

CHARLES IVES

Washington's Birthday

Imperial Philharmonic of Tokyo

Hallowe'en; The Pond;

Central Park in the Dark

Members of the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra

William Strickland, conductor

Musicians and Critics of the most irreconcilably differing persuasions about the art of music are vitally unanimous in their admiration for the music of Charles Ives. Certain critics, who in secret point of fact loathe *all* contemporary music, point to Ives as the heroic model to which all living American composers need not hesitate to aspire. The self-styled Music-of-the-Future Boys, likewise, point with pride to the innovations in Ives (innovations that are by now legendary in their having anticipated by years Stravinsky or Hindemith or Schoenberg) as if Ives were somehow a justification and precedent for their demented schemes of world conquest. On the other hand, the last-ditch academicians, perpetrators of the musical still-born, are often just as interested in Ives and just as quick to claim his work: Did not Ives, after all, compose stretches of music that suggest a somewhat retarded Brahms, or bars that might give pause to Ethelbert Nevin?

Everybody, actually, is crazy about the music of Charles Ives— there seems to be something there for all corners. But this love affair, for all its ardor, could not be more remote and more platonic because, dear reader, practically no one ever *plays* nor does anyone often hear any *music* by Charles Ives. It is rather as if a tourist guide in, let's say, Washington, D. C., were to indicate a major American monument to a foreign visitor—a national monument that, even though the ground has perhaps been broken, just happens not to *be* there yet.

Well, CRI is crazy about the music of Charles Ives, too, but it hereby renders its enthusiasm tangible with an extremely physical and highly available recording of four pieces that, if one is to give credence to the Schwann Long Playing Catalog of November, 1962, are not elsewhere recorded.

Washington's Birthday, which dates from 1909 and is a movement from the four-movement work, *A Symphony: Holidays*, is an extraordinarily vivid and haunting evocation of a New England winter scene. The composer himself has provided the following program in the published score: "‘Cold and Solitude,’ says Thoreau, ‘are friends of mine. Now is the time before the wind rises to go forth and see the snow on the trees.’"

“And there is at times a bleakness, without stir but penetrating in a New England mid-winter, which settles down grimly when the day closes over the broken-hills

“The older folks sit
‘the cleaned wing hearth about
Shut in from all the world without

Content to let the north-wind roar
In Baffled rage at pane and door.’
(Whittier)

“But to the younger generation, a winter holiday means action! —and down through ‘Swamp hollow’ and over the hill-road they go, afoot or in sleighs, through the drifting snow, to the barn dance at the Centre. The village band of fiddles, fife and horn keep up an unending ‘break-clown’ medley and the young folks ‘salute their partners and balance corners’ till midnight;—as the party breaks up, the sentimental songs of those days are sung half in fun, half seriously and with the inevitable ‘adieu to the ladies’ the ‘social’ gives way to the grey bleakness of the February night.”

Hallowe’en, one of *Three Outdoor Scenes* composed between 1898 and 1911, is a sort of musical joke so far as its execution is concerned. It may be played three or four times: The first time, for example, “only the second violin and cello play, until two measures before the D.C., which all strings play each time. No piano.” The fourth time, however, Ives suggests all instruments, “Presto (as fast as possible without disabling any instrument or player),” and, at another point, “the playing gets faster and louder each time, keeping up with the bonfire.”

The Pond, another of *Three Outdoor Scenes*, is a flawless nature scene, perfect in its detail and in the realization of its intent. Certainly Ives as a perfectionist, here demonstrated, is an unfamiliar concept.

Central Park in the Dark, the third of *Three Outdoor Scenes*, is a supreme accomplishment in the intensely original blending of impressionism and a kind of musical realism that is so significant a factor in Ives’ work. A workable programmatic key to the work, taken simply from its title, is not likely to elude even the most inexperienced listener.

WILLIAM FLANAGAN

The Lady of Tearful Regret

Eva Törklep Larson, soprano

Yngvar Krogh, baritone

Members of the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra

William Strickland, conductor

The Lady of Tearful Regret is the last of three extended vocal-chamber works that, along with the opera *Bartleby*, form the bulk of my own creative accomplishments during the 1950’s. The coloratura soprano, and her relationship with the contemporary composer, had been on my mind. In spite of the occasional exception, it seemed to me that our composers had *misused* the species (composed for high *lyric* soprano, *sans* ornamentation, called it “coloratura,” and suggested mistakenly that “coloratura” is a matter of range); *debased* it (used it to be “funny” in essentially witless contemporary opera); or, finally, had failed to come to terms with it (used it, quite legitimately, as a tool for evoking eighteenth century classicism, *viz* Stravinsky’s *The Rake’s Progress*).

Since pure vocalises give me the pip, and using the voice out of a *dramatic* context would, I felt, be just another way of ducking the issue, the possibilities I envisioned in Edward Albee's youthful, unpublished poem, *The Lady of Tearful Regret*, will be obvious enough. Furthermore, its treatment of narrative, by calling for a second voice, suggested a *kind* of piece that, so far as I knew, was without close precedent.

The piece was completed in piano sketch in 1958 and I set immediately to scoring it for the full orchestra I had planned. It soon dawned on me with increasing horror that I had been living in a world of fantasy and that I was creating the White Elephant to end them all. What orchestra in its right mind was going to *hire* two singers to perform a thoroughly spooky piece by a little-known and young American composer? I put aside the long sheets of orchestration manuscript and set about scoring the work in the seven- instrument setting that was first performed at Carnegie Recital Hall on February 24th, 1959.

Since this scoring was, in fact, unsuccessful, the prospect of a recording led to discussions with conductor Strickland regarding the selective addition of strings heard on this disc. The results are pleasing to me beyond any hope I had nourished.

It is only fair that I mention that Edward Albee, from his present vantage point of America's leading young playwright, regards his poem as a youthful indiscretion, its present circulation as an invaluable testimony to the ultimate wisdom of his choice in pursuing *The Play* rather than *The Poem*. Whatever the merit of the poem, *per se*, it offered me the chance to write some music that, for better or for worse, I very much wanted to get off my chest.

—Notes by William Flanagan

Like the renowned Leopold Stokowski, his predecessor at St. Bartholomew's Church in New York City, WILLIAM STRICKLAND'S professional beginnings are rooted in the music of the church, especially the organ. His artistic growth further parallels Stokowski's in the manner in which he has devoted most of his mature musical life to the commissioning and performance of contemporary music. He founded the present Nashville Symphony Orchestra in 1916 and was its conductor for five years. He has since made frequent guest appearances in this country, in Germany, Austria and Scandinavia, as well as extended tours of the Far East.

Unlike most American orchestras, the OSLO PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA engages its seventy permanent members on a year-round basis, with paid vacations as well as other benefits. Edvard Grieg was one of its founders in 1871. Government and municipal subsidy make possible an annual average of 120 concerts, including weekly broadcasts for the Norwegian National Broadcasting Company. Tours take the orchestra to other Scandinavian and European countries and to the remoter regions of Norway—one of the few instances of live orchestral performance north of the Arctic Circle.

The IMPERIAL PHILHARMONIC of Tokyo was formed in the winter of 1959, and gave its first concert January 25, 1960, under the direction of William Strickland. Since then, the ensemble has been active in the promotion of new music, and was the first to offer major American works to Japanese audiences, by such composers as Ives and Riegger.

(Original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)