

CHARLES IVES

SECOND PIANO SONATA

“Concord, Mass., 1840-1860”

EMERSON

HAWTHORNE

THE ALCOTTS

THOREAU

GEORGE PAPPA • STAVROU, piano

BONNIE LICHTER, flute

CHARLES IVES (1874-1954), as is well-known, made important and lasting contributions to the business of life insurance. A long-time business partner and close friend has written that Ives’ “. . . creative mind, great breadth of culture, intensive sympathies and keen understanding of the economic as well as the material needs of the community made it possible for him to evolve literature which paved the way for additional sales of life insurance. . . . This remarkable student, seated in his Connecticut home with pen in hand, has loved to concentrate upon and to analyze the problems with a master mind.”

Many noted musicians have tried to see to it that the musical product of this “master mind” should also be granted similar recognition. That this has not been fully accomplished is due to the need for a new generation of musical performers, with such ideals and perspective that the richness of musical imagination, invention and wit, panorama and power of his music would be presented as purposeful rather than laughable or eccentric. It was first necessary to develop performers who believed in the manners and tradition of America.

Our conviction goes with this recording that audiences will now grant Ives that high position among music creators which specialists have long awarded to him. Ives did not meet an audience during his lifetime; in fact he stopped writing music after the First World War because of this, being little satisfied to write only for his colleagues. As he himself wrote: “The fabric of existence weaves itself whole. You cannot set an art off in a corner and hope for it to have vitality, reality and substance. There can be nothing exclusive about a substantial art. It comes directly out of the heart of experience of life and thinking about life and living life.”

Each movement of the *Second Piano Sonata* bears one of the names that made the village of Concord, Massachusetts famous during the mid-nineteenth century. The first, “Emerson,” is a substantial sonata-form movement; the second movement bears the name “Hawthorne”—it is a fantastic scherzo. The third, “The Alcotts” is simple and religious; and the last, “Thoreau,” is a kind of mystic reflection on man’s identification of himself with nature.

The sonata is built on two motifs. One, epic in nature, consists of three repeated notes and a drop of a third to the fourth note—in other words, it is the opening motif of Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony*. The second motif is lyrical and moves mostly in conjunct motion. There is usually some interweaving of the two, whenever they appear.

Ives names the contrasting sections of the “Emerson” movement, *prose* and *verse*. In addition to an initial theme, a statement of form and idea opens the work, in the sense that all the musical means (melodic line, polyphony, rhythm and harmonic implications—atonal to tonal) are applied to the materials in such a way as to make obvious the concept of diversity drawing toward unity as its culmination.

Both motifs appear freely in both sections. Almost every conceivable type of variation is applied to the epic motif. Often several of these developments appear, polyphonically, in contrasting time values, usually with elements from the other motif mixed in at the same time. The rhythmic and thematic development does not proceed from the simple to the complex, but the reverse.

The “Hawthorne” movement opens with light, rapid sixteenth and thirty-second notes, and darting melodic leaps spaced widely apart; followed by a section with pre-jazz syncopation against rippling broken chords. One page later occurs the cause of great hilarity and bafflement at Ives' expense during the 'twenties: a piece of wood to hold down the piano keys (black and white) for a range of two octaves and a second. Their resentment kept the audience deaf to the resultant fine tone.

The middle section has frequent changes of pace, i.e., short sections which each introduce new aspects of the fundamental theme. There is a return to the very fast tempo of the beginning, rising to a *fortissimo*, and finally landing unexpectedly on the “Beethoven motif.”

“The Alcotts” presents a wholehearted simplicity. The movement opens with the epic motif in lyric form, simply harmonized, with all the parts in one key. The rhythm is as uninvolved as a hymn. Indeed, the spirit of this movement derives from the contained religion of the family church, and the domestic music of daughters playing the piano in the parlor.

THE TWO LARGE movements (“Emerson” and “Hawthorne”) are continuously active: many polyphonic strands, complex chords and polychords, and rhythmical irregularities. There are only momentary suggestions of an underlying key.

The final movement, while very slow in tempo, is subject to sudden darting runs. Contemplative in mood, its inner calm denies the seemingly capricious lack of order with which materials from other movements are introduced.

The apparent clash leads with powerful drive toward the dénouement, in which the *Sonata's* epic and lyric themes are blended in one long melody. To voice this melody Ives unexpectedly calls for a flute, although there has been no hint until now that this is anything but a piano sonata.

At the final cadence the epic motif appears over the tonic and dominant triads. This is the culmination of the whole work—a quiet conclusion on identical pitch, which refuses to rise or fall but is complete where it stands—yet one senses that the ending is not final and that the music will continue to grow in the imagination.

GEORGE PAPPA • STAVROU, a native of Syracuse, New York, is a graduate of New York's Juilliard School of Music (M.S.), where he studied with Irwin Freundlich. It was in this atmosphere that his natural enthusiasm for contemporary American music was considerably developed.

With two orchestral appearances and several solo recitals to his credit, Pappa • stavrou, early in 1960, gave broadcast performances of Roger Sessions' *Second Sonata* and Aaron Copland's *Sonata* over Station WFUV-FM in New York. These ambitious works formed the nucleus of his Town Hall debut in November of that year, with a performance of the *Concord Sonata*—the first complete performance in New York in twenty years—serving as the climax of this memorable program.

The New York Herald-Tribune remarked on Mr. Pappa • stavrou's "genuine affinity for these works" and termed him "a communicative musician;" the *New York Times* hailed his "uncompromising program;" but it was for *Musical America's* critic to sum up the general feeling: "For performing such a program I do more than applaud Mr. Pappa • stavrou. I thank him."

BONNIE LICHTER is one of the bright young woodwind talents now appearing on the concert stage. A graduate of the Juilliard School of Music, she has represented New York City's Lincoln Center as a member of its touring quintet, and has participated in concerts and recordings of Baroque and modern music.

CHARLES IVES

Second Sonata for Piano, "Concord, Mass., 1840-1860"

Excerpts from *Essays Before a Sonata* (1920) as included in the 2nd Edition of the score.

EMERSON

IT HAS SEEMED to the writer, that Emerson is greater—his identity more complete perhaps—in the realms of revelation—natural disclosure—than in those of poetry, philosophy, or prophecy. Though a great poet and prophet, he is greater, possibly as an invader of the unknown, —America’s deepest explorer of the spiritual immensities, —a seer painting his discoveries in masses and with any color that may lie at hand—cosmic, religious, human, even sensuous; a recorder, freely describing the inevitable struggle in the soul’s uprising—preceiving from this inward source alone, that every “ultimate fact is only the first of a new series;” a discoverer, whose heart knows, with Voltaire, “that man seriously reflects when left alone,” and would then discover, if he can, that “wondrous chain which links the heavens with earth—the world of beings subject to one law.” In *his* reflections Emerson, unlike Plato, is not afraid to ride Arion’s Dolphin, and to go wherever he is carried—to Parnassus or to “Musketaquid.”

We see him standing on a summit, at the door of the infinite where many men do not dare to climb, peering into the mysteries of life, contemplating the eternities, hurling back whatever he discovers there, —now, thunderbolts for us to grasp, if we can, and translate—now placing quietly, even tenderly, in our hands, things that we may see without effort—if we won’t see them, so much the worse for us. . . .

. . . Emerson wrings the neck of any law that would become exclusive and arrogant, whether a definite one of metaphysics or an indefinite one of mechanics. He hacks his way up and down, as near as he can to the absolute, the oneness of all nature both human and spiritual, and to God’s benevolence. To him the ultimate of a conception is its vastness, and it is probably this, rather than the “blind-spots” in his expression, that makes us incline to go with him, but halfway, and then stand and build dogmas. But if we can not follow all the way—if we do not always clearly perceive the whole picture, we are at least free to imagine it—he makes us feel that we are free to do so; perhaps that is the most he asks. For he is but reaching out through and beyond mankind, trying to see what he can of the infinite amid its immensities—throwing back to us whatever he can—but ever conscious that he but occasionally catches a glimpse; conscious that if he would contemplate the greater, he must wrestle with the lesser, even though it dims an outline; that he must struggle if he would hurl back anything—even a broken fragment for me to examine and perchance in it find a gem of some part of truth; conscious, at times, of the futility of his effort and its message, conscious of its vagueness, but ever hopeful for it, and confident that its foundation, if not its medium, is somewhere near the eventual and “absolute good” — the divine truth underlying all life. If Emerson must be dubbed an optimist — then an optimist fighting pessimism, but not wallowing in it; an optimist who does not study pessimism by learning to enjoy it, whose imagination is greater than his curiosity, who seeing the sign-post to Erebus, is strong enough to go to the other way. This strength of optimism, indeed the strength we find always underlying his tolerance, his radicalism, his searches, prophecies, and revelations, is heightened and made efficient by “imagination-penetrative,” a thing concerned not with the combining but the apprehending of things. A possession akin to the power, Ruskin says, all great pictures have, which “depends on the penetration of the imagination into the true nature of the thing represented, and on the scorn of the imagination for all shackles and fetters of mere external fact that stand in the way of its suggestiveness”—a possession which gives the strength of distance to his eyes, and the strength of muscle to his soul. . . .

. . . A devotion to an end tends to undervalue the means. A power of revelation may make one more concerned about his perceptions of the soul's nature than the way of their disclosure. Emerson is more interested in what he perceives than in his expression of it. He is a creator whose intensity is consumed more with the substance of his creation than with the manner by which he shows it to others. Like Petrarch he seems more a discoverer of Beauty than an imparter of it. But these discoveries, these devotions to aims, these struggles toward the absolute, do not these in themselves impart something, if not all, of their own unity and coherence—which is not received, as such, at first, nor is foremost in their expression. It must be remembered that truth was what Emerson was after— not strength of outline, or even beauty except in so far as they might reveal themselves, naturally, in his explorations towards the infinite. To think hard and deeply and to say what is thought, regardless of consequences, may produce a first impression, either of great muddiness, but in the latter that may be hidden possibilities. Some accuse Brahms' orchestration of being muddy. This may be a good name for a first impression of it. But if it should seem less so, he might not be saying what he thought. The mud may be a form of sincerity which demands that the heart be translated, rather than handed around through the pit. A clear scoring might have lowered the thought. Carlyle told Emerson that some of his paragraphs didn't cohere. Emerson wrote by sentences or phrases, rather than by logical sequence. His underlying plan of work seems based on the large unity of a series of particular aspects of a subject, rather than on the continuity of its expression. As thoughts surge to his mind, he fills the heavens with them, crowds them in, if necessary, but seldom arranges them along the ground first.

A working woman after coming from one of his lectures said: "I love to go to hear Emerson, not because I understand him, but because he looks as though everybody was as good as he was." Is it not the courage—the spiritual hopefulness in his humility that makes this story possible and true? Is it not this trait in his character that sets him above all creeds—that gives him inspired belief in the common mind and soul? Is it not this courageous universalism that gives conviction to his prophecy and that makes his symphonies of revelation begin and end with nothing but the strength and beauty of innate goodness in man, in Nature and in God, the greatest and most inspiring theme of Concord Transcendental Philosophy, as we hear it.

And it is from such a world-compelling theme and from such vantage ground that Emerson rises to almost perfect freedom of action, of thought and of soul, in any direction and to any height. Let us place the transcendent Emerson where he himself places Milton, in Wordsworth's apostrophe; "Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free, so didst thou travel on life's common way in cheerful Godliness."

The Godliness of spiritual courage and hopefulness—these fathers of faith rise to a glorified peace in the depth of his greater perorations. There is an "oracle" at the beginning of the *Fifth Symphony*—in those four notes lies one of Beethoven's greatest messages. We would place its translation above the relentlessness of fate knocking at the door, above the greater human-message of destiny, and strive to bring it towards the spiritual message of Emerson's revelations—even to the "common heart" of Concord—the Soul of humanity knocking at the door of the Divine mysteries, radiant in the faith that it *will* be opened— and that the human will become the Divine!

THE ALCOTTS

CONCORD VILLAGE, ITSELF, reminds one of that common virtue lying at the height and root of all the Concord divinities. As one walks down the broad-arched street, passing the white house of Emerson—ascetic guard of a former prophetic beauty— he comes presently beneath the old elms overspreading the Alcott house. It seems to stand as a kind of homely but beautiful witness of Concord's common virtue—it seems to bear a consciousness that its past is *living*, that the “mosses of the Old Manse” and the hickories of Walden are not far away. Here is the home of the “Marches”—all pervaded with the trials and happiness of the family and telling, in a simple way, the story of “the richness of not having.” Within the house, on every side, lie remembrances of what imagination can do for the better amusement of fortunate children who have to do for themselves—much needed lessons in these days of automatic, ready-made, easy entertainment which deaden rather than stimulate the creative faculty. And there sits the little old spinet-piano Sophia Thoreau gave to the Alcott children, on which Beth played the old Scotch airs, and played at the *Fifth Symphony*.

There is a commonplace beauty about “Orchard House”—a kind of spiritual sturdiness underlying its quaint picturesqueness—a kind of common triad of the New England homestead, whose overtones tell us that there must have been something aesthetic fibered in the Puritan severity—the self-sacrificing part of the ideal—a value that seems to stir a deeper feeling, a stronger sense of being nearer some perfect truth than a Gothic cathedral or an Etruscan villa. All around you, under the Concord sky, there still floats the influence of that human faith, melody, transcendent and sentimental enough for the enthusiast or the cynic respectively, reflecting an innate hope—a common interest in common things and common things and common men—a tune the Concord bards are ever playing, while they pound away at the immensities with a Beethovenlike sublimity, and with, may we say, a vehemence and perseverance—for that part of greatness is not so difficult to emulate.

We dare not attempt to follow the philosophic raptures of Bronson Alcott—unless you will assume that his apotheosis will show how “practical” his vision in this world would be in the next. And so we won't try to reconcile the music sketch of the Alcotts with much beside the memory of that home under the elms — the Scotch songs and the family hymns *that* were sung at the end of each day—though there may be an attempt to catch something of that common sentiment (which we have tried to suggest above) —a strength of hope that never gives way to despair—a conviction in the power of the common soul which, when all is said and done, may be as typical as any theme of Concord and its transcendentalists.

HAWTHORNE

ANY COMPREHENSIVE conception of Hawthorne, either in word or music, must have for its basic theme something that has to do with the influence of sin upon the conscience — something more than the Puritan conscience, but something which is permeated by it. In this relation he is wont to use what Hazlitt calls the “moral power of imagination.” Hawthorne would try to spiritualize a guilty conscience. He would sing of the relentlessness of guilt, the inheritance of guilt, the shadow of guilt darkening innocent posterity.

. . . This fundamental part of Hawthorne is not attempted in our music (the 2nd movement of the series) which is but an extended “fragment” trying to suggest some of his wilder, fantastical adventures into the half-childlike, half-fairyland phantasmal realms. It may have something to do with the children’s excitement on that “frosty Berkshire morning, and the frost imagery on the enchanted hall window” or something to do with “Feathertop,” the “Scarecrow,” and his “Looking Glass” and the little demons dancing around his pipe bowl; or something to do with the old hymn tune that haunts the church and sings only to those in the churchyard, to protect them from secular noises, as when the circus parade comes down Main Street; or something to do with the concert at the “Slave’s Shuffle;” or something to do with the Concord he-nymph, or the “Seven Vagabonds,” or “Circe’s Palace,” or something else in the wonderbook —not something that happens, but the way something happens; or something to do with the “Celestial Railroad,” or “Phoebe’s Garden,” or something personal, which tries to be “national” suddenly at twilight, and universal suddenly at midnight; or something about the ghost of a man who never lived, or about something that never will happen, or something else that is not.

THOREAU

AND IF THERE shall be a program let it follow his thought on an autumn day of Indian summer at Walden—a shadow of a thought at first, colored by the mist and haze over the pond:

Low anchored cloud,

Fountain head and

Source of rivers . . .

Dew cloth, dream drapery—

Drifting meadow of the air . . .

but this is momentary; the beauty of the day moves him to a certain restlessness—to aspirations more specific—an eagerness for outward action, but through it all he is conscious that it is not in keeping with the mood for this “Day.” As the mists rise, there comes a clearer thought more traditional than the first, a meditation more calm. As he stands on the side of the pleasant hill of pines and hickories in front of his cabin, he is still disturbed by a restlessness and goes down the white-pebbled and sandy eastern shore, but it seems not to lead him where the thought suggests—he climbs the path along the “bolder northern” and “western shore, with deep bays indented,” and now along the railroad track, “where the Aeolian harp plays.” But his eagerness throws him into the lithe, springy stride of the specie hunter—the naturalist—he is still aware of a restlessness; with these faster steps his rhythm is of shorter span—it is still not the *tempo* of Nature, it does not bear the mood that the genius of the day calls for, it is too specific, its nature is too external, the introspection too buoyant, and he knows now that he must let Nature flow through *him* and slowly;

he releases his more personal desires to her broader rhythms), conscious that this blends more and more with the harmony of her solitude; it tells him that his search for freedom on that day, at least, lies in his submission to her, for Nature is as relentless as she is benignant. He remains in this mood and while outwardly still, he seems to move with the slow, almost monotonous swaying beat of this autumnal day. He is more contented with a "homely burden" and is more assured of "the broad margin to his life; he sits in his sunny doorway . . . rapt in reverie . . . amidst goldenrod, sandcherry, and sumach . . . in undisturbed solitude." At times the more definite personal strivings for the ideal freedom, the former more active speculations come over him, as if he would trace a certain intensity even in his submission. "He grew in those seasons like corn in the night and they were better than any works of the hands. They were not time subtracted from his life but so much over and above the usual allowance." He realized "what the Orientals meant by contemplation and forsaking of works." "The evening train has gone by," and "all the restless world with it. The fishes in the pond no longer feel its rumbling and he is more alone than ever . . ." His meditations are interrupted only by the faint sound of the Concord bell—"tis prayer-meeting night in the village—"a melody as it were, imported into the wilderness . . ." "At a distance over the woods the sound acquires a certain vibratory hum as if the pine needles in the horizon were the strings of a harp which it swept . . . A vibration of the universal lyre . . . Just as the intervening atmosphere makes a distant ridge of earth interesting to the eyes by the azure tint it imparts." . . . Part of the echo may be "the voice of the wood; the poet's flute is heard out over the pond and Walden hears the swan song of that "Day" and faintly echoes . . . Is it a transcendental tune of Concord: 'Tis an evening when the "whole body is one sense," . . . and before ending his day he looks out over the clear crystalline water of the pond and catches a glimpse of the shadow-thought he saw in the morning's mist and haze—he knows that by his final submission, he possesses the "Freedom of the Night." He goes up the "pleasant hillside of pines, hickories," and moonlight to his cabin, "with a strange liberty in Nature, a part of herself."

HOW FAR IS ANYONE justified, be he an authority or a layman, in expressing or trying to express in terms of music (in sounds, if you like) the value of anything, material, moral, intellectual, or spiritual, which is usually expressed in terms other than music? How far afield can music go and keep honest as well as reasonable or artistic? Is it a matter limited only by the composer's power of expressing what lies in his subjective or objective consciousness? Or is it limited by any limitations of the composer?

If one is willing to go no further than to accept the theory that music is the language of the emotions and only that, —the matter is perhaps an insoluble problem; but one becoming more interesting, perhaps more possible of solution, if instead of accepting the term "emotion" only as an "expression of" itself, it is received in a deeper sense—that is, that it is a feeling influenced by some experience perhaps of a spiritual nature in the expression of which the intellect has some part. The nearer we get to the mere expression of emotion, says Professor Sturt in his *Philosophy of Art and Personality*, "as in the antics of boys who have been promised a holiday, the further we get away from art."

Whence comes the desire for expression? What is the source of the instinctive feelings, these vague intuitions and introspective sensations? The more we try to analyze them the more vague they become. To pull them apart and classify them as "subjective" or "objective" or as this or as that, means, that they may well be classified and that is about all; it leaves us as far from the origin as ever. What does it all mean, What is behind it all? The "voice of God," says the artist, "the voice of the devil," says the man in the front row.

Why try to trace any stream that flows through the garden of consciousness to its source only to be confronted by another problem of tracing this source to its source? Perhaps Emerson in the *Rhodora* answers by not trying to explain

That if eyes were made for seeing

Then beauty is its own excuse for being;

Why thou wert there, O' rival of the rose!

I never thought to ask, I never knew;

But, in my simple ignorance, suppose

The self-same Power that brought me there brought you.

Perhaps Sturt answers by substitution: “We cannot explain the origin of an artistic intuition any more than the origin of any other primary function of our nature. But if, as I believe, civilization is mainly founded on those kinds of unselfish human interests which we call knowledge and morality, it is easily intelligible that we should have a parallel interest which we call art, closely akin and lending powerful support to the other two. It is intelligible too that moral goodness, intellectual power, high vitality, and strength should be approved by the intuition.” This reduces, or rather brings the problem back to a tangible basis namely: —the translation of an artistic intuition into sounds approving and reflecting, or endeavoring to approve and reflect, a “moral goodness,” a “high vitality,” etc., or any other human attribute, mental, moral, or spiritual.

Can music do more than this? Can it *do* this? and if so what is to determine the degree of its failure or success? The composer, the performer (if there be any), or those who have to listen? One hearing? or a century of hearings? —and if it isn't successful or if it doesn't fail what matters it? A theme that the composer sets up as “moral goodness” may sound like “high vitality,” to his friend and but like a “stagnant pool” to those not even his enemies. Expression to a great extent is a matter of terms and terms are anyone's. The meaning of “God” may have a billion interpretations if there be that many souls in the world.

There is a moral in the “Nominalist and Realist” that will prove all sums. It runs something like this: No matter how sincere and confidential men are in trying to know or assuming that they do know each other's mood and habits of thought, the net result leaves a feeling that all is left unsaid; for the reason of their incapacity to know each other, though they use the same words. They go on from one explanation to another but things seem to stand about as they did in the beginning “because of that vicious assumption.” But we would rather believe that music is beyond any analogy to word language and that the time is coming, but not in our lifetime, when it will develop possibilities inconceivable now, —a language so transcendent that its heights and depths will be common to all mankind.

from PROLOGUE

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