

Montgomery Philharmonic 2014 - 2015 Concert Season – SINGULARITY

January 29, 2015

[Canticle for the Sun](#)[Le Froid de l'hiver](#)[Overture for Winds](#)[An American in Paris](#)[Tromphonium Musik](#)[Variations on America](#)

About Charles Ives

Charles Edward Ives was an American modernist composer. He is one of the first American composers of international renown, although his music was largely ignored during his life, and many of his works went unperformed for many years. What made Ives' music distinct was his ability to combine American popular music with American and European church music. He was influenced by both genres during his childhood because his father was an Army bandleader during the Civil War and also the local municipal band conductor in Danbury, Connecticut. In Ives' mind, his sound spectrum included hymns and traditional songs, the town band on the bandstand and at the holiday parade, the fiddlers at Saturday night dances, patriotic songs, and melodies by Stephen Foster. These influences combined to produce experimental music with polytonality, polyrhythms, tone clusters, aleatory elements, and quartertones. Ives was truly ahead of his time and much underappreciated. Ives won a 1947 Pulitzer Prize for his Symphony No. 3. Leonard Bernstein was a champion of Ives' music. He first brought Ives to the stage on a live radio broadcast of Ives' 2nd Symphony in 1951.

* **Born:** October 20, 1874, Danbury, CT

* **Died:** May 19, 1954, New York City, NY

* **Spouse:** Harmony Twitchell (m. 1908–1954)

* **Compositions:** Piano Sonata No. 2, The Unanswered Question,

* **Parents:** Mary Parmelee, George Edward Ives

* **Awards:** Pulitzer Prize for Music, Grammy Award for Best Classical Contemporary Composition

Charles Ives – *Variations on America* (orchestrated by William Schumann, 1963)

Written originally for organ, *Variations on America* has always excited audiences and performers alike. Ives wrote this set of variations at age 17 for a July 4th celebration in Brewster, New York. The work is a thematic statement with five variations and two interludes. Ives submitted it to several publishers, but it was summarily rejected, so the composition was put away in a drawer for several years. The famous American organist, E. Power Biggs, discovered and reassembled the piece in 1949. He performed the piece in 1962 at what is now known as Avery Fisher Hall at Lincoln Center. William Schuman, then the president of the Juilliard School, attended the concert and immediately felt that the piece should be orchestrated. In 1964, *Ives – Variations on America* was performed by the New York Philharmonic conducted by Andre Kostelanetz. William Schuman's orchestration vividly amplifies Ives' sense of unadulterated, irreverent fun. In Ives' set of variations, the orchestra plays in two different keys, playing the theme a la merry-go-round—in a minor key like a Spanish dance, and in a totally fragmented style. It was thought that Ives' use of musical unorthodoxy was an attempt at a young age to assert his independence from the genteel musical life of the 19th century.

Instrumentation –

3 flutes (2nd and 3rd doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns in F, 3 trumpets in C, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (3 players) snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, suspended cymbal, triangle, orchestral bells, xylophone, castanets, tambourine, violin 1, violin 2, viola, cello, double bass



1. Variations for Organ on "America" - American Jubilee

2. Schuman, W.: Symphony No. 8 - Night Journey - Ives, C.: Variations On America (orch. W. Schuman) - Gerard Schwarz & Seattle Symphony Orchestra

3. Star Spangled Songs - America's Greatest Hits - Various Artists

4. Stars and Stripes - An American Concert - Jerome Rosen, Boston Pops Orchestra & Arthur Fiedler



1. American Jubilee: Popular & Patriotic Works

2. Brahms: Haydn Variations; Reger: Mozart Variations; Ives/Schuman: Variations on America

3. Charles Ives: Variations on "America" (1891) for Organ; Adeste Fidelis In an Organ Prelude (1897) (Mercury Music Corp.)

4. Variations on "America", for Orchestra (Study Score)

5. Mad Music: Charles Ives, the Nostalgic Rebel

Artifact –

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-UZq09F9RR4>

– Performance of E. Power Biggs from Ives Original score.

<http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/2/28/CharlesEdwardIves1889.jpg/266px-CharlesEdwardIves1889.jpg>

– Charles Ives at about 17 years old when he wrote Variation on America

YouTube Video Links –

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NZ4eu53sP_s

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3rVZGlmIKLk>