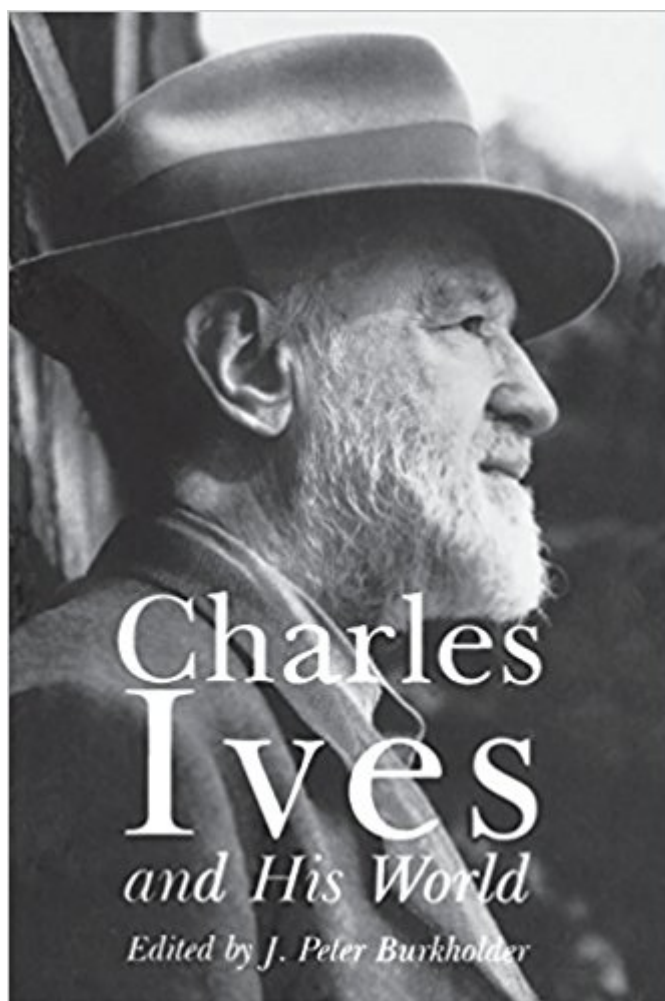


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# Charles Ives And His World



## Synopsis

This volume shows Charles Ives in the context of his world in a number of revealing ways. Five new essays examine Ives's relationships to European music and to American music, politics, business, and landscape. J. Peter Burkholder shows Ives as a composer well versed in four distinctive musical traditions who blended them in his mature music. Leon Botstein explores the paradox of how, in the works of Ives and Mahler, musical modernism emerges from profoundly antimodern sensibilities. David Michael Hertz reveals unsuspected parallels between one of Ives's most famous pieces, the Concord Piano Sonata, and the piano sonatas of Liszt and Scriabin. Michael Broyles sheds new light on Ives's political orientation and on his career in the insurance business, and Mark Tucker shows the importance for Ives of his vacations in the Adirondacks and the representation of that landscape in his music. The remainder of the book presents documents that illuminate Ives's personal life. A selection of some sixty letters to and from Ives and his family, edited and annotated by Tom C. Owens, is the first substantial collection of Ives correspondence to be published. Two sections of reviews and longer profiles published during his lifetime highlight the important stages in the reception of Ives's music, from his early works through the premieres of his most important compositions to his elevation as an almost mythic figure with a reputation among some critics as America's greatest composer.

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## Customer Reviews

"This book helps us to see why Charles Ives remains such a puzzle. The distinguished Ives scholar J. Peter Burkholder has assembled an insightful four-part study [that] . . . illuminate[s] the shifting history of Ives's place in American culture--and provide[s] therefore, important historical illuminations of its own."--History

This volume shows Charles Ives in the context of his world in a number of revealing ways. Five new essays examine Ives's relationships to European music and to American music, politics, business, and landscape. J. Peter Burkholder shows Ives as a composer well versed in four distinctive musical traditions who blended them in his mature music. Leon Botstein explores the paradox of how, in the works of Ives and Mahler, musical modernism emerges from profoundly antimodern sensibilities. David Michael Hertz reveals unsuspected parallels between one of Ives's most famous pieces, the Concord Piano Sonata, and the piano sonatas of Liszt and Scriabin. Michael Broyles sheds new light on Ives's political orientation and on his career in the insurance business, and Mark Tucker shows the importance for Ives of his vacations in the Adirondacks and the representation of that landscape in his music. The remainder of the book presents documents that illuminate Ives's personal life. A selection of some sixty letters to and from Ives and his family, edited and annotated by Tom C. Owens, is the first substantial collection of Ives correspondence to be published. Two sections of reviews and longer profiles published during his lifetime highlight the important stages in the reception of Ives's music, from his early works through the premieres of his most important compositions to his elevation as an almost mythic figure with a reputation among some critics as America's greatest composer.

This is a wide and comprehensive selection of articles to appear in conjunction with The 1996 Bard Festival. The articles, some more cogent and relevant than others, are an invaluable addition to any library of Ives materials. It would be hard for anyone not to find something of interest and relevance here, since the collection covers many areas. However, one should be aware that it is an assemblage of not necessarily related or continuous ideas, more along the lines of Ives's own "Memos," in which one can turn to almost any page and discover new facets to Ives's complex and amazing life and body of work, even when the opinions of the contributors do not align with one's own. Recommended to all interested in knowing Ives better.

This is a good book for a variety of scholars on Ives. It has a bit of everything, from his overall musical output to theory to higher-concept musicological writing. Nicely done, Peter Burkholder.

For anyone interested in the life of Ives, in addition to his music, this book is a "must read." It is enlightening in its approach to his personal life - which is so obvious in his music. There is an equitable blend of personal and musical background information by many notable composers, friends and business associates. The book has just enough photography to support context, not that Ives was a camera hog. I had the opportunity and privilege to attend the Bard Music Festival for performances of some of my favorite Ives pieces. It was fantastic. I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in the Ives legacy and especially to any student of composition.

Beginning in 1990, Bard College (Annandale-on-Hudson, NY) has held an annual music festival celebrating the music and related cultural/aesthetic background of composers, with the festival "proceedings" published as a Festschrift volume. The consideration for a composer being celebrated would seem to be that the composer's works represent a measurable break with "the past," in terms of musical aesthetic. Only one of these composers has been American. It is fitting that this American should be Charles Ives. This volume is from the 1996 festival for the music and life of Ives. It nicely summarizes why it is that Ives was important to the development of a uniquely American musical aesthetic, and how that aesthetic was closely tied with the man's life in other respects. The volume is in four unequal parts: Part I, ESSAYS (five in-depth pieces covering key aspects of Ives the composer, philosopher and businessman and ethicist, filling nearly half the book), and briefer Parts II, III and IV, providing, respectively, LETTERS (to and from Ives), REVIEWS (of music and performances), and PROFILES (of Ives during his lifetime). The essays cover distinct aspects but have some overarching themes: [1.] Consistently (and persistently), Ives composed in four styles: American popular music, Protestant church music, "art" music in the European classical sense, and experimental music, frequently combining two or more of these styles in a work. Ives did not "progress" from the simple to the complex (as had earlier been put forth, before musicologists and critics could achieve perspective on his output), but always had each of these in his "composers' toolbox

With most scholarly periodicals now digitized and searchable through JSTOR and Project Muse, collections like these risk becoming dinosaurs and--or rather, unnecessary. Not so with this collection. The articles are of course diverse and thought-provoking (especially when read alongside other Ives scholarship), especially cogent walk-through of Ives' un-summarizable political beliefs and how they play out in his wartime works. But where this collection really shines is in the excellent

primary sources appended to the back of the collection, giving a more-or-less thorough-going account of Ives' contemporaneous reception and saving the casual researcher hours spent paging through musty old periodicals to find a single citation. The generous selections from Ives' letters whet the appetite as well and draw connections between Ives and the American musical avant-garde more effectively than secondary scholarship on the same topic. I picked this up in a used book store about a year ago, and while it shouldn't be your first Ives book, it is a valuable companion to the many Ives bios and studies.

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