HARMONY *remembering the words, as she hears the tune*

'When I survey the wondrous cross

On which the Prince of glory died,

My richest gain I count but loss,

And pour contempt on all my pride.'

ME 24 *Harmonium plays 'Hamburg', text is spoken over 40"*

VO 15

IVES

And the same composer's... 'Naomi'...

HARMONY *remembering the words, and half singing the tune as the organist plays*

'Now from the altar of my heart

Let incense flames arise;

Assist me, Lord, to offer up

Mine evening sacrifice.'

ME 25 ***Harmonium plays 'Naomi', text is sung/spoken over 35"***

VO 16a

IVES

Now... in this Symphony... you'll hear what I worked out.

First a line from 'Hamburg'...

ME 26a ***Trombones and tuba play bars 137-144 (but faster [score provided]), with chorus in unison over the top*** **16"**

VO 16b

IVES

And then one from 'Naomi'...

ME 26b ***Trombones and tuba play bars 145-151 (but faster [score provided]), with chorus in unison over the top*** **16"**

VO 16c

IVES

And then the third line from 'Hamburg'...

ME 26c ***Trombones and tuba play bars 153-159 (but faster [score provided]), with chorus in unison over the top*** **16"**

VO 16d

IVES

And the last line... from 'Naomi'...

ME 26d Trombones and tuba play bars 160-165 (but faster [score provided]), with chorus in unison over the top 14"

VO 17

IVES

I believe that many American composers have been interested in working things out for themselves...

But at the same time it seems to be a general opinion in this country that unless a man has studied all his life in a European conservatory, he has no right to throw anything at an audience...

And it also seems to be taken for granted that anybody who composes must be conversant with all the music written in the world up to last night...

And they can't understand why I don't know this piece or that piece.

Well, I don't! And as I see it, there are two reasons why I don't...

One is, being in business for so many years,

I had only evenings, weekends and vacations in which to work...

The other reason was...

listening to concert music put me out of my stride...

confused me... threw me off...

Hearing the old pieces though...

the ones I'd been familiar with all my life...

did not have this effect... ever...

Bach... Beethoven...

[with suddenly greater intensity]

and Brahms!

ME 27 Brahms: Symphony 1, mvt 1, bars 157-175 (downbeat) 19"

VO 18

IVES

When I was still in college,

the composer George W. Chadwick visited our class.

Lord, what a beer breath!

But he told me one of my songs was...

"In its way... almost as good as Brahms!"

ME 28 From bar 355 to end 56"

Movement 3 Redding Campground

VO 19

IVES *taking us into a new world*

A long time ago... a 'nice' young man...

(his musical sense being limited to 3 years' study at the Boston Conservatory)

said to my Father:

"How can you stand to hear old John Bell sing?

Off-key, wrong notes and everything!"

*Recorded music 3 Charles Ives playing the discarded slow movement
of Symphony 1.*

[Give the music a moment to establish]

Now John Bell was the best stone-mason in town...

and he sang at the Camp Meetings....

And Father said to the young man: "John Bell is a supreme musician.

Look into his face and hear the music of the ages.

You won't get to heaven on pretty little sounds."

[The recorded music fades away]

And I remember, when I was a boy,

those outdoor Camp Meeting services in Redding...

in the days of the old "stone-fielders"...

and how all the farmers, their families and field hands, for miles around,

would come afoot or in their farm wagons...

And I remember...

how great waves of sound came through those trees...

the old Gospel Hymns... sung by thousands of "let out" souls...

'Nearer My God To Thee'... 'In The Sweet Bye And Bye'...

'The Shining Shore'... and 'Beulah Land'...

attacca, after "Brave boys are now in action" ('The Red, White and Blue')

ME 59

Bar 252 to end

50"

VO 39

IVES

defiantly

In my youth, that's how the fiddler stopped the dance!

[The stage goes to black!]