



**Charles
IVES**

**The Three
Orchestral Sets**

**Includes World Première
Recording of the complete No. 3**

**Malmö Symphony
Orchestra and
Chamber Chorus**

James Sinclair

Charles Ives (1874-1954)

Orchestral Sets

The works on this recording focus on a singular genre created by a singular composer. The kind of piece Charles Ives called a *Set* is usually a larger work made by putting together independently-written smaller pieces, with an ear for unity of theme, program, and the like, and at the same time an ear for contrast in tempo, texture, mood, and the like. The reasons Ives created the personal genre of the *Set* and worked so happily within it are embedded in his creative history.

An organ prodigy and professional church musician from age fourteen, Charles Ives grew up in music inspired by a remarkable teacher, his father, and the vital musical life of his hometown of Danbury, Connecticut. Father George Ives had once been a Civil War bandmaster; in Danbury he was a musical jack-of-all-trades, teaching, playing, directing bands and church choirs.

From his father Charlie inherited a love of music from popular through churchly to the European classics. The boy also soaked up his father's open-minded, exploratory streak. George Ives would march two bands around the Danbury town green in opposite directions playing different marches, to hear what happened when they passed. He would play his trumpet from across a pond, so Charlie could hear the effect of space on sound. Early on, while training his son in traditional musical theory, George told Charlie that ultimately any combination of notes was acceptable, if you knew what you were doing with them.

So Charles Ives grew up the first composer in history to be liberated from traditional harmonies, and for whom experimentation with sounds, rhythms, textures, space, and effects of chance were woven into his creative consciousness. No less did his father teach Ives that a humble hymn sung in church, a band playing on the march, a ragtime tune in a tavern could be as exalted as any symphony, if you perceived the human spirit behind them.

Four years of conservative German-oriented

training at Yale failed to taint Ives's musical consciousness. From those studies came his *First String Quartet* and first three *Symphonies*, all successful works, all within hailing distance of traditional forms and techniques. Then Ives decided to stop writing sonatas, quartets, and symphonies until he had learned how to make those genres his own, to unify them with his determination to explore new musical techniques and fill the old forms with the musical voices of Americans.

So to create large instrumental works Ives made an end-run around tradition to create a new, flexible, personal genre of which he would be sole proprietor: the *Set*. This recording is the first assemblage of Ives's three full-orchestra sets, including the newly-resurrected *Third*.

The *First Orchestral Set*, variously titled *Three Places in New England* and *A New England Symphony*, is one of Ives's great tributes to his roots. Put together around 1913-14 from material going back years, it is typically Ivesian in that each movement has an underlying program. Movement 1, *Impression of the 'St. Gaudens' in Boston Common* (Col. Robert Gould Shaw and His Colored Regiment) captures that sculptor's celebrated bas-relief commemorating the Civil War's first black regiment and their Boston-Brahmin commander. The movement is a slow march, portraying soldiers weary in body but indomitable in spirit. Ives had never heard what came to be called the blues, but here it is as if he created blues from its constituents, mainly spirituals. The music is filled with his usual quotations, here including *Old Black Joe* and *The Battle Cry of Freedom*.

The *Children's Holiday at Putnam's Camp* unfolds in a uniquely Ivesian mode, at once comic and spiritual. The program is of a boy who falls asleep at that Revolutionary-era memorial and has a dream of the soldiers, with the goddess of Liberty at their head. It assembles material from earlier works, mainly *Country*

Band March, an affectionate portrayal of small-town bands. The players are missing notes and losing the beat, or rather creating their own interpretations of the notes and rhythms, which to Ives was not merely funny but a case of people of whatever skill putting their hearts and souls into music. "Bandstuff!" Ives once noted. "They didn't always play right & together and it was as good either way."

The inspiration for *The Housatonic at Stockbridge* came from the second honeymoon of Charles and Harmony Ives, when they walked along that river in the rapture of their first weeks together and heard a hymn floating over the water from a distant church. In his music Ives paints the flowing river and the hymn, the ecstatic climax reflecting the small stream growing into a powerful river "out to the adventurous sea."

The score of *Three Places* used by James Sinclair here is the *First Version*, in which Ives trimmed back some of the complexities of his sketches (restored in the more familiar Second Version) in hopes of making a more practical piece for the ears and orchestral abilities of 1914. Among the differences: the first movement does not have the opening chord of the later version; and most strikingly, the difficult rhythms of the lines that create the misty texture of the later *Housatonic* are omitted. The above titles of the first two movements are from this 1912-13 version. This is the first recording of the *First Version*, revealing a work less complex, but with its own distinctive sound world and integrity.

Like the other *Sets*, the *Second* has a slow-fast-slow pattern and, like the other *Sets* and *Third* and *Fourth Symphonies*, a visionary hymn-based finale. It was assembled around 1919. The opening movement of the *Second Set* was first called *An Elegy to Stephen Foster*, later *An Elegy to Our Forefathers*. It is an Ivesian stream-of-consciousness, rising from silence in a sustained swell to a climax, then fading back to silence, like a moment in the passing parade of the universe. To that pattern is brought the element of space: the piece begins with an offstage group of zither, harp, and percussion featuring chimes and bells, which throughout give an extraordinary three-dimensional quality to the

texture. The sustained melody of the middle, over a bluesy bass ostinato, is like a memory of Stephen Foster tunes.

The Rockstrewn Hills Join in the People's Outdoor Meeting (alternate title *Ragtime*) is another high-spirited Ives reminiscence of the camp-revival meetings of his youth. The substance of the music is a kind of cut-and-paste ragtime collage based on Ives pieces going back to the early years of the century, the Ragtime era, when Ives sometimes sat in for the house pianist in taverns and theaters.

Like *The Housatonic*, the finale of the *Second Set* came from a powerful personal experience, reflected in its title: *From Hanover Square North, At the End of a Tragic Day, The Voice of the People Again Arose*. That day was May 7, 1915, when America learned of the sinking of the *Lusitania* by a German submarine, which made war imminent. At the end of that day Ives was waiting on the platform of the Hanover Square train station when the crowd suddenly broke into one of his beloved gospel hymns, *The Sweet By and By*. The music recreates that experience, more in its feelings than literally. It begins with a low chorus of the Latin *Te Deum*. From there the piece transforms that traditional, formal act of worship into the climax, which paints the spontaneous musical effusion of a grieving crowd of strangers in all its raw grandeur and shared fervor. Here was a moment in Ives's life that reaffirmed his lifelong faith in the universal human spirit beneath all music, which his father had called "the music of the ages." *Hanover Square* is one of his greatest and last revelations of that spirit.

The *Orchestral Set No. 3*, conceived around 1919, was the only *Set* Ives planned as a whole from the beginning. It was one of the pieces he was working on in 1927, when one day he came downstairs in tears and told his wife he felt he couldn't compose anymore. As he later wrote, "I couldn't seem to keep them up and sailing." The extensive drafts and sketches for the *Third Set* show that Ives's ideas were still running true and strong, but, sapped by a heart attack and diabetes, he had lost the energy and sustained concentration to pull them

together. His mature music had always involved a heroic effort to contain wildly disparate material. Now the centrifugal elements of Ives's art were escaping his grasp. Yet he continued to add notes to the last movement until as late as 1951.

The first movement is the most complete in draft, the material of the other two progressively sketchier. Nearly all the notes in this realization are by Ives, the first two movements edited and filled out by editor David Gray Porter, the uncanny third movement beautifully realized by Nors Josephson from a loose collection of sketches.

What is adumbrated here is a visionary work we can only wish Ives had found the energy to complete himself. But the *Third Set* is powerful as it is, like one of

Michelangelo's unfinished sculptures. The serene, ethereal atmosphere of the outer movements, similar to that of his last song *Sunrise*, can be called an example of the late-Ives Sublime Style, the most finished of which is the finale of the *Fourth Symphony*. The ebullient second movement — *An Afternoon or During Camp Meetin' Week—One Secular Afternoon (In Bethel)* — amounts to a parade of people and memories from his Danbury youth, captured in a blizzard of quoted tunes.

The *Third Orchestral Set* may stand as the most profound discovery of the many and ongoing efforts to reconstruct uncompleted Ives works. This is its first complete performance and recording.

Jan Swafford

Malmö Symphony Orchestra



Photograph: Klas Andersson

Founded in 1925, the Malmö Symphony Orchestra is a young and vigorous orchestra. For many years dividing its energies between opera and concerts, since 1991 the orchestra has been fully committed to the symphonic repertoire, which it performs in its own concert hall. With a complement of a hundred musicians, the orchestra offers an exciting variety of concert programmes to large and enthusiastic audiences. The main focus is on the rich tradition of orchestral music, with the ambition of bringing this tradition into the future. Several recordings have been acclaimed internationally and rewarded with the Cannes Classical Award and Diapason d'Or, with a recording of the Berwald symphonies with Sixten Ehrling receiving a Gramophone Award. The collaboration between the Malmö Symphony Orchestra and Naxos is expected to add still further to the orchestra's international reputation. Among the orchestra's principal conductors

over the years may be mentioned Herbert Blomstedt, Vernon Handley, James DePreist and Paavo Järvi. Vassily Sinaisky was appointed principal conductor in 2007.

Malmö Chamber Choir



Photograph: Andreas Nilsson

The first concert of the Malmö Chamber Choir took place in November 1975 and was widely acclaimed in southern Sweden. Since then the choir has given about seven hundred concerts and made recordings for record companies, television and radio. The choir archives show that most of the concerts have been given in Skåne, some thirty in Norrland and more than a hundred in other parts of Sweden. In all, some hundred concerts have been given during tours in Denmark, Norway, Finland, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Switzerland, Hungary, Belgium, Holland, England, Israel and the United States. There have also been a number of first performances of works specially written for Dan-Olof Stenlund and his ensemble.

Over the years many choir members have been recruited from the Malmö Academy of Music and from the Copenhagen Royal Academy of Music. After a few years in the choir several of them have then pursued their own careers, winning great success as soloists, conductors and church musicians.

James Sinclair

Photograph: Melanie Eve Barocas



James Sinclair is the music director of Orchestra New England and is one of the world's outstanding scholars and champions of the music of Charles Ives. His recording on Koch International Classics of Ives orchestral music, with Orchestra New England, is considered a classic in the field. For Naxos Sinclair is recording the complete orchestral works of Charles Ives. In 1999 Yale University Press published his 800-page *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Music of Charles Ives*, a work that the Association of American Publishers cites as the best publication of 1999 in arts scholarship; the catalogue has also won an ASCAP Deems Taylor Special Citation. Sinclair is the Executive Editor for the Charles Ives Society, supervising the work of Ives scholars throughout the United States and has edited for publication nineteen works of Ives. He has served as music director for four PBS television documentaries including the Peabody Award-winning film about Ives, *A Good Dissonance Like a Man*.

Get this free download from Classicsonline!

Griffes: *The White Peacock*

Copy this Promotion Code **NaxqRN2HBVFI** and go to http://www.classiconline.com/mpkey/griff_main.

Downloading Instructions

- 1 Log on to Classicsonline. If you do not have a Classicsonline account yet, please register at <http://www.classiconline.com/UserLogIn/SignUp.aspx>.
- 2 Enter the Promotion Code mentioned above.
- 3 On the next screen, click on "Add to My Downloads".



AMERICAN
CLASSICS



Playing
Time:
62:36

**Charles
IVES**
(1874-1954)

**Orchestral Set No. 1:
Three Places in New England (Version 1,
edited by James B. Sinclair) (1913-14)* 18:07**

- 1** Impression of the 'St Gaudens' in Boston Common
(Col. Robert Gould Shaw and his Colored Regiment) 8:55
- 2** Children's Holiday at Putnam's Camp 5:15
- 3** The Housatonic at Stockbridge 3:57

Orchestral Set No. 2 (1919) 15:49

- 4** An Elegy to Our Forefathers 4:34
- 5** The Rockstrewn Hills Join in the People's
Outdoor Meeting 4:59
- 6** From Hanover Square North, at the End of a
Tragic Day, the Voice of the People Again Arose† 6:16

Orchestral Set No. 3* 28:40

- 7** – (Andante moderato) (edited by David Gray Porter) 6:12
- 8** During Camp Meetin' Week – One Secular Afternoon
(in Bethel) (edited by David Gray Porter) 9:46
- 9** – (Andante) (realized by Nors Josephson) 12:42

***World première recording**

**Malmö Symphony Orchestra
and †Chamber Chorus**

James Sinclair

Recorded at the Konsertsalen, Malmö, Sweden,
from 5th to 7th June, 2006, and on 19th June, 2007

Producer and editor: Sean Lewis • Engineers: Mike Hatch
and Sean Lewis • Technical assistant: Erik B. Nilsen

Publishers: Mercury Music (Theodor Presser Co.) (tracks
1-3); Peer International (Peermusic) (tracks 4-6); unpublished
(rights held by the American Academy of Arts and Letters)
(tracks 7-9) • Booklet notes: Jan Swafford

Cover photograph: *New England Fall Foliage*
by Chee-onn Leong (Dreamstime.com)



AMERICAN CLASSICS

The works on this recording focus on a singular genre created by a singular composer. The kind of piece Charles Ives called a 'set' is usually a larger work made by putting together independently-written smaller pieces. The *First Orchestral Set*, variously titled *Three Places in New England* and *A New England Symphony*, is one of Ives's great tributes to his roots. Put together around 1913-14 from material going back years, it is typically Ivesian in that each movement has an underlying program. Like the other sets, the *Second* has a slow-fast-slow pattern and a visionary hymn-based finale. The unfinished *Third Orchestral Set* was the only set Ives planned as a whole from the beginning. It may stand as the most profound discovery of the many and ongoing efforts to reconstruct Ives's incomplete works. This is its first complete performance and recording.

Includes Free Downloadable Bonus Track
at www.classicsonline.com.

Please see inside booklet for full details.

www.naxos.com



6 36943 93532 3



8.559353

