

## Ives at Century's Turn

847406132ecc77eb74774d417b5bd641  
ebrary

“Is an icon becoming a has-been?”<sup>1</sup> This was the question *New York Times* critic Donal Henahan posed in April 1987, after Leonard Bernstein decided to cancel a scheduled performance of Ives’s Fourth Symphony. Indeed there was evidence that a certain amount of ennui had set in with respect to Ives. A few weeks earlier, in a *Times* survey of high-profile musicians, several participants had nominated him “most over-rated composer.”<sup>2</sup> On the other side of the country, Los Angeles critic Herbert Glass observed that there had been a “general decline in Ives’s stock since the overexposure attending the 1974 centenary,” and, he added, it was a shame that the “lovely, listenable” works had been consigned to oblivion “along with the more off-putting creations of Ol’ Charlie, sometime musical bogeyman and ear-stretcher.”<sup>3</sup> Glass’s quip at Ol’ Charlie’s expense was mild in comparison to the accusation musicologist Maynard Solomon leveled against the composer that fall. Ives, Solomon pronounced, had engaged in a “systematic pattern of falsification” to safeguard his claims at the patent-house of musical modernism. During the twenties, he had methodologically upped the dissonance in his compositions, crafted lists that backdated his works, and added marginalia in the manuscripts that would corroborate the false dates.<sup>4</sup> For Ives scholars, Solomon’s indictment was especially irksome because of the forum in which it was lodged: the preeminent publication of musical scholarship, the *Journal of the American Musicological Society*. Never before had the journal’s editors deigned to publish a feature article about Ives, and now in 1987, some twenty years after Ives had become par for musicological discourse, he made his debut as one of the greatest musical perjurers of all time.

Though Solomon’s criticisms were devastating, they served as the catalyst for an explosion of scholarly activity centered on Ives in the nineties. Rebutting

847406132ecc77eb74774d417b5bd641  
ebrary

Solomon became a vital industry that attracted a host of musicologists, long-time Ives stalwarts and neophytes alike. Their approaches varied, some working within the traditional framework of musicological methodologies, others venturing tactics associated with what came to be known as “New Musicology.” The old tools of paleographic and stylistic analysis were deployed alongside new techniques that prioritized social context and stressed the contingency of musical meaning. Ultimately, Solomon’s accusations would be rebuffed, but to this day, his article remains unsurpassed as the most influential scholarly essay ever written about Ives.

As Ives scholarship boomed in the nineties, his sagging reputation in the concert hall also lifted, though for different reasons. The main factor was the broad acceptance of a new version of an old myth. Ives was no longer simply the icon of American individualism and lone pioneer of musical modernism, but the patriarch of a lineage of composers linked by their penchant for experiment: the American Mavericks. The etiology of this myth and the vicissitudes of Ives scholarship at the turn of the twentieth century are the subjects of this final chapter.

## Ives on the Couch

When, in 1987, Solomon broached the question of chronology in Ives’s oeuvre, he did so from a vantage that was unusual in the field of musicology. The evidence he mustered to support his assertion about Ives’s duplicity was paleographical and comfortably within the bounds of disciplinary discourse. It was harnessed, however, to a psychoanalytical theory about the motivations behind the campaign of misinformation Solomon imputed to Ives. Psychobiography had been a preoccupation of Solomon’s ever since he entered the musicological world in the seventies with a controversial biography of Beethoven. As far as the output of musical scholars was concerned, that book and the subsequent Ives article sat on a sparsely populated shelf. But there was ample precedent in other academic disciplines.

Beginning in the fifties, a subset of professional historians had availed themselves of the explanatory potential of psychoanalysis.<sup>5</sup> On the whole, their preference was not for orthodox Freudianism but for so-called “ego psychology,” which focused on the member of the psychoanalytic tripartite that mediated between the unconscious animal drives of the Id and the dictates of society issuing from the Superego. Ego psychology appealed because it stressed conditioning factors arising from social (and thus historical) context, mitigating the biological reductionism of Freud. One of its most influential practitioners, Erik Erikson, provided a model in his *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History* (1957). The book hinged on the concept of “identity crisis,” Erikson’s famous

neologism for the pivotal and fraught moment he believed everyone confronted in late adolescence. But if universal, it had specific historical manifestations and solutions. Erikson attributed Luther's crisis to the tension he experienced between his father's expectation that he pursue a career as a lawyer and his own sense of spiritual calling. It was resolved by a rethinking of theological doctrine, the consequences of which rumbled through European history in the form of the Reformation.<sup>6</sup> In the two decades following the publication of Erikson's book, psychobiography flourished, its subjects as varied as Goethe, Thaddeus Stevens, Woodrow Wilson, Adolph Hitler, and Richard Nixon. Alongside this biographical literature, studies of mass movements rooted in psychological theorizing also thrived.<sup>7</sup>

Seen against this backdrop, the publication of Maynard Solomon's *Beethoven* (1977) was a continuation of a vibrant, if somewhat controversial, tradition. In fact, conservative would be an apt characterization of the book, because Solomon hewed closely to orthodox Freudian doctrine and evinced little influence of the social concerns of ego psychology. He argued that some of the long-known peculiarities of Beethoven—his uncertainty about his birth date, his pretense at being a member of the nobility, his predilection for unavailable women—pointed toward a classic Freudian neurosis, the “family romance.”<sup>8</sup> Ten years later, Solomon turned his attention to Ives, and, just as he had done with Beethoven, mingled careful documentary study with psychoanalytical theorizing. The end result was his inflammatory 1987 article “Charles Ives: Some Questions of Veracity.”

Again, Solomon opted for Freudian orthodoxy, depicting Ives as a victim of an Oedipus complex, the desire of the son to replace his father and the attendant feelings of guilt. On some fronts, Charlie was successful at trumping George his father: Charlie became a prosperous businessman and succeeded as a composer; George had been a mere performer. But on other fronts, he could not compete: as Mollie's husband, George had a stronger claim on her than Charlie did as son, and Charlie could never get around the fact that he was the offspring of George. Thus, Solomon concluded, “Unable to surpass his father in his most fundamental roles and perhaps hoping to avoid reprisals for imagined transgressions, we may surmise that Ives was impelled to make his father his permanent collaborator, idealizing their relationship, purifying his own motives, and professing a filial piety of immaculate quality.”<sup>9</sup> To vouchsafe the status of his father, Charlie turned to the issue of priority, ascribing to George the invention of a host of modernist devices, from polytonality to quarter-tone expansions of the diatonic pitch set. To sustain the claim that the usage of these devices in his own compositions stemmed from George, Charlie had to disavow the influence of any contemporary composers—from Debussy to Stravinsky—on his music. This, Solomon explained, was the motivation for the massive project of revising and backdating manuscripts.

On the whole, musicologists shied clear of the psychoanalytical content of Solomon's article, preferring to focus on paleographical evaluation of the evidence for or against the "systematic pattern of falsification." The only scholar to address the Freudian thesis at the heart of the article was Stuart Feder, who, unlike Solomon, was a professional psychoanalyst. In his book *Charles Ives, 'My Father's Song': A Psychoanalytic Biography* (1992), Feder agreed that the oedipal complex had played a part in Ives's psychological development, as was the case with all human beings. But, Feder averred, Solomon had imposed the complex onto the facts of Ives's life in a procrustean way, neglecting factors arising from the broader social context in which the father-son relationship played out. Moreover, to focus exclusively on the oedipal moment was to deny the significance of other stages of psychological development, the postadolescent period, for example, which, as Feder argued, had been crucial for both George and Charlie.<sup>10</sup> As young men, both experienced an identity crisis shaped in part by ideals deeply embedded in Danbury culture that made music and masculinity incommensurate.

For George, the crisis came while he was serving as an army bandmaster during the Civil War. Feder uncovered documents revealing that amid the pivotal Siege of Petersburg, George requested that he be removed from his position, demoted to private, and presumably deployed right into the fray. Making the point emphatically, he destroyed his cornet and failed to show up for regular duty. This incident, which earned George a court martial, Feder interpreted as symptom of a failure to negotiate the passage from boyhood to manhood. While the pomp attendant upon band performances made George temporarily and ritually a leader of men, his musical endowment could never substitute for the bloody heroism of a frontline infantryman or, beyond the Civil War, the business acumen that allowed his elder brothers to prosper. The values of Danbury precluded this, and Danbury he could not escape. Feder wrote, "Events in the years following the war reveal that George continued to be unprepared to leave home literally; events of later life suggest that he was never fully able to do so psychologically."<sup>11</sup>

Charlie left home physically, but as with his father, not psychologically. Here oedipal factors did come into play. As a baby, Charlie was confronted with the noisy disruptions—musical certainly, sexual probably—of his bandmaster father. George was thus responsible for making Charlie aware of the world beyond his mother, who, for her part, was a silent presence and left little trace in her son's autobiographical writings. Feder asserted that the music Charlie heard in those early years, the hymns and marches of his father's repertoire, became ineluctably bound to his mental representation of George. Thus, throughout Charlie's life, his musical imagination would keep him connected to George, and through George, to Danbury and its environs. George died the first year Charlie was away from home, precisely that moment at which he was beginning to assert his own

identity and succeed where his father had not, becoming an independent man. And so Charlie's crisis. The correspondence between father and son during the final months of George's life shows tensions, the consequence of a son's impatient desire to move forward and a father's urge toward cautious restraint. Feder hypothesized that the death of George "represented the fulfillment of his [Charlie's] most despised wishes and initiated a state of mourning which is necessarily complex. For his most beloved opponent had been rendered so completely helpless as to make the struggle meaningless. Worse was the enduring self-suspicion of mortal responsibility. Thus was loss burdened with guilt." Charlie spent much of the subsequent two decades engaged in a protracted mourning process. Its vicissitudes played out in his musical imagination, where George continued to live, and where Charlie could engage in what Feder described as an "intrapsychic" collaboration with his father.<sup>12</sup>

On the surface, there are resemblances between the analyses Solomon and Feder proffered, both of them homing in on Ives's complex relationship with his father and activating issues of gender and sexuality in the process. But they part ways because of their different interpretations of psychoanalysis, Solomon being an amateur Freud enthusiast and Feder a professional, whose Freudianism was inflected by Eriksonian ego psychology. In the larger scope of things, this difference matters little. By the early nineties, psychobiography had been on the wane for some time, its fortunes ebbing as psychoanalysis in its various flavors lost credibility in academe.<sup>13</sup> As far as the reception of Ives is concerned, no one has followed Solomon and Feder further down the path of psychological speculation, and with both men absent from the world of Ives scholarship (Solomon has moved on to other subjects and Feder passed away in 2005), this seems to be the state of things for the foreseeable future. In any case, from the moment Solomon published his Ives article in 1987, it was his paleographical analysis rather than the Freudian interpretation it supported that claimed musicologists' attention.

## The Great Paper Chase

Solomon called into question the dates for Ives's compositions listed in John Kirkpatrick's *Temporary Mimeographed Catalogue*. In compiling it, Kirkpatrick relied primarily on evidence that originated with the composer himself: information contained in diaries and letters; various lists of dates that Ives compiled, beginning in the late twenties; and marginalia in the manuscripts, particularly addresses that could be identified with specific periods of Ives's life.<sup>14</sup> Solomon argued that the contradictory nature of much of this evidence was so serious that it could not serve as the basis of a valid chronology. Without attempting an exhaustive dismantling of the catalogue, he adduced a few examples to illustrate the problems.

Among them was the second movement of the *First Orchestral Set*, entitled “Putnam’s Camp,” a perennial favorite of Ivesians past and present. In the middle section of the piece, Ives superimposes two different marches at different tempi, mimicking his father’s most famous musical experiment—and the only one for which there is external corroboration.<sup>15</sup> The marginalia for the autograph of “Putnam’s Camp” includes the following bit of political commentary: “Wanted in these you-beknighted states! . . .—more independence—more gumption!—Less Parties and Politics. Election Day 1908—[William Howard] Taft” (Figure 6.1). Scrawled in block capitals, it is clearly in a later hand than the music. Moreover, the date 1908 conflicts with another Ives supplied elsewhere in the manuscripts for this piece: “Whitman’s House, Hartsdale N.Y., Oct. 1912.” Solomon was skeptical that the piece was composed on either of these dates, noting pointedly, “There is no independent evidence that this work was composed prior to the première of *Le Sacre du printemps* on 29 May 1913, or, indeed, completed much before its own first public performance on 10 January 1931.” This example, and many like it, suggested to Solomon that Ives had backdated his scores, making it appear that he had slipped into the musical patent office before modernist notables like Igor Stravinsky.<sup>16</sup>

The pages of the *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, where Solomon’s article was published, had long been the site of paleographic autopsies. Over the years, readers of the journal had seen many manuscripts subject to the kind of critical scrutiny Solomon directed toward the Ives material. But whereas contesting the provenance of a Medieval or Renaissance manuscript had few repercussions in the larger musical world, throwing into question the chronology of Ives’s music was big news—big enough to garner the front page of the Sunday Arts and Leisure section in the *New York Times*. “Did Ives Fiddle with the Truth?” blared the headline at the top of a summa of Solomon’s findings. Critic Donal Henahan soberly announced,

Because recent research has largely dissipated the aura of integrity and rugged independence that surrounded the name of Ives and inevitably rubbed off on his music, it is going to be impossible for many of us ever again to hear an Ives piece in quite the same way as before. The New Englander who fired our imaginations as the Last Transcendentalist, the artistic descendant of Emerson and Thoreau, appears now to have something in common with a shady accountant.<sup>17</sup>

It was a blow to the national musical psyche to have Ives exposed as a fraud.

The immediate wake of Henahan’s article stirred up irate letters from *Times* readers.<sup>18</sup> But the scholarly response to the issues Solomon raised was slower in coming. In the fall of 1988, a meeting of the Greater New York chapter of the American Musicological Society brought Solomon face to face with several

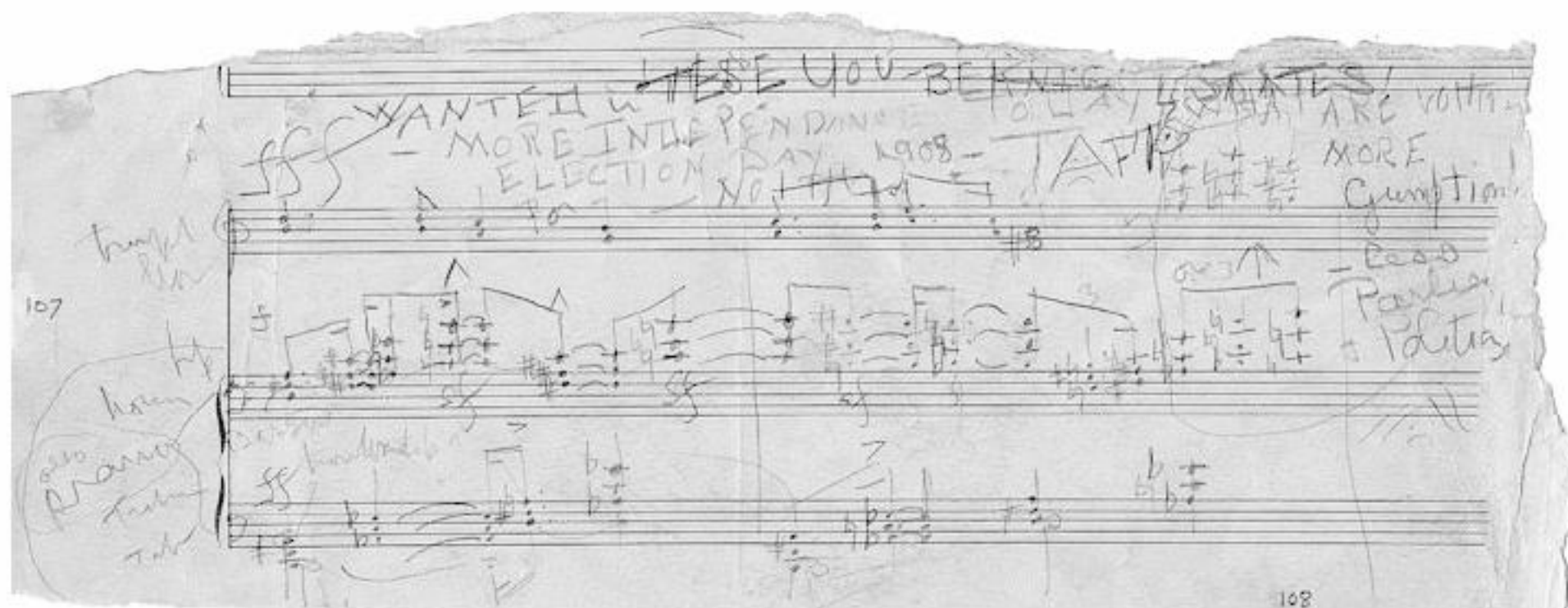


Figure 6.1. Manuscript for *Putnam's Camp*, mm. 107–108. Courtesy Yale University Irving S. Gilmore Music Library.

prominent Ives scholars: H. Wiley Hitchcock, J. Peter Burkholder, theorist Philip Lambert, and editors Paul C. Echols and Jim Sinclair, who were at the helm of the Ives Society's critical editions project. The feature event was a panel discussion entitled "Charles Ives: Trying to Answer Some Questions of Veracity." Burkholder contributed a prepared statement, welcoming Solomon's contribution to Ives scholarship as an "important corrective." He agreed that it was quite likely that Ives had fallen victim to the modernist propaganda issued on his behalf, and, as a result, engaged in some legerdemain when dating his compositions.<sup>19</sup> For Burkholder, whose own work had divested Ives of the transcendentalist legacy, the stakes were very different than for someone like Henahan, who retained the popular image of Ives that had been in circulation since the fifties.

Apart from Burkholder's statement, the contributions of the panelists did not make it to print. But an exchange between Lambert and Solomon published in the *Journal of the American Musicological Society* opens another window on the early stages of the scholarly discussion prompted by Solomon's article. Lambert, whose research mostly centered on Ives's experimental works, acknowledged that the composer was inconsistent about his dates. However, the evidence was open to multiple interpretations, and one need not arrive at Solomon's conclusion that Ives was an inveterate liar. One could, for example, take a copybook containing harmony and counterpoint exercises in the hand of both George and Charles Ives as evidence substantiating the son's recollections of early musical experiments shared with his father.<sup>20</sup>

With respect to the copybook, Solomon retorted, there was no way to show decisively that all of Ives's additions were made during his father's lifetime. In fact, some of the writing in Ives's hand, particularly the marginalia, looked like it

had been added some thirty years later. This was just another instance in which the “Ives mythology” unduly swayed scholarly interpretation. The best approach was to jettison all of Ives’s dates. We need, Solomon asserted, “to rely upon the traditional methods of historical musicology—documentary and paper studies, handwriting comparisons, and a detailed analytic reconstruction of the compositional process of each work.”<sup>21</sup> To a large extent, the dating controversy would proceed to a resolution according to these very terms, an exemplary display of conventional disciplinary practice.

One of the first scholars to take up the challenge was Carol K. Baron, who filed a PhD thesis about Ives’s *Three Page Sonata* in 1987, the same year Solomon published his inflammatory article. To address the dating problem and vindicate Ives, Baron adopted a classic paleographic dual strategy. First she constructed an argument based on “internal evidence,” information gleaned from the characteristics of the music alone. The goal was to demonstrate that some of Ives’s revisions actually made the music less dissonant, thereby deflecting the accusation that the composer had reworked his scores to bolster his claims as a modernist pioneer. Although Baron’s analysis met with skepticism, she did set a precedent, and a number of other scholars have since essayed arguments along the same lines.<sup>22</sup> The second part of her strategy was to muster “external evidence,” hard material facts about the provenance of the manuscripts. Here she turned to handwriting analysis, identifying three manuscripts from different periods of Ives’s life that could be dated precisely because they were for pieces that had verifiable first performance dates. For each of these manuscripts, Baron tabulated handwriting characteristics—the general size of the characters, the direction and length of note stems, the shape of noteheads, clefs, and accidentals, and so on. The handwriting in other manuscripts could then be compared against the tables to determine a rough date. Though this method was imprecise, Baron felt it provided sufficient evidence to conclude that “Putnam’s Camp” dated from early enough to vouchsafe the composer’s claim as innovator.<sup>23</sup>

A more complete exoneration came at the hands of Gayle Sherwood, another scholar just beginning her career in the late eighties. Sherwood had first encountered Ives in an undergraduate course that was part of the music-history survey sequence at McMaster University, where she completed her bachelor’s degree. She remembers a shock of recognition: many of the hymn tunes Ives borrowed inhabited the sonic landscape of her own childhood and brought back memories of the small church in Brantford, Ontario, that her father, a minister, had led when she was a girl. Even while she experienced the music as nostalgic, Sherwood marveled at the audaciousness of including simple hymn tunes like “In the Sweet By and By” and “What a Friend We Have in Jesus” in a genre as august as the symphony. “When I heard Ives,” she recollects, “it just lit up for me.” Over



the course of her undergraduate career, Sherwood's interest in Ives deepened, and when she took an intensive research and bibliography course in her third year, she submitted as a final project an annotated bibliography on the composer. That project laid the groundwork for the Ives research and information guide she would later publish with Routledge—a guide that has become indispensable to Ives scholars (along with Geoffrey Block's *Charles Ives: A Bio-Bibliography*) and is now in its second edition. When, in 1989, she was offered a graduate fellowship at Yale, where the Ives manuscripts were housed, her mind was made up: she would do a dissertation about Ives.<sup>24</sup>

The musicology curriculum Sherwood encountered at Yale was conservative and substantially unchanged from what an aspiring scholar in the discipline would have encountered in the sixties and early seventies. The emphasis was on pre-1700 music, and the skill set the musicology faculty sought to inculcate was mostly centered on primary-source studies: establishing provenance, identifying style traits, and, should manuscripts present the opportunity, sketch studies geared toward documenting compositional processes. These were the tools that Solomon had suggested would resolve the dating controversy and, as Sherwood acquired them, she remembers being surprised that no Yale musicology graduate students had ever brought them to bear on the Ives manuscripts housed literally a block away. Fortunately for Sherwood, a newly arrived member of the theory faculty was extraordinarily well-suited for supervising a dissertation on Ives: Robert Morgan, who had overseen Burkholder's dissertation at the University of Chicago.<sup>25</sup>

The period during which Sherwood completed her PhD was one of tremendous upheaval in musicology, when traditional preoccupations and practices came under fire from multiple quarters. But Sherwood's dissertation, "The Choral Works of Charles Ives: Chronology, Style, Reception," which she filed in 1996, is free of the vexations that otherwise beset the field. The product of Yale's conservative milieu in which the status quo ante was preserved, the dissertation rests firmly on the twin pillars of conventional musicological practice: paleography and style criticism. To be sure, Sherwood ventures a discussion of reception, a concern of more recent vintage within the world of musicological scholarship. But, by and large, the dissertation is an affirmation of the blueprint drawn up some hundred years earlier by the discipline's patriarch, Guido Adler. Indeed, traditionalist factions in the larger disciplinary debate could have made recourse to it for evidence of the continuing effectiveness of orthodox methodologies.

As her first task, Sherwood devised a method for dating Ives's manuscripts modeled on the paper analyses that figured in classic musicological studies of the output of Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, and other composers. The paper types found in Ives's manuscripts had already been indexed by John Kirkpatrick in his *Temporary Mimeographed Catalogue*. Using this information, Sherwood deter-

mined the dates during which each of the companies that produced the paper was active, thereby establishing a *terminus post quem* for any page. Companies tend to change some of the characteristics of their paper from time to time, watermarks or other insignias being the most readily detectable alterations, but records of when such changes are made are hard to come by. To overcome this problem, Sherwood sought out dated manuscripts from the collections of other composers who were active in the New York and New Haven areas between 1881 and 1941 and who used the same paper types as Ives. As a result, for any given paper type, she determined a rough span of time in which it was used by Ives's contemporaries. Further refinement was possible for the paper types used by the professional copyists Ives occasionally employed. Dated correspondence between Ives and the copyist could help pin down a more precise period of usage. Sherwood created a cross-correlation mechanism by expanding Baron's handwriting study to include some additional manuscripts that could be definitively dated. This provided her with a finer-grained understanding of the way in which Ives's handwriting changed over the course of his life. Together, Sherwood's tables of paper types and their period of usages and her refined handwriting typology constituted the most accurate means of dating Ives's manuscripts yet devised.<sup>26</sup>

Even before Sherwood filed the dissertation, her work was filtering through the Ives community, disseminated through conference talks and an article she published in a high-profile journal. Anticipation was high for here, at last, was the means to issue a definitive ruling on the charges Solomon had leveled against Ives. Had he engaged in a systematic pattern of falsification, backdating his works so that all European modernist influences were obscured? Yes, she conceded, "Ives musical development was more gradual and more strongly influenced by other composers than he was willing to admit." But—and here, the sound of relieved sighs is almost audible—"the early results of this objective chronology verify Ives's reputation as an innovator and experimenter at the turn of the century and thus help to confirm his unique role in the development of North American music."<sup>27</sup> The composer was vindicated, though the tarnish of the Solomon controversy would take some time to remove.

In the classic model of musicological practice that Sherwood absorbed at Yale, paleography served as a precursor to style criticism, and that is indeed the place it occupied in her dissertation. To keep the scope manageable, she chose to focus on Ives's choral output, projecting its changing style traits onto the kind of narrative arc that musicologists had traced through the oeuvres of many composers—an arc that relied upon biological metaphor for coherence. The archetypal model, which can be traced back to Guido Adler and the first generation of university-based musicologists, located in the earliest pieces of a composer the seed of future genius. In turn come works in which the budding composer wrestles with stylistic

influences, then the full flowering of artistic maturity, and, finally, the retrospection of a “late period.” Sherwood departed from this model in only two respects. First, following Peter Burkholder’s precedent, she bifurcated Ives’s mature period (post-1907), considering experimental research works separately from those she describes as being “written in the concert music tradition.” Second, she forewent the term “late period,” though the defining retrospective characteristic is present in her description of some of the last works. Sherwood writes, for example, that Ives’s setting of Psalm 90, his final sacred choral work, “combines original approaches with a stylistic catalogue of previous techniques to make a unified and integrated whole.”<sup>28</sup>

The effect of Sherwood’s revised chronology had its greatest impact on the portion of the evolutionary style narrative concerned with Ives’s efforts to sort through his various musical influences. Preeminent among those influences, were, of course, George Ives and Horatio Parker, but Sherwood also detected some additional ones. The new dates she had generated for the choral music Ives composed prior to 1902, when he abandoned music professionally, suggested that his output was conditioned by the church positions he occupied. Ives had become adept at working with the medium of the so-called quartet choir, preferred by two prominent American church musicians, Harry Rowe Shelley and Dudley Buck. Comprised of four professional soloists backed by an amateur choir, the quartet choir was a configuration ideal for the limited resources of churches. Generally speaking, Shelley, Buck, and their many imitators (Ives among them), played the quartet off of the larger choir, infusing the parts sung by the former with a chromaticism that was close kindred to the barbershop style associated with glee clubs. The quartet-choir had its detractors, reformers who wanted to rid church music of the sickly hymns and harmonies they associated with it, and Horatio Parker was one of the most vociferous. Thus, as a pupil of Parker’s at Yale, Ives was confronted with a direct challenge to the kind of music he performed and composed as a professional musician. Sherwood demonstrated that this confrontation played out in Ives’s musical output, most notably in his cantata *The Celestial Country*, which was long assumed to be a straightforward homage to Parker’s *Hora Novissima*. The cantata, she explained, was Ives’s attempt to integrate the quartet-choir and the reformed style of his Yale Professor, creating a “true hybrid” that anticipates the stylistic plurality that would become one of the most celebrated hallmarks of Ives’s musical maturity.<sup>29</sup>

The net effect of Sherwood’s dissertation was to stabilize scholarly discourse about Ives, mitigating the dating controversy and adding more clarity to his process of stylistic development. In other words, Sherwood sharpened without substantially altering the image of Ives that musicologists had been reconstructing since the late sixties. As with her predecessors, she relied upon the conventional

tools of her discipline—indeed, her dissertation is a masterly demonstration of classic musicological methods. Rhetorically speaking, this is part of the point. Ives, for all his unconventionality, could be investigated in the same manner as any other composer: his oeuvre bore the earmarks of consummate craftsmanship, displayed the sort of progressive growth natural to any major artist, and could sensibly be integrated into the larger history of classical music. In other words, Ives merited his place in the canon and ought to enjoy all the attendant privileges that canonicity bestowed.

By the time Sherwood filed her dissertation in 1995, however, conventional musicological tools and the questions they were designed to address had been the subject of a protracted and heated debate within the discipline. Paleography and style analysis seemed wholly inadequate to probe the relationships between music and its sociopolitical contexts, the kind of inquiry that a mostly younger cohort of musicologists felt the field had neglected to its detriment. Gender, sexuality, race, and class—these were the issues that animated so-called “New Musicology.”

### Ives and Recent Musical Scholarship

Before going any further, the term “New Musicology” requires some clarification. Sometimes it is used in a broad sense to describe the hegemony under which most musicologists now operate, where a premium is placed on studying music in its cultural context. But the sense in which I invoke it is more limited, referring to a contingent of scholars who commanded the spotlight in the late eighties and early nineties, agitating for disciplinary reform. Without being exhaustive, a list of prominent members includes Susan McClary, Rose Subotnik, Ruth Solie, and Lawrence Kramer, all of whom produced books and articles that ventured far afield from the concerns that had previously dominated music scholarship.<sup>30</sup>

Their work was certainly a catalyst for “New Musicology” in the first and broader sense. But sometimes, as the case of Ives scholarship illustrates, their impact was more indirect, exerting a quickening effect that stimulated discussion of issues that were already part of the discourse, rather than working a full-scale transformation.

The main targets of New Musicological opprobrium were the modes of criticism that were *de rigueur* in the field. Still dominant was Adlerian style criticism, which was concerned solely with the organization of the constitutive elements of music—melody, harmony, rhythm, timbre—and avoided speculation about meaning. This was intentional, for Adler and the other nineteenth-century musicological patriarchs sought to create a rigorous “scientific” discourse that, distinct from more popular forms of criticism, offered impressionistic interpretations. At the same time, Adler’s emphasis on matters of formal construction was reinforced by an aesthetic tradition that privileged “absolute music.” According to this tra-

dition, the instrumental works that stand at the pinnacle of the classical music canon do not possess meanings that can be indexed to the physical or emotional world. Instead they exist on their own separate plane. To freight a symphony with a dramatic narrative or to associate it with the flux of emotions is to laden it with unnecessary baggage, for its true value lies in its formal construction.

For New Musicologists, the privileging of form to the exclusion of all else impoverished musical experience. They argued that since music is the product of social context, its connections to that context—its meanings—should be a prerogative of the discipline. Lawrence Kramer, assuming a hortatory mode that is typical of New Musicology pronouncements, encouraged his colleagues to engage in “modes of hermeneutic and historical writing that . . . position musical experience within the densely compacted, concretely situated worlds of those who compose, perform, and listen.”<sup>31</sup> To do this, New Musicologists looked outside the field, adopting theoretical frameworks that thrived elsewhere in the humanities: neo-Marxian critical theory, various flavors of structuralism and post-structuralism, feminist and queer theory. So armed, they set about the business of hermeneutics, generating readings of musical works that prioritized issues of identity, with gender and sexuality topping the list of concerns.

A salient example is an essay about Ives that appears in Kramer’s 1995 book *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge*. Kramer meshes a premise about art and its immanent link to society advanced by critical theorist Theodor Adorno with a theory about the nature of “democratic social space” developed by literary critic Philip Fisher. Turned loose on Ives, this theoretical apparatus reveals a music that is fraught with the contradictions of early-twentieth-century American culture, juxtaposing progressive innovation with reactionary misogyny and racism. Here Kramer reveals a hallmark of New Musicological practice: the burden of proof lies on the interpretive virtuosity of the scholar rather than documentary evidence. Kramer does not seek to prove that anyone ever heard Ives’s music this way before, whether the composer himself or his auditors, but that it can (and, he insists, should) be heard this way.<sup>32</sup> Thus Kramer, like the other New Musicologists, garbs himself in the critic’s mantle, not the historian’s.<sup>33</sup> It is perhaps not surprising then, to find that New Musicologists were also critical of the paleographical work that had consumed so much of musicologists’ energy in the past, what Joseph Kerman, one champion of interpretive criticism, famously characterized as “positivist musicology.”<sup>34</sup>

Since New Musicologists set out to interrogate the basic assumptions of the discipline, the most obvious targets were the scholarly edifices that supported major canonical composers. Even at the height of his prominence in the midseventies, Ives had never rivaled a Bach or Beethoven for public or scholarly attention. Comparatively speaking, only a small band of the spectrum of musicological

enterprise was ever dedicated to Ives, and the energies it contained were mostly directed toward the project of fitting the composer into conventional narratives. Kramer's Ives essay was a rare New Musicological exploration of the composer, and it proved not to exert much influence on subsequent discussion. But New Musicology would have an indirect impact on Ives scholarship by fomenting change in the broader discipline. It stimulated an engagement with social context that was already present in the field—despite what New Musicology polemics sometimes suggested.

Combing musicological monographs and articles from the late seventies and early eighties, one encounters numerous examples of scholars looking beyond the “music itself,” before the advent of New Musicology. There were Renaissance specialists who examined the sociopolitical complexities of patronage systems and musical institutions at the courts of the Italian peninsula.<sup>35</sup> Opera scholars had begun to explore the ways in which issues of nationalism impinged on their various repertoires.<sup>36</sup> And, on the fringes of the discipline, a group of Americanists banded together as the Sonneck Society (now renamed the Society for American Music) in 1975, part of their purpose being to study music as a social phenomenon on this continent. Richard Crawford, a charter member, recalls that the society was founded “in a climate where curiosity about music centered on its role in history, not its artistic excellence.”<sup>37</sup> New Musicology would help legitimize and draw attention to these various enterprises, even if the scholars involved in them did not necessarily adopt the New Musicological method of preference: hermeneutics fueled by high-octane theory.

The work of Judith Tick, one of the members of the Sonneck Society, is a case in point. Tick was exploring issues of gender over a decade before the “New Musicology” cohort appeared on the scene, the impetus coming from her own political commitments. While a graduate student at Berkeley, from 1964–1967, she became involved with the women's liberation movement. Like many second-wave feminists, Tick was reacting to the ingrained sexism of academia, from the condescending treatment some faculty members meted out to female students, to the narrow range of professional opportunities for women within the university. At first, her social concerns did not impinge much upon the substance of her scholarly work. In 1970, when Tick decided to continue her graduate studies at the City University of New York, she submitted a paper rooted in style analysis that examined Ives's use of ragtime. She showed that many of the composer's most adventurous rhythmic explorations took ragtime as a point of departure, testament to his awareness of turn-of-the-century popular music and evidence against the then-prevalent image of the composer working in splendid musical isolation.<sup>38</sup> H. Wiley Hitchcock, with whom Tick hoped to study at CUNY, liked the paper so much he recommended that she submit it to the *Journal of the*

*American Musicological Society*. But Tick hesitated, intimidated by the patriarchal mien of contemporary academe, and, in the end, she did not follow through. As she eloquently explains, “When you are on the margins, you often don’t see your way to the center clearly.” The article would not be published until 1974, and then in the less prestigious (though vibrant) *Current Musicology*, a journal run by graduate students at Columbia University.<sup>39</sup>

Tick remained interested in Ives as a graduate student, but by the time she was in a position to select a dissertation topic, she had acquired a sense of urgency about one of the central projects of the nascent women studies movement: “re-writing women back into history.”<sup>40</sup> She produced a paper about professional women musicians in late-nineteenth-century America for a seminar taught by Gilbert Chase, who visited CUNY in 1973. At Chase’s urging, Tick published an expanded version of the paper in *Annaurio*, a journal unusual for its catholicity of subjects and thus one of the few forums hospitable to this rare example of musical scholarship engaged with social history.<sup>41</sup> After completing the article, Tick decided that she would make the history of American women composers in the nineteenth century her dissertation topic. At the time, she observes in retrospect, “I did not fully appreciate the implications of *not* studying a ‘great man.’”<sup>42</sup>

Although the subject of her *Annaurio* article and dissertation would seem to have little bearing on Ives, it was motivated by Tick’s response to recent scholarship dedicated to the composer. She had read Frank Rossiter’s dissertation and was aghast at the way he made women culpable for Ives’s alienation from American musical culture. This, she felt, granted women far more agency than they actually had, for the sphere they inhabited was just as much a prison as the psychological chains with which Rossiter bound Ives.<sup>43</sup> Tick set out to examine the sphere of women’s confinement, arguing that social values determined its practical and aesthetical dimensions: the sanctioned contexts in which women could create music, whether as performers or composers, and the styles with which they were associated. The emergence of women as composers in the late nineteenth century, she argued, prompted a “sexual aesthetics” that reinforced gender prejudices and was built on long-standing distinctions between “feminine” and “masculine” music. The former was sentimental, lyrical, and emotive, best realized in the “smaller forms” of parlor song and short piano pieces; the latter was virile, powerful, and intellectual, its qualities revealed in the “higher” forms of the symphony, string quartet, and the like. Tucked in at the end of the article, Tick pointed out that Ives’s gendered rhetoric was of a piece with this pervasive sexual aesthetics: “Ives’s opinions were aberrant only in the violent lengths to which they were carried. His vocabulary was very much a part of his time.”<sup>44</sup>

For over a decade after the publication of her *Annaurio* article, Tick pursued the study of women composers, with only a few companions.<sup>45</sup> She could take

some solace in the activism of her female composer colleagues, who had formed organizations like the League of Women Composers in order to create greater opportunities for women in the world of contemporary music.<sup>46</sup> Paradoxically, the burgeoning women's studies movement proved inhospitable to the sort of work Tick was doing. One of the foundational figures in the field, Gerda Lerner, wrote scathingly of histories that focused on "notable women," a rubric that inevitably applied to the composers that Tick studied. Such history, Lerner proclaimed, "does not tell us much about those activities in which most women engaged, nor does it tell us about the significance to society as a whole of women's activities. The history of notable women is the history of exceptional even deviant women, and does not describe the experience and the history of the mass of women."<sup>47</sup> Thus Tick's lonely position within the field of musicology was compounded by the studied indifference of the historians who might have been her closest scholarly kin. Possibly, she might have found interested interlocutors among the practitioners of feminist criticism in the arena of literary studies. Tick's inclinations however, ran more toward social history than criticism. Her work was concerned with what documentary evidence had to reveal about the situation of women musicians in the nineteenth century, not with interpretations of the way feminine identity was constructed in specific pieces of music.

By the end of the eighties, the study of women no longer persisted on the fringes of the discipline, New Musicology having galvanized interest in the intersection between music and gender. Tick now had more allies, among them Ruth Solie, editor of the landmark multiauthored volume of essays *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship* (1993). As Solie acknowledges, it was Tick who originally conceived of assembling the collection, but other commitments (a biography of composer Ruth Crawford Seeger) prevented her from taking on the task of editing. However, Tick did supply a contribution, an essay entitled "Charles Ives and Gender Ideology," that marks her return to the world of Ives scholarship after a nearly twenty-year hiatus. This return was not an abrupt departure from her recent work, for she had initially intended her essay to use Ives's aesthetics as a foil to those of Crawford Seeger. In comparison to the other offerings in the volume, Tick's is characteristically free of references to literary and critical theory. She moves quickly to documentary evidence that supplies a much-needed context for understanding the gendered nature of Ives's language. Again, it is social history that is her focus, and she devotes herself to unpacking the composer's prose writings rather than offering a theory-driven reading of a specific piece.

The scholars who had been most active in addressing Ives's gendered language—Frank Rossiter, Stuart Feder, and Maynard Solomon—had all opted for a psychological approach, interpreting Ives's vituperations about the emasculation



of art as symptoms of a deeper pathology. For Tick, such explanations were insufficient because they failed to take the larger social context into account. Gendered language, as she had been arguing for years, was pervasive in nineteenth-century American culture, and Ives was exceptional only in the vehemence of some of his pronouncements. Addressing Solomon and Feder specifically, she writes, “[A] psychoanalytic perspective masks the power of society to transmit gendered views of culture, rife with prejudice and viable precisely because issues other than sexuality are engaged through tropes of masculinity and femininity.” Ives was deploying a “grammar of prejudice” to attack those who occupied positions of power in the musical world, not to defend his or his father’s masculinity. When he raged about “sissies,” “lily pads,” and “ladies,” Ives was articulating the frustration of an American composer who felt the oppressive weight of the European classical-music tradition. These were the tropes that came ready to hand, and they were not necessarily the symptom of a virulent reactionary misogyny.<sup>48</sup>

This is a very different conclusion from the one Kramer reached, even though the politics of gender also figure prominently in his arguments. That difference is a function of methodology, for while Kramer is quick to soar to hermeneutical heights lofted by critical theory, Tick hovers closer to documentary evidence.

Generally speaking, in the last decade and a half, Ives scholars have taken Tick’s lead rather than Kramer’s. They have not neglected the business of interpreting Ives’s works, but the preference has been to hem in modest hermeneutical readings with primary source material that bolsters plausibility. For Denise Von Glahn, an exploration of the turn-of-the-century preservation movement, specifically its modes of memorializing war heroes, serves as a backdrop to parsing the first movement of *Three Places in New England*.<sup>49</sup> David Metzger examines how Victorian constructions of childhood tinge the nostalgic patina and subject matter of Ives’s music.<sup>50</sup> And both Michael Broyles and Judith Tick have examined the intricacies of contemporary political discourse and its ramifications for Ives’s music and prose.<sup>51</sup> These examples skim the surface of an extensive literature, but they are characteristic in furnishing few encounters with the French or German intellectuals whose literary, critical, and social theories swept into the field with the advent of New Musicology. This is not to say that Ives scholarship proceeds without theory, for whether or not scholars choose to make their presuppositions explicit, they are necessarily present. Rather, the premises with which Ives scholars tend to operate bear more resemblance to those employed by historians than literary critics—premises about cause and effect, the role of documentary evidence, and the relationship between the scholar and his or her materials.

There are notable exceptions. Charles Hiroshi Garrett, in his book *Struggling to Define a Nation* (2008), follows Kramer in invoking Adorno and pursuing a mode of “immanent critique” to explore the social implications of Ives’s use of

ragtime.<sup>52</sup> Significantly, Garrett's book is a revision of the dissertation he completed at the University of California, Los Angeles, a bastion of New Musicology. Michel Foucault's notion of "discourse" figures prominently in Thomas Clarke Owen's 1999 dissertation, "Charles Ives and His American Context: Images of 'Americanness' in the Arts."<sup>53</sup> Owens is the third and final musicologist to have completed a PhD thesis about Ives under Robert Morgan's supervision—Peter Burkholder and Gayle Sherwood preceded him—and his work reveals that in the final years of the twentieth century, New Musicology had even established a foothold at conservative Yale University. On the whole though, the impact of New Musicology on Ives scholarship has been less direct. It has not spelled the end of older disciplinary concerns like establishing stylistic continuities between the music of Ives and the European classical tradition.<sup>54</sup> But it has served to open up space around and draw attention to issues of cultural context, formerly the demesne of the handful of historians and American Studies scholars who had ventured into the Ives arena in the late sixties and seventies.

The possibilities of the enlarged space in which musicologists could now operate are illustrated by the postdissertation work of Gayle Sherwood. Her output, culminating with the only musicologist-authored biography of the composer, *Charles Ives Reconsidered* (2008), traces a trajectory away from paleographical and style-critical concerns that commanded her attention as a graduate student and toward a broader engagement with American culture.

The first point along the trajectory is a 1999 article that reiterates one of the major arguments of her dissertation, namely that Ives's *Celestial Country* is a stylistic mélange that mingled the influence of Horatio Parker with elements of the popular quartet-choir repertoire that the Yale professor detested. The article departs from the dissertation by overlaying a new interpretive framework borrowed from the work of cultural historian Lawrence Levine. Sherwood suggests that *Celestial Country* inhabited the increasingly untenable middleground between classical and popular music, a division Levine traced to the late nineteenth century in his seminal book *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (1988). "Quite literally," Sherwood writes, "Ives was caught between the populist style [the quartet-choir tradition] . . . with which he had grown up and elitist views of Parker that were gaining support throughout educated American society."<sup>55</sup> The style-critical tools of the musicological trade are much in evidence in Sherwood's article, but the perspective is reoriented, directed outward, from scores to changing cultural mores.

Just two years later, Sherwood was exploring terrain well outside the traditional domain of musicology. Her second postdissertation Ives article was published in the *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, where still, in 2001, Ives's name was an infrequent presence.<sup>56</sup> Titled "Charles Ives and 'Our National Malady,'"

Sherwood's article sifts through the documentary evidence pertaining to Ives's health breakdowns in 1906 and 1908. Though past biographers had suggested these were a consequence of heart problems, family correspondence and medical records spoke of "nervous collapse," which pointed to one of the most common diagnoses of the period: neurasthenia. According to George M. Beard, the physician who coined and popularized the term in the 1880s, the disease was a by-product of modernity and its main sufferers were upper-middle-class businessmen who were required to process unprecedented amounts of information. Heredity too was a factor, those most susceptible being from the educated and refined classes. And Americans seem to have been afflicted earlier and in far greater numbers than any other people in the Western World. Perverse though it may seem, this was a point of pride for Beard and his followers because they took it as an indication that the United States was on the vanguard of modern development. In fact, as Sherwood discovered, the diagnosis "neurasthenia" was a mark of status, medical acknowledgment that a man occupied an illustrious stratum of American society. That same stratum was responsible for the sacralization of art, the distinction between highbrow and lowbrow tastes that was, as Levine argued, cultivated by members of an embattled Anglo-American elite faced with the immigrant horde. Sherwood explained the connection: "[T]he alliance between American high culture and European musical traditions on the one hand, and the American upper class and neurasthenia on the other, reveals a kind of cultural crossroads." And it was there that she situated Ives. Seen from this perspective, the music the composer began to write in 1907, after taking the "rest cure" and beginning his courtship of Harmony Twichell (both prescribed treatments for neurasthenia), is cast in a reactionary light:

By conjoining the vernacular music that he learned as a child and mostly associated with his father with the Euro-American forms that he learned at Yale—a bastion of white male privilege—Ives preserved and "elevated" this music. The fusion of these genres in Ives's mature works embodied a musical reaction against the threatened eradication of his world—that of the educated Anglo-Saxon white male—that acts as a compositional analogue to his physiological reaction in the form of neurasthenia.

This is a far cry from the kind of argument Sherwood had advanced in her dissertation.<sup>57</sup>

In 2008, now working under her married name Magee, she uses the greater space afforded by a book to flesh out the arguments of her postdissertation articles. But in *Charles Ives Reconsidered*, Magee also ventures into territory that she had not previously covered—again, the driving impulse being to situate Ives more completely in his culture. For example, in her account of Ives's mature period,

which she identifies with the twelve years bookended by his 1906 and 1918 breakdowns, Magee emphasizes the various attempts the composer made to introduce his music to others. Though yielding little result, whether Walter Damrosch's reading of the First Symphony or the infamous contretemps with violinist Franz Milcke, those incidents point not to a composer determinedly aloof from the musical culture of his time but one seeking to break back into it. Ives "continuously presented his works to musicians that he hoped would be sympathetic," but it was not until the twenties that he would find the "right product, the right sales pitch, and receptive customers in the form of a modernist community of composers and performers." Once Ives joined that community, he was a willing collaborator in the process of revising his life to make it conform more closely to the modernist and nationalist precepts of Henry Cowell's circle. This last assertion was not new, of course, other scholars—Peter Burkholder and Maynard Solomon—made it in the past. All told, though, Magee's account of Ives's career presented a composer far more bound up with the idiosyncrasies of American culture than anyone had previously offered.<sup>58</sup>

The musical commentary Magee supplies also departs from the traditional mode of style analysis, and markedly so in the case of her readings of the works Ives produced in and around the First World War. At the time, she observes, Americans were preoccupied with the issue of immigration and the loyalty of hyphenated Americans. These same kinds of concerns were manifest in Ives's music, because concurrently "Ives was fleshing out several major compositions that expressed his own, unhyphenated identity in conjunction with a new emphasis on musical militarism." Magee is even more specific when she tackles individual works, the richness of her comments about the "Concord" Sonata bringing her close to the hermeneutic realm of New Musicology. She suggests that by "[a]nchoring the work in a place known simultaneously for brass-knuckles warfare against a foreign entity [it was where the Revolutionary War had begun], and the advocacy of nonviolent resistance (voiced in Thoreau's *Civil Disobedience* of 1849), . . . [Ives] may have been offering a complicated reflection of his own time." In addition, he was perhaps making an assertion about the vitality of American amateur music making. Honing in on the most obvious borrowings featured in the piece, the opening motive from Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, Magee explains:

Throughout the sonata, Ives enshrines the work in a pianistic reduction similar to the arrangements of Beethoven's symphonies that he played as a teen. In so doing, Ives reclaims the nineteenth-century American amateur performance context of this work from the forces of the early twentieth-century concert establishment that insisted on "authentic" readings of the work by trained, professional symphony orchestras.

Magee is always careful to lace her readings with conditional auxiliary verbs. But even with this cautionary measure in place, she has traveled far from the safe precincts of traditional musicology.<sup>59</sup>

The end result fulfills the promise of the book title: Magee does indeed present an Ives reconsidered. There are resemblances to the psychologically damaged Ives of Stuart Feder's imagination, bereft after the early death of his father. But for Magee, Ives's ailment has broader cultural connotations, extending well beyond the immediate family relationships that preoccupy psychoanalysts. There are resemblances to the well-trained classical musician of Peter Burkholder's imagination, but Magee's Ives has more nuanced musical commitments that are inextricably bound up with social milieu. There are also resemblances to the victim of American cultural mores of Frank Rossiter's imagination, but Magee's Ives has more agency and responds to his changing circumstances with the shrewdness of a businessman (though not without misfires). There are much fewer resemblances to the isolated, autonomous Ives that the Cowells so successfully projected in the fifties, though Magee does rehabilitate the composer's reputation as an innovator.

As a codicil to this section, it is worth bringing in one further text for comparison, Jan Swafford's 1996 Ives biography. Swafford's work also provides a convenient way to begin mitigating the effects of the diachronic organization of this book, a task that will preoccupy me for most of the remaining pages. Thus far, I have presented the reception of Ives as if it has been dominated by a successive series of images (more or less mapped out in reverse order in the preceding paragraph). But, as these various Iveses have appeared, they have tended not to supplant the ones that preceded them. Instead they have coexisted, often sustained by the different, sometimes overlapping spheres that comprise American musical culture. Swafford's book exists in one of the overlaps, for it is the product of a composer-critic nominally involved in musical academe and intent on engaging a general audience.

In the preface to *Charles Ives: A Life with Music*, Swafford declares, "This biography follows no schools or theories. . . . Rather than theories I have facts and materials, and I tried to draw no conclusions until the facts and materials demanded them." But elsewhere in the preface, one learns that Swafford's book is animated by several convictions—which is another way of saying that it is underpinned by "theory" (pace Swafford). First and foremost is the belief that the lives of artists tend to unfold in a more predictable fashion than most, a function of the compulsion to realize an inner creative impulse. "Even more than an artist's life," Swafford goes on to add, "the lifework has a roughly predicable shape, coalescing toward an approach, a voice, a maturity—call it a style. Often that style moves toward some sort of zenith and consummation, sometimes followed by decline." Here is the residue of older musicological narratives that conflate style

development with the growth of biological organisms, metaphor collapsing into identity.<sup>60</sup> A second conviction Swafford expresses in his preface concerns the relationship between the composer and cultural context, which would seem, at first sight, to nudge him closer to the issues Magee addresses in her biography. Swafford asserts, “We cannot adequately understand [Ives] without reference to the spirit of his age: Progressive, Pragmatist, and Realist.” The appeal to zeitgeist, however, is more evocative of the precepts of American Studies scholars operating around 1970—Sandra Rosalie Perry and Robert M. Crunden, for example—than those preferred by musicologists in the nineties. Indeed, the sources that Swafford relies upon to characterize American culture generally, and progressivism, pragmatism, and realism specifically, almost all date from before the advent of “New History,” which left the American past a tangled skein of narratives.<sup>61</sup>

But while Swafford relies upon dated musicological and historical frameworks to support his biography, he demonstrates a comprehensive knowledge of both the Ives manuscripts and Ives scholarship, from Cowell to Magee. His tendency is to mitigate the extreme qualities in the images of Ives created by his predecessors. Thus, for example, he is willing to accept Rossiter’s contention that the feminization of American musical culture left an indelible mark on Ives, but not to imbue the composer with the pathos of victimhood. Similarly, he acknowledges that Ives suffered from depression, but refrains, unlike Solomon and Feder, from plumbing the depths using psychoanalytical theory. If there is one thing Swafford is intent upon, it is safeguarding Ives’s image as innovator, something he returns to time and again. In sum, the book is a conservative one. It is unmatched by any of the Ives biographies in its level of detail, but the portrait it offers is a mingling of the more moderate elements drawn from the work of others. This Ives stands in the middle ground between academia, where disciplinary vicissitudes had made over the image of the composer several times, and the broader, more public arena of classical-music devotees, where much older conceptions of the composer continued to thrive—though with an important modification.

## The Maverick Tradition

As the culmination of the millennial concert season, the San Francisco Symphony, led by its music director, Michael Tilson Thomas, presented a ten-concert festival that featured the work of twenty-two composers, collectively identified as “American Mavericks.” To commemorate the festival, the orchestra issued a lavish volume sized for the coffee table and printed on durable glossy stock. Interleaved with and sometimes printed on pages swathed in bold colors are vignettes, biographical blurbs, and brief essays about the maverick composers. Pride of place in the volume belongs to Charles Ives. Chronology was certainly a factor, Ives

being the earliest composer included on the festival programs. But the authors, a bevy of critics and commentators who supply annotations for the San Francisco Symphony, offer other justifications:

[Ives] found his way to polytonality, atonality, polyrhythms, and other devices that, like Leonardo's bicycle and contact lenses and ball bearings, all had to be reinvented by others. He even anticipated ideas dear to some composers in the 1960s: that any sound is potential music, that a stylistically neat and consistent articulation of musical materials is not a necessary part of the musical experience, and that a work need not be "fixed," but might be work-in-progress as long as its creator lived.<sup>62</sup>

Quite simply, Ives had foreseen the whole of twentieth-century musical develop-

ment. Prima facie, this is nothing more than the recitation of dogma, the belief in Ives's primacy first espoused by modernists in the twenties and then sedimented into doctrine through endless repetition in the fifties and sixties. Its presence in a book targeted at a general audience would seem to be an indication of the static nature of public discourse about Ives, as against its dynamic scholarly counterpart. On closer inspection, however, the narrative in which the book places Ives departs from the one espoused in the heyday of Bernsteinian and Stokowskian advocacy. For the Ives that appears here is not only the great anticipator but also the paterfamilias of a specifically American tradition of musical experimentalists. This is a narrative that traces a lineage from Ives, through Henry Cowell, John Cage, the minimalists, and ultimately to John Adams. It is a narrative that bifurcates the history of American classical music, valorizing those composers who have foregone the patronage of the university (particularly in the form of tenure appointments) and the styles of modernism that have flourished there. It is, in short, an antiestablishment narrative, though as the San Francisco Symphony's "Maverick Festival" demonstrates, it has, ironically, found support from some of the most established musical institutions in the classical-music world. How that happened is the last story I have to tell. And, as with many things Ives, it requires me to return again to Henry Cowell.

In the late twenties, Cowell initially promoted Ives as a part of a group of American composers. Known occasionally then, and more frequently now, as the "ultra-moderns" (hyphen optional), the group was eclectic stylistically and aesthetically, encompassing the occult-inclined Dane Rudhyar and the mercurial Carl Ruggles. Of course, Cowell regarded Ives as a composer-ethnographer, an American Bartók whose music was rooted in the exuberant practices of amateur, small-town musicians. As different as the ultramoderns were, Cowell found a way

of linking them in a 1933 essay entitled "Trends in American Music." He cast Rudhyar, Ruggles, Ives, and the rest as experimentalists, who either by dint of training or choice, stood at some remove from European musical traditions. They were, Cowell implied, genuinely American composers, unlike the contingent of New York-based cosmopolitans following "either modern French or 'neoclassical tendencies'"—men like Aaron Copland and Virgil Thomson, who just so happened to dominate the influential League of Composers.<sup>63</sup> Ultramodernism, as musicologist Carol Oja observes, "stood for an assertion of regional validity, a reaction against the perceived hegemony of East Coast institutions."<sup>64</sup>

Ives, as it turned out, found his way to the broader public singly as an "autonomous man" and not in the company of the ultramoderns. But Cowell's convictions about divisions in the contemporary music scene persisted in the writings of two of his pupils, Lou Harrison and John Cage.<sup>65</sup> For example, in a 1945 review of a concert featuring the music of Cage, Harrison sketched a lineage shaded by familiar nationalist undertones: "The three works on this program, it seems to me, definitely establish Cage as the newest member of the great American independents, along with Ives, Ruggles, Cowell, and Varèse."<sup>66</sup> Cage reciprocated the compliment in an influential 1959 article entitled "History of Experimental Music in the United States." Harrison figures as a member of the youngest generation of experimentalists alongside Christian Wolff, Earle Brown, and Morton Feldman, three composers who were then closely associated with Cage. Their ancestry is traced back to Ives and Varèse, while Stravinsky and Schoenberg, modernism's usual patriarchs, are deemed irrelevant to the history of experimental music. Here nationalist convictions occupy the foreground. "America," Cage pronounced, "has an intellectual climate suitable for radical experimentation. We are, as Gertrude Stein said, the oldest country of the twentieth century." It is the most American of tendencies "to easily break with tradition, to move easily into the air . . . [to exhibit a] capacity for the unforeseen, . . . for experimentation."<sup>67</sup> That said, however—and here Cage closely echoed Cowell—experimentalists have been the outsiders, neglected by the most influential new music organizations in the United States, including the League of Composers. Thus, familiar protagonists, complemented by recruits from a younger generation, are made to face off against equally familiar antagonists.<sup>67</sup>

Peculiar though it might seem, Cage's article was first published in German translation. It appeared in the 1959 issue of the *Darmstädter Beiträge* and was not available in English until 1961, when Wesleyan University Press included it in a collection of Cage's essays. This delay is symptomatic of the lack of institutional support that Cowell and Cage complained about, and, at the same time, points to a complicated process of transnational exchange. Though the formative ideas



about American experimentalists originated with Cowell and his confederates, they fused into a coherent and persistent narrative in the context of post-World War II central Europe.

In the years immediately following the war, competition among the four occupying powers in Germany had given rise to a vibrant cultural infrastructure comprised of public radio stations, New Music festivals, performance ensembles, and well-stocked libraries.<sup>68</sup> This infrastructure remained intact with the advent of political independence and the creation of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1949. The bountiful commissions, performance opportunities, and speaking engagements available in West Germany made it possible for American composers to earn a respectable living from their *métier*, something few of them had experienced in the United States. Musicologist Amy Beal, who has chronicled the history of postwar American-German musical relations, memorably explains that for American composers, West Germany was “a place to ply their wares with dignity.”<sup>69</sup> Moreover, as Beal also shows, it proved to be a place particularly receptive to views of American musical culture of Cowellian pedigree, the result of a fortuitous resonance with long-held stereotypes about the United States.

Cage’s music was first played on West German radio in 1952, debuting on an influential late-night New Music program broadcast out of Cologne. Composer Herbert Eimert, who produced and hosted the program, offered some commentary to establish context for his listeners. Audiences in the United States, he explained, were poorly informed about music; however, this ignorance freed them from the “holy eternal criteria of value” that held tyrannical sway over the German musical establishment.<sup>70</sup> As a result, Americans were more open to experimentation, and a figure like Cage could emerge unfettered by the weight of tradition. This caricature of American culture was standard fare, the sort of thing German commentators had glibly dispensed for decades. But it happened to harmonize with Cowellian ideas about the autochthonous nature of experimentation in the United States—ideas that Cage recycled in his *Darmstädter Beiträge* article six years later.

The emergent West German narrative about Cage crystallized in a lecture Wolfgang Edward Rebner delivered in 1960 at the famed *International Fereinkürse für Neue Musik* in Darmstadt. Rebner, a German composer who had spent considerable time in the United States, titled his lecture “American Experimental Music” and supplied his audience with a more coherent version of the lineage Cage had sketched. Beal describes Rebner’s lecture as “crucial to the development of a German narrative about American modern music, a narrative stretching from Ives to Cowell to Varèse to Cage” and “the first clear articulation of a historical position that linked these four composers through an established musical tradition.”<sup>71</sup> Over the subsequent decades, the fertile climate of West Germany

nourished the historiography Cage and Rebner propounded. It was cultivated by Germans and visiting Americans; strengthened by repetition in concert-hall commentary, lectures, program notes, and radio programs; and grew to absorb subsequent generations of experimentalists.

Perhaps the most important sustaining factor was the vigor of German musical discourse, the long tradition of polemics about aesthetic theory and the future of music that extended back to the beginning of the nineteenth century. In the fifties and sixties, a node of this discourse was the debate about the systematization of music as represented by the “total serial” works of composers like Pierre Boulez and Karlheinz Stockhausen. From Rebner’s lecture onward, the experimentalists served as the antithesis to this tendency, “the sensual foil,” as Beal puts it, because they emphasized the nature of sound rather than its rigorous organization. When, in the late sixties, musical debates were conflated with a larger, more heated conflict about the nature of society, the experimental lineage, which now extended from Ives to the minimalists, was freighted with New Left symbolism. The protests and strikes that beset Europe with particular ferocity during the *annus horribilis* 1968 were fueled by the conviction that traditional institutions and conventional authority had failed. Though the anger of young revolutionaries was also directed at the United States and its Cold War policies, in the musical world, the antiestablishment narrative burnished the reputation of American experimentalists. It helped that Cage and some of his confreres had embraced the American New Left.<sup>72</sup>

By and large, the revolutionary tincture that seeped into European discourse about the experimentalists had little impact on the American reception of the experimentalist patriarch Charles Ives. But there was one notable instance in which it did impinge, and with predictably divisive results. Among the offerings of the 1974 Ives Centennial Festival-Conference held in New York was a roundtable session called “International Views.” Several participants chose to invoke the vexed politics of the moment, including Dutch composer Louis Andriessen. “The growing importance of Ives’s music in Holland,” he maintained, “had directly to do with the democratic movement there, with its development after the revolution in Paris in 1968 and the democratic movement at the universities and conservatories. Not until this very lively period in Europe—I would say a revolutionary period—did we recognize the revolutionary aspects of Charles Ives’s music.”<sup>73</sup> Even more emphatic was the contribution of Hans G. Helms, a West German filmmaker and writer. Helms recast Ives as a social revolutionary who understood “the necessity for enhancing musical and ideological communication with his audience” and, as a result, created music freed of the hegemonic aesthetic sensibilities of the petty bourgeois.<sup>74</sup> Ideologically speaking, Helms suggested, Ives most closely resembled communist composer Hans Eisler. This was a com-

parison he repeated in a scathing review of the Ives Festival-Conference published a year later. Helms accused the organizers of having behaved in a manner typical of “musical officialdom,” ignoring the underlying “socio-economic and political or ideological motivations” that informed Ives’s activities. The composer’s work was not best understood as a celebration of American culture, as the conference organizers would have it, but a revolt against it. Ives’s political writings were, Helms tendentiously asserted, “a premonition of a development which reached its climax with the Watergate affair.”<sup>75</sup>

Helms’s invective prompted a response from Richard Taruskin, a musicology graduate student at Columbia University who had also attended the Festival-Conference. In a letter to the editor of the journal that had published Helms’s critique, Taruskin explained that he did not object to Helms’s obvious Marxist perspective but to the display of ignorance about American intellectual history. Ives was not a “crypto-Eisler,” a musical advocate of socialism, but rather a “dreamy Utopian,” as the nineteenth-century transcendentalists had been. Moreover, Taruskin contended, Helms had engaged in a highly selective reading of Ives’s political writings, cherry-picking those quotations that supported his own ideological agenda. The certitude with which Helms made his pronouncements on American culture bespoke Old World snobbery—something Taruskin detected among several panelists in the “International Views” session. Nor was he alone, for he recollected that one of the spectators “exhorted the smug Europeans around the table to ‘know our history as well as we are made to learn yours,’ and drew a round of spontaneous and tension-relieving applause.”<sup>76</sup> Indeed, as Taruskin supposed, Old World stereotypes about American culture had informed Helms’s views of Ives. What Helms supplied was the New Left variant of the narrative about the experimentalists that had coalesced in West Germany some twenty years earlier, German clichés about American culture having been a decisive factor.

847406132ecc77eb74774d417b5bd641  
ebrary If, however, the specific European political connotations of the experimentalist narrative failed to resonate in the United States, the process of repatriation had begun. Partly this was a consequence of English-language books about the experimentalists written by European authors—notably Michael Nyman’s *Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond* (1974) and Walter Zimmermann’s *Desert Plants* (1976).<sup>77</sup> Another crucial factor was the activity of American experimentalists themselves, who, despite limited opportunities, made efforts to perform and disseminate their music on this side of the Atlantic, conditioned by the reception they received in Europe.

During the sixties, three members of Cage’s New York milieu—James Tenney, Malcolm Goldstein, and Philip Corner—founded a contemporary music ensemble and bestowed upon it the name “Tone Roads,” borrowing Ives’s title for a collection of three of his more venturesome scores. The tribute implied by

the name was reflected in the programming, which featured performances of many Ives works. For example, a 1965 program included Ives's Second String Quartet, *The Anti-Abolitionist Riots*, and *Some South-Paw Pitching*. Rounding out the program were works by a familiar complement of composers: Cage's *Aria for Voice with Concert for Strings* and *Fontana Mix*, Cowell's *Quartet Pedantic*, and Carl Ruggles's *Evocations*.<sup>78</sup> As Peter Garland, a former pupil of Tenney, has observed, the repertoire of this ensemble "connected the 'maverick' influence of John Cage to the more 'classic' American tradition of Varèse and Ives." Garland is wrong in asserting that *Tone Roads* created "the idea of a continuous, radical American tradition," for in actual fact the idea had already taken root overseas.<sup>79</sup> But the activities of Tenney and his collaborators helped lay the groundwork that would allow it to flourish at home.

So did the books of a trio of American authors, who, during the fifties and sixties, ventured rare assessments of contemporary music. Gilbert Chase, in his landmark *America's Music: From the Pilgrims to the Present* (1955), devoted a chapter entitled "The Experimentalists" to composers from Cowell to Cage. Notably absent was Ives, whom Chase placed in splendid isolation at the end of the book, reflecting the contemporaneous view of the composer as an autonomous man. In contrast, both Peter Yates and Eric Salzman, who published separate surveys of twentieth-century music in 1967, identified Ives as a foundational figure for the experimentalists.<sup>80</sup> Of these three authors, only Yates deployed the rubric "American Experimental tradition," affixing it at the head of a two-part chapter.<sup>81</sup>

Broader circulation of the concept of an experimental tradition did not occur until the late seventies and eighties, when a process of organization and institutionalization lodged it more firmly in public modes of musical discourse. The watershed was a 1979 festival called *New Music, New York*, which took place at *The Kitchen*, a SoHo performance space that had long been hospitable to avant-garde art. In the course of a tightly programmed nine days, the festival featured a veritable "who's who" of New York experimentalists, including Philip Glass, Steve Reich, Meredith Monk, Pauline Oliveros, and dozens of others. Tom Johnson, reporting for the *Village Voice*, described it as a coming-out celebration for music that had existed "on the fringes of official culture."<sup>82</sup> *New York Times* critic John Rockwell struggled to describe the eclectic assemblage: "They come mostly from the realm of 'classical' avant-gardism, what might very loosely be called the post-Cageian school of American music. But there are also people from the loft jazz scene, the underground, 'no wave' New York rock scene, sound-related performance art and more." Taking a slightly different tact, Rockwell observed that as inclusive as the festival seemed to be, it excluded "what might be called 'uptown' or 'midtown' contemporary classical music," by which he meant the music of composers associated with Columbia University, the Julliard School

of Music, and those who had been lucky enough to receive performances in the hallowed precincts of Lincoln Center or Carnegie Hall. Here Rockwell fell back on a dichotomy—uptown versus downtown—that commentators of the New York art scene had invoked going back at least to the sixties, and which he himself had used frequently in his popular music criticism.<sup>83</sup> The uptowners enjoyed the benefits of mainstream credibility and institutional support, while the downtowners were forced back on their own resources, making a go of it by themselves or forging local alliances. Rockwell made no secret about where his sympathies lay: “A case can be made that much of the finest American music has been composed by rugged individualists, cut off by geographical or psychological isolation from the mainstream of American culture.”<sup>84</sup> The name “Charles Ives” does not appear here, but it lingers in the offing.

The success of New Music, New York—the concerts regularly filled to capacity—served as the impetus for an annual event with the generalized name New Music America. What had been a local (New York) celebration of downtown experimentalists became a peripatetic, annual festival held in different cities across the country throughout the eighties.<sup>85</sup> The downtown/uptown binary also stuck, in large part due to Rockwell’s repeated recourse to it in his own writing, both for and apart from the *New York Times*. It figured prominently in his *All American Music: Composition in the Late Twentieth Century* (1983), the first book to attempt an accessible overview of the eclectic contemporary music scene in the United States. He did not employ the binary in his article on “Experimental Music” for the *New Grove Dictionary of American Music* (1986), but it was there by implication in his discussion of the vibrant New York nexus of performance art, rock, jazz, and experimental music that coalesced in the sixties and seventies. The article is significant for consolidating the experimental-tradition narrative in the premiere reference source for American music, thereby granting it an unprecedented degree of historiographical legitimacy. “Experimental music in the USA,” Rockwell explained, “reaches back at least as far as Charles E. Ives. . . . Ives, like many American inventors and tinkerers, musical and otherwise, who preceded him, struck out on his own. His works were largely ignored while he was active as a composer . . . but after they gained an audience in the 1920s the experimental tradition found a wider resonance.”<sup>86</sup> Thus began a familiar trajectory, its terminus now extended beyond the minimalists so as to include all the artists involved in the downtown scene and other experimentalist outposts across the country.

Further scholarly sanction for the experimentalist narrative came from the work of English musicologist David Nicholls, whose 1990 book *American Experimental Music, 1890–1940* offered a thorough-going analysis of the output of three generations of experimentalists.<sup>87</sup> The following year, in what would become a widely

used textbook on twentieth-century music, Robert Morgan declared that Ives had the “voice of an authentic American maverick” and that he was “the initiator of an ‘alternative’ stream in twentieth-century American music, dedicated to the pursuit of highly personal compositional approaches largely unencumbered by European precedents.” The title of the section dedicated to this alternative stream? “The Experimental Tradition in American Music.”<sup>88</sup>

In 1994, the New York Philharmonic, under the baton of its music director, Kurt Masur, offered a concert dubbed “The American Eccentrics,” which juxtaposed Ives with Ruggles, Henry Brant, and Wallingford Riegger.<sup>89</sup> The rubric “eccentric” was perhaps not the most flattering of choices from the array of synonyms that identified this tradition over the years—experimentalist, innovator, pioneer, maverick. However, the concert did signal the moment at which Cowell’s ultra-moderns and their progeny entered mainstream concert culture as a coherent group, rather than appearing singly as they had done in the past. The dalliance of the New York Philharmonic with the eccentrics was soon eclipsed by a more dedicated and protracted engagement on the part of Michael Tilson Thomas and the San Francisco Symphony. It persists to this day—and in the Bay Area, the term of preference is “maverick.”

From early on in his career, Thomas cultivated an interest in the music of the mavericks. A lifelong engagement with Ives began in the late fifties, when Thomas heard the composer’s music for the first time as a young teenager. By 21, already launched on his meteoric climb to conducting celebrity, he had led a performance of *Three Places in New England* by the Los Angeles–based Debut Orchestra at a time when Ives was rarely heard in Southern California.<sup>90</sup> The same year, 1966, Thomas gave a piano recital entitled “Pioneers of Music . . . Past and Present,” which featured the works of Cowell and Cage alongside more traditional fare: Bach, Mozart, Liszt, and Ravel.<sup>91</sup> He was still in his twenties when, as associate conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, he made his first Ives recording, pairing *Three Places in New England* with Carl Ruggles’s *Sun-treader*.<sup>92</sup> Again, at the helm of the Boston Symphony, he created a stir at Carnegie Hall in 1973 by presenting a program that featured Steve Reich’s *Four Organs*.<sup>93</sup> Thus, by the time he was thirty, Thomas had a performance repertoire that included representation of all generations of experimentalists, from Ives to the minimalists. There is no evidence, however, that he conceived of them as part of a unified tradition. Indeed, with respect to Ives, his views were actually drifting in the other direction.

During the eighties, Thomas partnered with the Charles Ives Society to make the first recordings of the major orchestral works using the society-sanctioned critical editions. In the liner notes for the earliest of these recordings, which featured the Second Symphony, Thomas explained that he had first been attracted to Ives’s “dissonant later works” and that “it took me a while to realize the Ro-

mantic spirit that pervaded them, and I proceeded back to the source of this spirit in his earlier tonal works.”<sup>94</sup> Whether or not this perspective was a direct consequence of his interaction with Ives scholars, it certainly resonates with the project of rooting Ives in the nineteenth century that dominated contemporary American musicological endeavor. It also has the effect of directing attention away from Ives’s would-be legatees, the future-oriented ultramoderns and the subsequent generations of experimentalists.

The album art quite literally overlaid a retrospective patina on Ives, reinforcing his connection to the past (Figure 6.2). It featured a montage of black and white photographs, superimposed on a sepia background and slightly colorized to create an autochrome effect. The foreground is dominated by a grainy 1913 image of Ives standing in New York’s Battery Park, cropped around his silhouette and pasted on top of a photograph of the Danbury Fair Grounds, effectively relocating him from an urban to rural setting. In italics, above the composer’s name, appears an imprimatur that vouches for the authenticity of the LP: “First Recording of the Critical Edition.” This design, which was retained for the other recordings in the series, broadcasts the documentary aspirations of the project (despite the sleight-of-hand of moving Ives the New York businessman to the hometown where he would never live again). A quick glance at the collection of album covers pictured in the 1967 Columbia Ives advertisement reproduced in chapter 4 reveals something of the distance at which Thomas’s recordings stand from other items in the Ives discography. Certainly some of the images link Ives to the past, but they tend to opt either for dreamy nostalgia or patriotic American symbols—stars and stripes—without the trappings of historical authenticity (the abstract design of William Masselos’s recording of the Piano Sonata points decidedly forward).

In the nineties, with the Critical Edition recordings behind him, Thomas’s perspective shifted, reflecting the extent to which the notion of an American experimentalist tradition, with Ives as its founder, had become pervasive in discourse about contemporary classical music. Since taking the helm as music director of the San Francisco Symphony in 1995, he has regularly offered concerts featuring the music of “American mavericks.” The earliest of these took place in June 1996, a pair of concerts that made a considerable splash, in part because the guest artists included the living members of the Grateful Dead.<sup>95</sup> Repeated success with this repertoire prompted Thomas to organize a festival entirely devoted to the American mavericks as the culmination of the 1999–2000 season. And, as I write, the plans have been laid for a more modest four-program series to figure as part of the San Francisco Symphony’s centenary season, 2011–2012.

Over the years, Thomas and the San Francisco Symphony have had their share of critics, most of the objections having to do with the indiscriminate way in which the rubric maverick is dispensed. Richard Taruskin, who wrote a largely

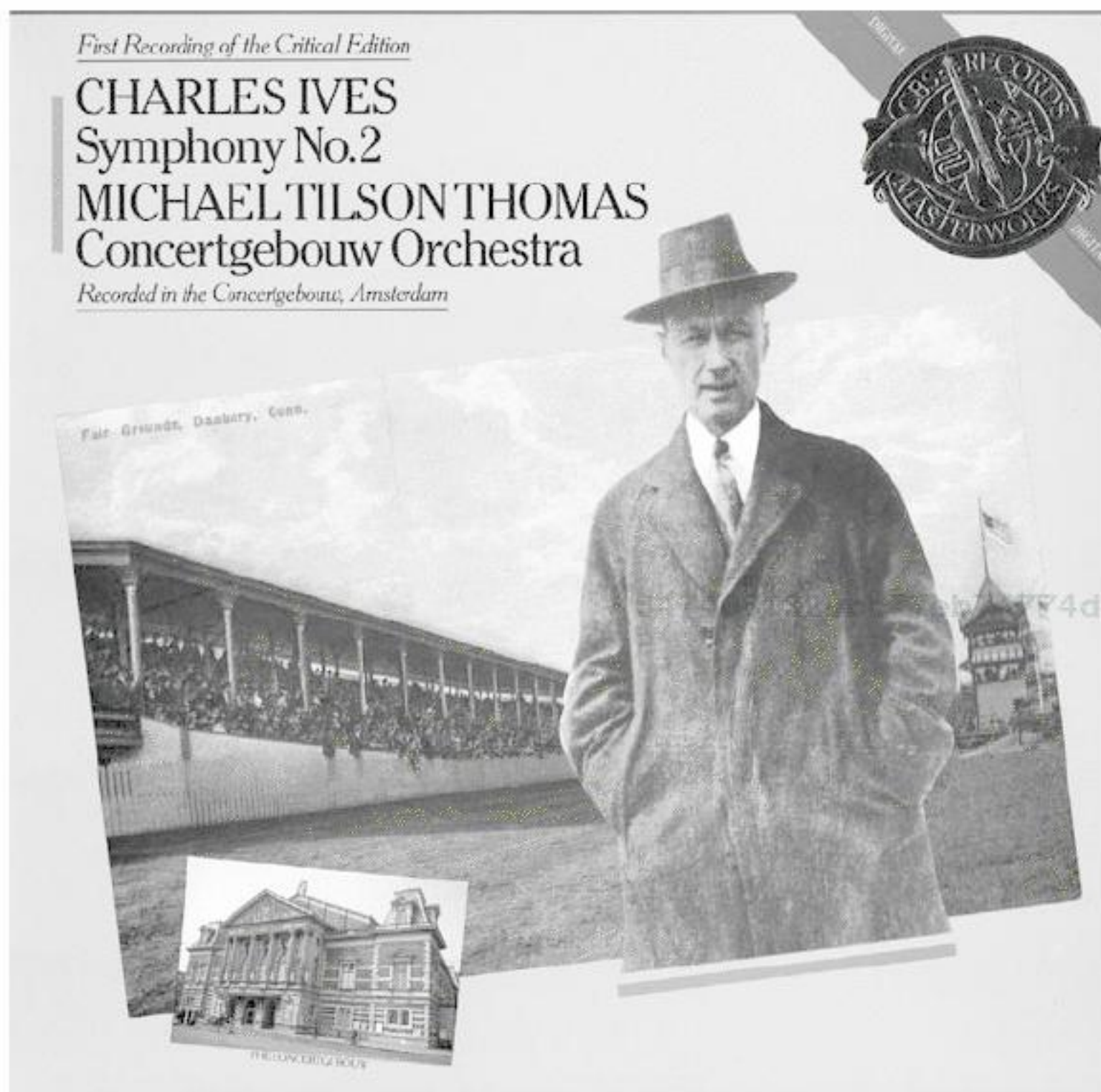


Figure 6.2. Cover of Columbia recording of Ives's Second Symphony, 1982. Courtesy Sony Music Entertainment.

847406  
ebrary

positive review of the 2000 festival in the *New York Times*, could not help but observe that the inclusion of Milton Babbitt, “the very icon of tenured palefacer,” was at odds with what the mavericks were supposed to represent. Taruskin also reported that online classical-music forums were flooded with bids and nominations for Maverick membership; every composer wanted to be a part of “the in-group of outsiders, the icons of icon.”<sup>96</sup> Few traces of this discussion survive, the transience of information on the internet being what it is, but on the American Mavericks website, launched in 2003 under the joint sponsorship of the San Francisco Symphony and National Public Radio, the criteria for inclusion are even looser. Notably Elliott Carter is represented by an interview, despite the fact that Thomas deemed him too “Eurocentric” and “brainy” to figure on the 2000 program. Visitors to the website will observe that “American Mavericks” is now a registered trademark—an irony too delicious not to point out.<sup>97</sup>



From a cynical standpoint, this eager readiness to confer the maverick mantle smacks of commercial opportunism. From another perspective, it points to the trait of omnivorousness that is unique to the discourse (or discourses) that yielded and supported the concept of the American experimental tradition. This concept has always been flexible, absorbing successive generations of American composers, proliferating in ways that are impossible for the other terms deployed by scholars, critics, and composers to categorize contemporary music. The musical historiography of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is littered with terms of this latter sort—impressionism, expressionism, serialism, neoclassicism, minimalism, neoromanticism, postminimalism—each identified with a discrete group of works or composers. But “maverick tradition” is endlessly versatile, unencumbered by specific style criteria, and immune, apparently, to being absorbed by mainstream classical-music institutions that might otherwise spell its logical demise. It is rooted in the myth of the outsider, a perennial favorite of American culture in most all of its constituencies, regardless of the proximity of those constituencies to whatever one might choose to define as “inside.”

Among the current scions of the maverick tradition is a composer whose access to public and high-profile classical-music forums has been unmatched in recent American music history, save perhaps by Leonard Bernstein. John Adams, the composer in question, is uniquely in a position to shape the reception of his music, and he has done so by tracing his musical lineage back to Ives, explicitly and implicitly. Sometimes, assuming the role of conductor, he has surrounded his own works with those of other mavericks. In 1999, for example, serving as guest conductor for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Adams offered programs that featured two of his pieces, Ives’s *Three Places in New England*, and compositions by Lou Harrison, Philip Glass, and Aaron Copland (Copland is the odd man out here).<sup>98</sup> But it is his scores that provide the strongest evidence of his commitment to the idea of the maverick tradition and his own sense of place within that tradition.

Two of Adams’s recent orchestral works, *On the Transmigration of Souls* (2002) and *My Father Knew Charles Ives* (2003), pay homage to the maverick patriarch. The New York Philharmonic commissioned the earlier work to commemorate the victims of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. In a 2004 interview, Adams recollected that he struggled to find the right tone, not wanting to lapse into the “Coplandesque brand of sentiment.” His solution was the “elevated philosophical mode” that Ives assumed in pieces like *The Unanswered Question* and the Fourth Symphony. Portions of the former appear in *On the Transmigration of Souls*, “a ghost in the background . . . [that] every once in a while . . . peeks through [the] screen of activity.”<sup>99</sup>

Far and away the strongest testament to Adams's sense of connection to the maverick patriarch is *My Father Knew Charles Ives*, which was commissioned by the San Francisco Symphony. It is a work of musical rather than factual autobiography, for Adams's father did not know Ives. Instead, the piece grew out of Adams's sense that as a child, he had shared with his father a relationship that had parallels to the one enjoyed by George and Charles Ives. Adams's father was part of a New England milieu of amateur music makers, redolent of postbellum Danbury and its lively vernacular musical traditions. Like Ives, Adams gained entrée to the musical world through his father, who served both as his first music teacher and companion in his earliest ensemble experiences. For attendees of the premiere performance of *My Father Knew Charles Ives*, the San Francisco Symphony program annotator offered an evocative scenario: Adams senior and junior playing alongside "local worthies such as the town jeweler, garage mechanic, and English Teacher, . . . [in] such organizations as the band of the town's mental hospital and the Nevers Second Regimental Band." Here was the beloved community of Ives's imagination, preserved in aspic and reanimated in the middle of the twentieth century. The sounds too of Ives's musical world swirl nostalgically through *My Father Knew Charles Ives*, which, as Adams has joked, might alternately be titled *Three Places in New England, Only a Little Further North* (his hometown Worcester, Massachusetts, lies some one hundred miles to the Northeast of Danbury, Connecticut).<sup>100</sup>

Shortly after the premiere of *My Father Knew Charles Ives*, critic Joshua Kosman asserted in the *San Francisco Chronicle* that the work made explicit something that had long been implicit. "What Adams is attempting is to define the terms of an indigenous American musical tradition. And the assertion is twofold: the tradition begins with Ives, and is encapsulated today by Adams's music."<sup>101</sup> This is true as far as it goes, but it neglects the fact that others have been complicit in promoting the experimentalists as the authentic American lineage of composers. And certainly, among them, Michael Tilson Thomas has been one of the most influential. Thomas has cultivated the relationship between the San Francisco Symphony and Adams, who is based in the Bay Area. Together, with the support of California critics, program annotators, and the scholars who have sometimes been involved in San Francisco Symphony projects, Adams and Thomas have formed a virtuous circle that reinforces the idea of the "maverick tradition" and venerates Charles Ives as founding father.<sup>102</sup>

Thus the peripatetic trope of the American experimentalist has returned from whence it originated, though now it finds its seat not in the Bohemian enclaves of the Bay Area that Henry Cowell frequented, but in one of the most important institutions of the modern-day classical-music world. Conceived by Cowell, who

regarded himself as the perennial outsider, it had been forged abroad amid the vibrant contemporary music world of postwar Germany, was burnished at home by the eclectic downtown scene of New York, and acquired its final sheen as it entered the lore of the concert hall in San Francisco.

## And Now?

The fiftieth anniversary of Ives's death occurred in 2004, and like the centenary of the composer's birth three decades earlier, served as the motivation for festivals celebrating Ives across the United States. Although the anniversary did not occasion anything on the scale of the Ives Centennial Festival-Conference, with its international profile and near-complete roster of then-prominent Ivesians, there were multiple opportunities to hear Ives. New York proved especially vibrant, the season's offerings including a six-concert festival held under the auspices of the Julliard School of Music and a three-week extravaganza titled "Charles Ives—An American Original in Context" sponsored by the New York Philharmonic.

In anticipation of the latter event, the *New York Times* made space for its classical-music critics to list their favorite Ives recordings and supply some commentary. A panoply of Iveses paraded by. Anthony Tomassini depicted the composer in his oldest guise, as modernist innovator, noting that blurry chords in one of his songs "seem to anticipate the atmospheric harmonies of Gyorgy Ligeti." Further down the page, Allan Kozinn and Anne Midgette stressed Ives's connection to the late-nineteenth-century romantics, a view that dates back to the seventies, when musicologists set about connecting the composer to the European Classical tradition. Sandwiched between Kozinn's and Midgette's contributions, Jeremy Eichler's presented the fiercely individualistic Ives, by-product of the concerns about autonomy that animated the early Cold War period.<sup>103</sup> A week into the festival, *Times* readers were furnished with yet another perspective, this one courtesy of musicologist Richard Taruskin. Invoking the gender issues that animated more recent Ives scholarship, Taruskin observed that *Essays* "shows Ives to have been . . . no modernist at all but a nostalgist, with all that the word implies in cultural and social conservatism."<sup>104</sup>

Here, in the space of one week's worth of concentrated commentary on Ives, are most of the portraits from the full span of the composer's eighty-year reception history. The only major image missing is the conception of Ives as an American music ethnographer. But one need not range far in the anniversary-year criticism published in the *Times* to discover that it too remained in circulation. Several months earlier, in a review of a concert that was part of the Julliard festival, Eichler had noted, "One of Ives's outstanding qualities was his brash

confidence in the vitality of American music at a time when the country still lingered deep in Europe's shadow."<sup>105</sup>

The Iveses refracted through the pages of the *New York Times* in 2004 were also dispersed in other mass-market newspapers and magazines—sometimes singly, sometimes in multiples. Certain images figured more prominently than others, particularly the view of Ives as the patriarch of the maverick tradition—a view that essentially updated the earliest conception of Ives as a modernist. What did not happen, in contrast to the 1974 centenary celebration, was the unveiling of new, controversial interpretations of the composer. The discourse was multifarious, but it was also static. And it remains so today, insofar as occasional appearances of Ives in mass-market publications can be said to constitute a discourse.

Such appearances are increasingly rare, a reflection of a much broader decline in coverage of classical music. Traditional newspapers have seen their subscriber base dwindle as they struggle to compete with new media, and when executives make cuts to compensate, arts critics are obvious targets since they can be removed without affecting the resources and personnel committed to “hard news.” Across the country, full-time classical-music critics have been replaced by stringers, and in some cases, newspapers and magazines have stopped covering classical music completely.<sup>106</sup> Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that Gayle Sherwood Magee's *Charles Ives Reconsidered* (2008) passed mostly without notice in major newspapers and magazines. Only *The Nation* saw fit to publish a review, a marked contrast to the considerable attention that Jan Swafford's *Charles Ives: A Life with Music* attracted just twelve years earlier.<sup>107</sup>

If discourse about Ives in the public square is greatly diminished, there is one place where Ives continues to thrive: American colleges and universities. Evidence of this vitality comes in many forms, the most obvious being the number of Ives festivals that have taken place under the aegis of academic institutions. The 1974 Ives Centennial Festival-Conference, of course, was jointly sponsored by the City University of New York and Yale University. But there are many more recent examples, including the 1996 Bard College music festival, “Charles Ives and His World,” which yielded a book of essays and documentary sources (amply cited in this book), and the Wesleyan-sponsored Ives Vocal Marathon, a four-year series of concerts that covered all of Ives's vocal repertoire, capped by a four-day event in 2009 that melded concerts and scholarly panels. Outside of such celebratory occasions, the music of Ives is a fairly regular presence in the repertoire of collegiate choirs and chamber ensembles. Perhaps more significant though is the increased space devoted to Ives in recent editions of *A History of Western Music*, the standard music-history textbook used in American universities. Beginning with the seventh edition, Ives scholar J. Peter Burkholder has been the custodian

of this venerable textbook, ensuring that for the foreseeable future, virtually every American undergraduate who studies music will encounter Ives at least once in the course of his or her education.<sup>108</sup>

As for Ives scholarship, which has largely been supported by the patronage of the university, it remains a growth industry. Since 2000, there has been a steady supply of new books and articles about the composer, though not quite matching the prolific nineties. Even the *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, which was inhospitable to Ives for many years, has been a reliable source for new Ives scholarship.

Given the multitudinous nature of public discourse about Ives (insofar as it persists), it is not surprising that the output of Ives scholars is also variegated. One major strand is constituted of work concerned with placing Ives in his social context, a stimulus for which, as I have suggested in this chapter, was the advent of New Musicology. Alongside and sometimes entangled with this strand, is another that is rooted in traditional musical analysis. Among the more notable contributions are Philip Lambert's extensive investigations of Ives's experimental music and Geoffrey Block's analysis of the "Concord" Sonata.<sup>109</sup> As theorist John McGinness has aptly pointed out, this scholarship continues the project initiated during the seventies and most influentially sustained by Burkholder's work.<sup>110</sup> The goal is to show that there are systematic regularities in Ives's music, that his compositions are not the result of haphazard intuition but the product of a refined musical craftsmanship, and that, consequently, he belongs to the European art-music tradition. In addition to these two central strands of modern Ives scholarship, a number of others coexist, including studies of documentary sources and reception.

And so work on Ives proceeds apace. But even as it does, the sanctum of academe stands in jeopardy. The financial crisis of 2008 and the subsequent economic unraveling placed many colleges and universities under duress. Cuts and furloughs have become the order of the day as administrators are forced to manage with fewer resources, and in this climate, questions about the value of a humanities education have begun to resound. It is too soon to say what this portends for American music departments, but their fate will determine that of Ives. Irony of ironies: today, the reputation of a composer who, in old age, raged about the narrow-mindedness of "Doctors of Music," hinges on the ongoing commitment of an embattled professoriate.