

AUSSENSEITER DER NEUEN MUSIK: CHARLES IVES UND EDGARD VARESE

Versteht man unter Neuer Musik nicht die Musik des 20. Jahrhunderts insgesamt, sondern ausschließlich jene Werke, die in ihrer inneren Zusammensetzung Konsequenzen aus dem Traditionsbruch um 1908 gezogen haben, so ist ein Außenseiter der Neuen Musik dadurch charakterisiert, daß er, um es banal auszudrücken, zugleich dazugehört und nicht dazugehört. Die ungezählten Komponisten, die hinter der Entwicklung zurückgeblieben sind, als Außenseiter der Neuen Musik zu bezeichnen, wäre verfehlt, obwohl sie selbst zu der Vokabel greifen mögen, um sich darüber zu trösten, daß sie - auf einem Weg, den sie für den Mittelweg hielten - an die Peripherie geraten sind.

Für Charles Ives und Edgard Varèse gilt gerade umgekehrt, daß sie Genies der Antizipation waren, und zwar innerhalb der Neuen Musik, daß es ihnen aber dennoch versagt blieb, in deren Entwicklung unmittelbar einzugreifen. Von Schönberg, Berg und Webern, die in den 20er und 30er Jahren gleichfalls in die äußere und manchmal auch die innere Situation einer Sekte gedrängt worden waren, ging nach 1945 ein breiter und tiefer Einfluß aus. Ives und Varèse aber sind von den Nachgeborenen erst entdeckt worden, als es für eine unmittelbare Wirkung zu spät war. Ihre Zeit ist niemals gekommen. Auf Ives, dessen Musik, nicht unähnlich den Klangkompositionen der letzten anderthalb Jahrzehnte, weniger Werk- als Improvisationscharakter hat, besann man sich in Europa erst, nachdem durch Cage die Herrschaft des Werk- und Strukturbegriffs gebrochen worden war. Und Varèse, der die elektronische Musik als Konzeption vorausgenommen hatte, ohne sie technisch realisieren zu können, ist zu Ruhm - zu esoterischem Ruhm - gelangt, nachdem die elektronische Musik ohne seinen Einfluß und ohne daß man sich seiner Ansätze erinnert hätte, entstanden war. Ives und Varèse gleichen Propheten, deren Worte erfüllt wurden, obwohl sie nicht gehört worden waren.

William W. Austin

IVES AND HISTORIES

Charles Edward Ives, whose isolation at the beginning of the 20th century is legendary, now attracts an increasing number of admirers. His music seems to be moving even more remarkably than that of Schoenberg, his contemporary, from an obscure fringe of the musical world toward centers of concern for many people. Ives and Schoenberg may in turn begin to overshadow figures like Ravel and Falla, composers we take for granted among our masters. With some assurance and precision we locate Ravel and Falla in relation to Debussy and Stravinsky. Ives and Schoenberg, by contrast, disturb our whole sense of tradition, our judgements of Debussy and Stravinsky, and even our actual relation to Bach and Beethoven. Ives disturbs us in a way not the same as Schoenberg's but in a way becoming just as insistent. We cannot dismiss Ives as eccentric without redefining our centers of interest. Today, among historians whose special studies are ever more diverse but still interrelated, it seems appropriate to expose the most recent and comprehensive thoughts of a historian in response to the challenge of Ives, with the hope that these thoughts may be shared and criticized more speedily than the music itself.

First, let us consider a historical perspective in which Ives links the work of some prominent living composers with Bach and Mozart and more distant models, while leaving Beethoven on one side. This perspective has its advantages and disadvantages. So does a very different history, that of American music, in which Ives can appear as central, dominating figure. These two histories compete with several traditions in which Ives plays a minor but fixed and indispensable part. The competition can enlighten us, I think, about the relation between histories and traditions in general. Finally, let us note that Ives claims a place in the diffuse tradition whose center is Beethoven.

I. How can a historian today regard Ives as a central figure in a continuous line of developing musical thought? Hans G Helms has shown the way <sup>1</sup>. There is a kind of "statistical" composing that can be detected in a few works by Bach and Mozart, that has antecedents in some African polyphony, that was fostered by George Ives and developed by his son Charles, that was occasionally approached by Grainger and Berg and Milhaud, and that has now become a prevailing fashion with Messiaen, Carter, Cage, Boulez, Stockhausen, Xenakis, Berio, James Drew, Frank Zappa, Van Dyck Parks <sup>2</sup> and many others. In this line Ives is important because he is the first to develop the ideas in most of his works and to use them as normal procedures whenever he writes for orchestra. Tracing the line from Ives to our contemporaries can help us interpret all the works touched. Ives interests many of us chiefly because of this line. For me the line has emerged only since 1966, when I was regarding Ives as a representative minor figure in a pattern whose centers were Debussy and Stravinsky. The new line has become clearer for me since Professor Dahlhaus stimulated me to fresh thinking about Ives, and especially to rereading the essays by Helms. But of course an American notices that this line rather neglects what Ives called the "substance" of his music - its allusions to American churches, theaters, military bands, and social philosophies. Also, the concrete factual connections from Ives through Cowell and Cage to younger men are not so prominent as the differences and distances among them. The context in which Helms has put Ives is in a sense anti-historical.

II. How, then, can a historian regard Ives in the context of American music? No historian in his own time tried to do so. But Gilbert Chase, in his survey <sup>3</sup> of 1955 - the year after Ives died - made him a supreme and central figure. For Chase, Ives reconciles the opposed traditions of ragtime and symphony; Ives vindicates the serious worth of all that Chase finds typically American in folk music and commercial music. This organizing thesis makes Chase's book a great advance over the earlier survey by John Tasker Howard <sup>4</sup>, which had subordinated all folk music and most commercial music to the strivings best represented by Edward MacDowell. But Chase's pattern falsifies important discontinuities between Americans so close to Ives as MacDowell, Gilbert, Chadwick, Jelly Roll Morton, Copland, Gershwin and Harris. It fails to do justice to the suddenness of Ives's appearance, and the independent achievements of the others. At the same time it tends to neglect continuities of two sorts: those that connect Americans with European music - Ives with Brahms, Dvořák, Rheinberger, Reger, Mahler, Franck and Debussy - and those that connect music with other supranational modes of thought - Ives with Swedenborg, Condorcet, Michelet, Ruskin, and Tolstoy, for example. Chase hides, moreover, Ives's recognition of America's need for a Louisa May Alcott and a Daniel Gregory Mason <sup>5</sup>. Chase's thesis may yet inspire some young composer to create a great American music, but it may hinder another potentially great American composer from finding himself. The same thesis now inspires many performers to play and sing Ives, and many scholars to study him <sup>6</sup> but it may retard the performance and study of composers like MacDowell, Gershwin,

Copland, Piston, Thomson, Barber, and Ellington; it may hamper the coordination of musical scholarship and criticism in America. The subject "American music" is perhaps a hopeless one for a coherent historical narrative, if only a little more hopeless than French music, or German, or Italian. Within the music of mankind historians can choose better units than these national ones, larger and smaller units, as well as units of musical thought and units embracing more or less "extramusical" thought. Our newest survey of American music, a fine concise one by Wiley Hitchcock<sup>7</sup>, modifies the Chase thesis; Hitchcock treats Ives as uniquely interesting, and as opening a possibility of synthesis still to be hoped for, though not to be preferred over other very different possibilities.

III. Can a historian still regard Ives as an "outsider"? Yes, surely this is possible. Ives's challenge can be met by forthright opposition in accordance with various particular interests. If a historian wants to trace the line from Beethoven, Brahms, and Wagner through Schoenberg and Webern to Boulez and Babbitt - the line of an increasingly precise technical control over possible perceptions in sound - he will mention Ives as an early experimentalist but not as a master nor a significant contributor to common resources. Similarly in histories of the living repertoires of symphony, sonata, quartet, and song, Ives remains a marginal figure. Moreover, if a historian is interested in the vital line from Stephen Foster and the Negro Spirituals to the "soul music" of Ray Charles and Aretha Franklin, or the line from Lowell Mason through Ira Sankey to the "country and Western" music of the 1960s, then Ives's concern with a few Foster tunes, a few Spirituals, ragtime, and many "gospel hymns" will be treated as a deviation from the two intertwined central continuities. My own primary concern with Ives is in just this perspective; his use of these materials lures me to study certain of his works with their many variant forms, their sketches, and their scribbled commentaries<sup>8</sup>. In each of these histories, by contrast with the two where Ives assumes a central place, the historian is less a discoverer or creator of continuities and more a critic, a conservative reformer.

IV. Can a historian, to generalize from these observations, ever provide a new central line of continuity for a group of people, national or professional, comparable to a traditional "mainstream"? I think not. History is a critique of traditions - a poor substitute for a wanted tradition. Historians do well, in my view, to confess their alienation and to propose their various lines of continuity as available alternatives for individual use. Stravinsky says "the disappearance of the musical mainstream" is the primary historical fact about 20th-century music<sup>9</sup>. He teaches that tradition must be recreated by every individual composer. His work defends all music, in all its variety, not attempting to lead any convergence of trends or provide any model for imitation. Stravinsky recognizes in Ives something valuable, something American that remains strange to him, irrelevant to his music so far but not to his life in America and Europe<sup>10</sup>. A historian who finds Stravinsky demanding his attention every day and Ives only on occasion will maintain a humble attitude in his own work. Ives's thoughts about history, however, can be used to reinforce Stravinsky's.

Ives prefers Emerson to such historians as Macaulay, Carlyle, Newman, and Renan, precisely because they claim too much for the continuities that concern them. Emerson, says Ives, bases his work "on the large unity of a series of particular aspects of a subject rather than on the continuity of its expression"<sup>11</sup>. Ives and Emerson might acknowledge that continuity of expression is needed more by historians than by composers or poets or philosophers. If a historian should rely only on transcendent unities, his account of "particular aspects of a subject" might disintegrate altogether. The narrative is a means of thought as well as a means of expression. It defines a subject for

historical inquiry. But Ives insists that histories which "show the struggle of the group led by an individual" cannot restrain the individual who will lead himself, freely availing himself of the universal "public store of reason"<sup>12</sup>.

Ives envisions a future musical language common to all mankind, but this vision is not the goal of his work, only an ideal measure of all existing musics, which he seizes to reinforce his courage to exercise freedom<sup>13</sup>.

Ives sketches a history of musical taste from Rossini through Wagner to Brahms, Franck, d'Indy, "or even Elgar (with all his tiresomeness)"<sup>14</sup>. He proposes tentatively a historical generalization, that works of art lose their highest values in the course of a generation or two, acquiring lower values as new works claim the highest. But this hypothesis, he says, may be disproved by Bach and Beethoven.

V. Ives reveres Beethoven most of all, even more than Emerson or Thoreau, Socrates or Jesus. "In the history of this youthful world", he says, "the best product that human beings can boast of is probably Beethoven"<sup>15</sup>. Ives "translates" the oracular motif of the Fifth Symphony, in his "Concord"-Sonata and in his "Essays". He ignores most of Beethoven's work, to be sure. He ignores all scholarly work on Beethoven. He challenges us to recreate our own contact with Beethoven, leaping over all obstacles whether continuous or discontinuous. He says that "Beethoven is always modern and Strauss always medieval - try as he may to cover it up"<sup>16</sup>. Ives is modern in the same sense. Any true composer, he says again, finds times "when he feels that his selfexpression needs some liberation from at least a part of his own soul. At such times, shall he not better turn to those greater souls?"<sup>17</sup>

#### Footnotes

- 1 Hans G Helms, "Der Komponist Charles Ives: Leben, Werk und Einfluss auf die heutige Generation", NZfM 125, 1964, 425-433; "Über statistisches Komponieren bei Charles Ives", NZfM 127, 1966, 90-93; notes to the recording of the "Concord"-Sonata by A. Kontarsky, Time Records 58005, and to the collection of recordings, *Die Welt von Charles Ives*, Columbia CBS S 77406. Before Helms, the most persuasive placing of Ives in the general history of 19th- and 20th-century music was probably that of Leo Schrade, "Charles E. Ives", *Yale Review* 44, 1955, 535-545. Still more in accordance with the very broad perspective in which I am considering Ives now is the early essay by Charles Seeger, "Charles Ives and Carl Ruggles", *Magazine of Art* 32, 1939, 396-399, 435-437.
- 2 The composer James Drew cites the influence of Ives in his article "Information, Space, and a New Time-dialectic", *Journal of Music Theory* 12/1, 1969, 86-103. Frank Zappa, leader of the group called "Mothers of Invention", has written a valuable statement, "Little House", in *Downbeat* 36/22 (30. Oct. 1969), 30-33.
- 3 G. Chase, "America's music from the Pilgrims to the present", New York 1955 (Paris 1957, Berlin 1958). Compare, however, revised edition, New York 1966.
- 4 J. T. Howard, "Our American music: three hundred years of it", New York 1931, 1939, 1946, 1965.
- 5 Ives, "Essays before a sonata" [1920], ed. by H. Boatwright, New York 1962, p. 47, 95.
- 6 Recent and current work includes the following items: Ives, "Memos", ed. by J. Kirkpatrick, in preparation at Norton's, New York. D.-R. de Lerma, "C. E. Ives: a bibliography of his music", Kent (Ohio) 1970. Sidney Cowell, *Postscript*

- 1969, in the new edition of the Cowells' book, "Charles Ives and his Music", New York 1955, 1969. S. R. Charles, "The use of borrowed material in Ives's second symphony", MR 28, 1967, 102-111. E. Salzman, "Charles Ives, American", Commentary 66/2, August 1968, 37-42. D. Marshall, "Charles Ives's quotations: manner or substance?" PNM 6/2, 1968, 45-56. V. Thomson, "The Ives case", NY Review of Books, 21 May 1970, 9-11. Dissertations by E. Gratovich (Boston 1968), C. W. Henderson (Washington University 1969), W. C. Kumlein (Illinois 1969), P. E. Newman (Iowa 1967), Rosalie Perry (Texas 1969), Charles Rossiter (Princeton 1970) and M. A. Vinquist (Indiana 1965).
- 7 H. W. Hitchcock, "Music in the United States: a historical introduction", Englewood Cliffs 1969.
  - 8 The first movement of "Three places in New England", the first movement of the Second orchestral set, the Second quartet, the Second and Fourth symphonies, and the "Concord"-Sonata are all related to Foster. Some of these pieces quote the same Spirituals as well. Two of them quote the same motif from Beethoven. For help in these studies I am endlessly indebted to John Kirkpatrick, my colleague at Cornell from 1947 to 1968, now curator of the Ives Collection at Yale.
  - 9 I. Stravinsky and R. Craft, "Retrospectives and conclusions", New York 1969, 103.
  - 10 Ibid. 30-32.
  - 11 Ives, "Essays", 22. Compare also A. Davidson, "Transcendental unity in the works of Charles Ives", American Quarterly 22, 1970, 35-44.
  - 12 Ibid. 34.
  - 13 Ibid. 8.
  - 14 Ibid. 72-74.
  - 15 Ibid. 88.
  - 16 Ibid. 83.
  - 17 Ibid. 102.

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#### ANMERKUNGEN ZUM STREICHQUARTETT NR. 2 VON CHARLES E. IVES

Charles E. Ives wird mit Vorliebe etikettiert als einer, der die unterschiedlichen Erscheinungsformen der Neuen Musik - sei es Atonalität, Polytonalität oder statistisches Komponieren - vorweggenommen hat, und zwar nicht fragmentarisch oder mehr zufällig und naiv, sondern total, im Bewußtsein kompositorischer Radikalität. Diese Etikettierung genügt leider allzuoft, um Ives auch als Komponisten zu charakterisieren; sie ist indessen nicht nur fragwürdig sondern falsch, denn sie definiert die „Bedeutung“ des Komponisten aus der Sicht der europäischen Musikentwicklung, und so gesehen war Ives unstreitig einer der ersten, die das Terrain der Neuen Musik betreten haben. Es bleibt jedoch die Tatsache, daß Ives, in der Zeit als er komponierte (von ca. 1890 bis ca. 1919/20), keinerlei Kontakt zum europäischen Musikgeschehen hatte. Als seine Kompositionen nach dem zweiten Weltkrieg allmählich ins allgemeine Bewußtsein traten, waren die „heroischen“ Zeiten der Neuen Musik in Europa längst Geschichte geworden<sup>1</sup>. Die offensichtlichen Berührungspunkte zwischen dem kompositorischen Denken Ives' und dem der Neuen Musik in Europa lassen eher entscheidende Rückschlüsse auf die europäische Musik zu als auf die Kompositionen von Ives.