

## ABSTRACT

Title of Document: VINTAGE MODERNISM: EARLY  
EXPERIMENTALIST MUSIC FOR VIOLIN IN  
THE UNITED STATES

Francis M. Liu, Doctor of Musical Arts, 2011

Directed By: David Salness  
Professor of Violin  
Director, Chamber Music Studies  
String Division, School of Music

The historical narrative of concert music in the early twentieth century has focused a great deal on the influence of European composers as well as the American composers who went to Europe to study. Often overlooked, however, is the influence of an entire generation of composers working in the United States during that time period. These artists experimented with polyrhythm, polytonality, dissonant counterpoint, and a whole host of other musical techniques in order to express their perceptions of a changing world. Over the years, the new techniques became associated with various movements including futurism, experimentalism and ultra-modernism. Regardless of label, these composers were some of the first to introduce the new musical styles to the listening public.

The recitals that make up this dissertation explore the sound world of experimentalist composers working in the United States during the early twentieth century. Serving as the foundation of these recitals are all four of the violin sonatas by Charles Ives, the “grandfather” of modernist music whose financial support helped to foster a whole generation of American composers. Also prominently featured is the music of Henry Cowell. His *Suite for Violin and Piano*, *Mosaic Quartet (String Quartet No. 3)*, and *Quartet Euphometric* demonstrate the composer's use of cluster tones, dissonant counterpoint, polymeter, and indeterminate form. Additional works by George Antheil, Leo Ornstein, Wallingford Riegger, Dane Rudhyar, Carl Ruggles, and Ruth Crawford (Seeger) highlight other approaches taken by members of the ultra-modernist movement. Rounding out the repertoire for these recitals are works by Johanna Beyer and Conlon Nancarrow, both of whom either worked with or were influenced by Cowell in some way.

All of the pieces selected date roughly from 1900 to the mid 1930's. Thus, the purpose of these recitals is not to provide a comprehensive overview of each composer's development, but rather to examine the influence and interconnections of a specific cross-section of the musical landscape.

"VINTAGE MODERNISM": EARLY EXPERIMENTALIST MUSIC FOR VIOLIN  
IN THE UNITED STATES

By

Francis M. Liu

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the  
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
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Advisory Committee:  
Professor David Salness, Chair  
Dr. James Fry  
Dr. James Stern  
Professor James Ross  
Professor Richard Klank

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1	<i>I. Largo</i>	
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4	<i>IV. Allegro marcato</i>	
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*All works on this CD performed by:*

*Francis Liu, violin  
Eliza Ching, piano*

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Francis Liu, violin  
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Nicholas Hodges, viola  
Elizabeth Meszaros, violoncello

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*Charles Ives*  
(1874-1954)

- 17 *I. Autumn*
- 18 *II. In the Barn*
- 19 *III. The Revival*

Francis Liu, violin  
David Ballena, piano

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<u>Track</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Composer</u>
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(1888-1944)

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- 3 *III. III*

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*“Children’s Day at the Camp Meeting”* (c.1911-1916)**

*Charles Ives*  
(1874-1954)

- 4 *I. Allegro*
- 5 *II. Largo*
- 6 *III. Allegro*

Francis Liu, violin  
David Ballena, piano

***String Quartet No. 1 (“Quartet Pedantic”) (1916)***

*Henry Cowell*  
(1897-1965)

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- 8 *II. Andante*

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*Henry Cowell*  
(1897-1965)

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CONCERT I RECITAL PROGRAM

THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND SCHOOL OF MUSIC  
PRESENTS

***VINTAGE MODERNISM***  
***EARLY EXPERIMENTALIST COMPOSERS***  
***IN THE UNITED STATES***

***FRANCIS LIU, VIOLIN***

***ELIZA CHING, PIANO***

***Thursday, February 4, 2010***  
***8:00 p.m.***  
***Joseph & Alma Gildenhorn Recital Hall***



*PROGRAM*

***Suite for Violin and Piano (1924)***

*Henry Cowell  
(1897-1965)*

- I. Largo*
- II. Allegretto*
- III. Andante tranquillo*
- IV. Allegro marcato*
- V. Andante calmato*
- VI. Presto*

***Sonata for Violin and Piano, Op. 26 (1915)***

*Leo Ornstein  
(1893-2002)*

- I. Moderato*
- II. Andante*
- III. Scherzo*
- IV. Finale: Moderato*

*INTERMISSION*

***Poems No. 1 and 2 (1920)***

*Dane Rudhyar  
(1895-1985)*

***Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano (c1914 or c1917)***

*Charles Ives  
(1874-1954)*

- I. Andante–Allegro vivace*
- II. Largo Cantabile*
- III. Allegro*

*This recital is being presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Doctor of Musical Arts Degree. Francis Liu is a student of David Salness.*

CONCERT II RECITAL PROGRAM

THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND SCHOOL OF MUSIC  
PRESENTS

***VINTAGE MODERNISM***

***EARLY EXPERIMENTALIST COMPOSERS  
IN THE UNITED STATES***

***FRANCIS LIU, VIOLIN***

***WITH***

***MICHAEL ANGELUCCI, PIANO***

***DAVID BALLENA, PIANO***

***NICHOLAS HODGES, VIOLA***

***ELIZABETH MESZAROS, VIOLONCELLO***

***JONATHAN RICHARDS, VIOLIN***

***SUN HA YOON, PIANO***

***Thursday, December 2, 2010***

***8:00 p.m.***

***Homer Ulrich Recital Hall***

*PROGRAM*

***Whimsy*** (1920)

*Wallingford Riegger*  
(1885-1961)

*Michael Angelucci, piano*

***Mood*** (1918. ed. 1975)

*Carl Ruggles*  
(1876-1971)  
(ed. John Kirkpatrick)

*Michael Angelucci, piano*

***Sonata for Violin and Piano*** (1926)

*Ruth Crawford (Seeger)*  
(1901-1953)

*I. Vibrante, agitato*

*II. Bouyant*

*III. Mistico, intenso*

*IV. Allegro*

*Sun Ha Yoon, piano*

***Second Sonata for Violin and Piano***  
***with Accompaniment of Drums*** (1923)

*George Antheil*  
(1900-1959)

*David Ballena, piano and drums*

*INTERMISSION*

***String Quartet No. 3***  
***“Mosaic Quartet”*** (1935)

*Henry Cowell*  
(1897-1965)

*Jonathan Richards, violin*

*Nicholas Hodges, viola*

*Elizabeth Meszaros, violoncello*

***Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano***  
(c 1917-1921)

*Charles Ives*  
(1874-1954)

*I. Autumn*

*II. In the Barn*

*III. The Revival*

*David Ballena, piano*

*This recital is being presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Doctor of Musical Arts Degree. Francis Liu is a student of David Salness.*

CONCERT III RECITAL PROGRAM

THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND SCHOOL OF MUSIC  
PRESENTS

***VINTAGE MODERNISM***

***EARLY EXPERIMENTALIST COMPOSERS***

***IN THE UNITED STATES***

***FRANCIS LIU, VIOLIN***

***WITH***

***MICHAEL ANGELUCCI, PIANO***

***DAVID BALLENA, PIANO***

***NICHOLAS HODGES, VIOLA***

***ELIZABETH MESZAROS, VIOLONCELLO***

***JONATHAN RICHARDS, VIOLIN***

***SUN HA YOON, PIANO***

***Monday, March 28, 2011***

***8:00 p.m.***

***Joseph & Alma Gildenhorn Recital Hall***

PROGRAM

**Suite for Violin and Piano (1937)**  
*I.–II.–III.*

*Johanna Beyer*  
*(1888-1944)*

*David Ballena, piano*

**Sonata No. 4 for Violin and Piano**  
**“Children’s Day at the Camp Meeting”**  
*(c.1911-1916)*

*Charles Ives*  
*(1874-1954)*

*I. Allegro*  
*II. Largo*  
*III. Allegro*

*David Ballena, piano*

**String Quartet No. 1 (“Quartet Pedantic”) (1916)**  
*I. Andante sostenuto– Allegro non troppo*  
*II. Andante*

*Henry Cowell*  
*(1897-1965)*

**Quartet Euphometric (1919)**

*Henry Cowell*  
*(1897-1965)*

*Jonathan Richards, violin*  
*Nicholas Hodges, viola*  
*Elizabeth Meszaros, violoncello*

INTERMISSION

**Toccata for Violin and Player Piano (1935)**

*Conlon Nancarrow*  
*(1912-1997)*

**Sonata No. 3 for Violin and Piano (c 1914)**  
*I. Verse 1 (Adagio)–Verse 2 (Andante)–*  
*Verse 3 (Allegretto)– Refrain (Adagio)*  
*II. Allegro*  
*III. Adagio*

*Charles Ives*  
*(1874-1954)*

*Sun Ha Yoon, piano*

*This recital is being presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Doctor of Musical Arts Degree. Francis Liu is a student of David Salness.*

## PROGRAM NOTES

### **VINTAGE MODERNISM: EARLY EXPERIMENTALIST MUSIC IN THE UNITED STATES**

“We have a history in this country, of which I consider myself a part of, of strange composers writing very weird music.”

-David Lang, speaking before a performance of George Antheil's *Ballet Mechanique*, Bang on a Can Marathon, Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, August 1, 2009

A 1907 article in the *North American Review* observed that the “...society which supports our symphony orchestras also supports an unwritten law that music is of Europe,” a fact the orchestra conductor should not forget, “whatever his regard for certain American works might be.”<sup>1</sup> This sentiment accurately captures the state of concert music in the United States at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Typical concert programs consisted of music that was both conservative and European, often focusing on composers such as Beethoven and Brahms. Meanwhile, the “contemporary” pieces that American critics railed against actually consisted of works by European composers dating from roughly 20 years earlier. Those American composers fortunate enough to have their works performed, people like George Whitefield Chadwick, Horatio Parker, John Knowles Paine, and Edward MacDowell, all studied in Germany and wrote music in a Romantic style.

Such a homogenous musical landscape may be difficult to imagine. After all, for most modern concert-goers it comes as no surprise to see Copland on the same concert program as Beethoven, or a piece by Monteverdi in the same performance as

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<sup>1</sup> Arthur Farwell, “The Struggle Toward a National Music,” *The North American Review*, Vol. 186, No. 625 (Dec., 1907), 570.

a premiere. The stark contrast between then and now asks us to examine how we have arrived at the plurality of styles we have in American concert halls today.

Understandably, the historical narrative of concert music in the early twentieth century has focused a great deal on the influence of both European composers, such as Schoenberg and Stravinsky, as well as the American composers who went to Europe to study. Yet there was also an entire generation of composers working in the United States during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that is often left unrecognized and unappreciated. These artists experimented with complex rhythms and raw dissonances, finding new techniques which enabled them to express their perceptions of a changing world. Over the years, these composers have been assigned various names, including ultra-modernists, futurists, and even the recently much-maligned term, mavericks. Regardless of the label, they are the American *avant-garde* in the truest sense, being some of the first to introduce the listening public to a whole host of new musical styles and techniques.

These three recitals will explore the music of some of these early experimentalist composers. All of the pieces selected date roughly from 1900 to the mid 1930's, and serve to illustrate the musical and personal connections within this specific cross-section of the musical landscape. Unfortunately, the Great Depression severely hampered or put an end to the careers of many of these composers, and much of the literature from this period has been neglected. As recent scholarship begins to unravel the influence of this experimentalist generation, the music is once again being discovered.

## CONCERT I

Thursday, February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2010 / 8:00 PM / Gildenhorn Recital Hall

### **Suite for Violin and Piano (1924)**

Henry Cowell (1897-1965)

Henry Cowell's name stands at the center of many of the institutions that have fostered the development of contemporary music in the United States. After founding the California Society for New Music in 1925, he went on, along with Edgar Varèse, to form the Pan American Association of Composers in 1928. His most enduring legacy is the *New Music Edition*, a quarterly publication he founded for the printing of new scores from the United States, Latin America, and Europe. From its first issue in 1927 until its transference to the Theodore Presser Company in 1958, it was one of the few avenues through which composers could get their works distributed. The list of composers who had works published through *New Music Edition* is impressive, and includes Babbitt, Becker, Cage, Carter, Copland, Cowell, Crawford, Feldman, Harrison, Ives, Nancarrow, Piston, Riegger, Rudhyar, Ruggles, Strang, Thomson, Varèse and Wolff.

Cowell's unique musical language stems from an equally unique upbringing. The child of two anarchist writers, he was raised without conventional schooling in impoverished circumstances. As a child, he came to the attention of Stanford University psychologist Lewis Terman, who was duly impressed with Cowell's "breadth of knowledge, conversational abilities, poor arithmetic and wretched spelling."<sup>2</sup> In 1914, Stanford English professor Samuel S. Seward created a fund to support the budding composer's musical endeavors. In this way Cowell was able to

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<sup>2</sup> David Nicholls, "Cowell, Henry," *Grove Music Online*, Oxford Music Online, 3 Feb. 2010 <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/06743>>.



attend classes in harmony, counterpoint, and contemporary music at the University of California, Berkeley. It was here that he came under the influence of musicologist Charles Seeger, who pronounced him an “autodidact.”

Cowell's formal musical training up to that point had been brief and sporadic. This lack of schooling, however, also enabled him to form certain musical ideas which he would consistently return to throughout his life. One of these was his love of tone clusters.

...I was invited to write music for an Irish play...which would introduce the home and the deep tides of Manaunaun, the god of the sea...This was a rather big job for a fifteen-year-old boy. I tried a couple of low octaves in a certain rhythm. They sounded just a little too definite...Then, I had the idea of having all thirteen of the lowest tones of the piano played together at the same time...I played this with the flat of the hand, being very careful to get all of the notes exactly equal and to have what I considered a reasonable tone quality there. In other words, I was inventing a new music sound later to be called tone clusters.<sup>3</sup>

Cowell undertook five European tours (1923, 1926, 1929, 1931, 1932), generating great publicity for himself and his tone clusters through the performances of his own pieces. It was during one of these tours that he met Bartók, who asked permission from Cowell for the use of these “secundal harmonies.”

Another of Cowell's interests, seemingly at odds with his modernist leanings, was his love of folk and world music.

I remember living in San Francisco, right near the Oriental district...When I was between seven and ten, I hummed Japanese, Chinese, and Tahitian tunes just as normally as I hummed the British tunes... Irish tunes... and classical melodies of Haydn and Mozart... I

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<sup>3</sup> Excerpt from interview with Henry Cowell. Vivian Perlis and Libby Van Cleve, *Composers' Voices from Ives to Ellington: An Oral History of American Music*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 160-162.

think that I got an idea of music in which the Orient and the Occident were not separated, but all fused in to one and the same thing...<sup>4</sup>

In the later half of his life, Cowell turned increasingly towards the study and teaching of world music, and his later compositions show the influence of his cross-cultural interests. Two of his pupils, Lou Harrison and John Cage, also showed great eclecticism in their musical tastes.

The *Suite for Violin and Piano*, an early work, is an excellent example of his ability to meld together many disparate stylistic elements into a cohesive whole. Figuring prominently in the suite is his use of tone clusters, but in a way that never obscures the clear, lyrical, and simple violin melody. Cowell also makes allusions to Baroque music, with running contrapuntal eighth notes and long held notes followed by short motivic fragments. The form of the piece is probably also an homage to the Baroque suite. These stylistic ingredients, combined with his unusual irregular phrasing and dissonant colors, make this work recognizably Cowell's.

***Sonata for Violin and Piano, Op. 26 (1915)***  
Leo Ornstein (1893-2002)

Leo Ornstein counts as one of the most enigmatic figures among the ultra-modernists. As a young child he studied at St. Petersburg Conservatory, even playing violin under Rimsky-Korsakov in the student orchestra, before eventually emigrating to New York in 1907. There he studied piano at the Institute of Musical Art (later known as the Julliard School) under Bertha Fiering Tapper, grooming himself for a career as a virtuosic pianist. All indications foretold the beginnings of a successful, if

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 158.

not conventional, career. Yet by 1913, with no previous known experience with modern music, Ornstein began to hear pieces in his head.

...the *Danse sauvage*- that was written by a young person who had no experience whatever with modern music- I still wonder at the age of eighty, why should I have thought of that? I'd been sitting at the piano practicing the (Liszt) Twelfth Rhapsody to astonish the ladies with the speed and accuracy of the passages- and blind the audience with the terrific glissandos and whatnot. Don't ask me why suddenly, having had no experience whatever, that thing came into my head—I'll be blessed if I know—. And as a matter of fact, I really doubted my sanity at first. I simply said, "What is that?" It was so completely removed from any experience I had ever had.<sup>5</sup>

As a performer he gained a name for himself through his virtuosic playing of standard repertoire. His notoriety increased when he began to include more modern works, playing his own pieces as well as those of Bartók, Ravel, Schoenberg, and Scriabin. As one critic stated in a 1914 review, "The audience remained to the end, hypnotized as a rabbit by a snake." Amazingly, many of Ornstein's pieces were published soon after their composition, including *Suicide on an Airplane* (c 1913), *Danse sauvage* (c 1913), and *Three Moods* (c 1914). The writer Waldo Frank declared that between Ornstein, Schoenberg, and Stravinsky, "Leo Ornstein, the youngest of these, gives promise to be the greatest."<sup>6</sup> In 1922, however, Ornstein abruptly withdrew from concertizing and rarely appeared thereafter. He continued to compose and teach, but from then on lead a much more private life. The reasons for this abrupt change are a mystery. Fortunately, he was rediscovered in the 1970's by historian Vivian Perlis, and his music has once again enjoyed a revival of interest.

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<sup>5</sup> Excerpt from interview with Leo Ornstein. Perlis, 87.

<sup>6</sup> Waldo Frank, "Leo Ornstein and the Emancipated Music," typescript for article in *Onlooker*, 1916. Ornstein Papers, Yale Music Library.; quoted in Perlis, 74.

Ornstein's compositional process was highly unorthodox. He often committed, or claimed to commit, whole works to memory before feverishly writing them down. Therefore, each piece was a product of spontaneous creativity. This way of thinking about composing may have been influenced by the ideas of Henri Bergson. As Ornstein stated, “if it nags at me long enough, I’ve got to just put it down, if for no other reason than to get it out of my system. Sometimes it’s so irritating to be around and around in my head, and it can be almost an unpleasant feeling.”<sup>7</sup> Ornstein was also little concerned with “style,” instead focusing on the emotional impact of the work. He stated that when writing music, he was “not thinking of experiments,” but rather “of projecting something of substance or of having some musical value.”<sup>8</sup>

The *Violin Sonatas, Op. 26 and Op. 31* were both composed around 1915. Of the two works, the Op. 31 sonata is better known for its strident atonality and obvious modernist style. The Op. 26, which we will be performed here tonight, is a bit more conventional, but nevertheless a highly lyrical and evocative work. Listeners may hear connections with Debussy in the way that Ornstein employs quartal and quintal chords, ornate flowing sixteenth-note passages, and chordal planing. The second movement consists of flowing melodic material in the violin over a continuous series of chord clusters. Unlike the block clusters used by Cowell, Ornstein tends to vary the color of his chords by spreading out his cluster groups with different gaps in register. The third movement, a biting Scherzo with contrasting trio, brings us to the last movement. Themes from the second movement once again make an appearance at the end of the finale, and Ornstein ends the piece in a way that is somber and haunting.

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<sup>7</sup> Excerpt from interview with Leo Ornstein. Perlis, 86.

<sup>8</sup> Excerpt from interview with Leo Ornstein. Perlis, 90-91.

The music of Ornstein aims for connection more through its emotional force rather than through its intellectual rigor. As a performer-composer who wrote his music in a spontaneously inspired manner, Ornstein bridges the transition between Romanticism and Modernism.

***Poems No. 1 and 2 (1920)***  
Dane Rudhyar (1895-1985)

Dane Rudhyar was a true polymath, with interests in music, art, philosophy, theosophy, poetry, and astrology. Born in France under the name Daniel Chennevière, Rudhyar began playing piano at age 7 and composing at age 16. The following year, he published three short piano pieces with Durand in addition to the second part of a book, *Claude Debussy and the Cycle of Musical Civilization*. Intrigued by the opportunities he saw for artistic and spiritual growth in the United States, Rudhyar emigrated in 1916, changing his name in the process. Influenced by his study of Rosicrucianism, Buddhism, Baha'i movement, and Theosophy, the composer adopted the name Rudhyar, derived from the Sanskrit word *rudra*, meaning dynamic action.

Rudhyar was well connected to the ultra-modernist music community. As he stated in an interview with Vivian Perlis, he knew both Ornstein and a very young Henry Cowell.

I met Henry Cowell in 1921 in that little group called Halcyon, which was the Temple of the People, to which his mother had belonged... I was staying with people from Java, and I went with them to Theosophical convention. It was that first evening of the convention when I was introduced to Cowell, who I knew was a composer. I had heard his name from Ornstein... Cowell was a young kid in his teens. We became very good friends and we started some things together.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Excerpt from interview with Dane Rudhyar. Perlis, 131.

Rudhyar was also familiar with the work of Carl Ruggles, and wrote articles on developments in “dissonant polyphony.” In typical florid language, Rudhyar stated that the music of Ruggles was not the “rather dry structures of Schönberg” but contained “musical substance organized and dynamized by an inner breath, which either is full of peace, as in his "Angels", or stirs with an intense emotional surge, as in his "Portals.”<sup>10</sup> Statements like these show that like Ornstein, Rudhyar may have also been inspired by the ideas of Henri Bergson.

Rudhyar's approach to music was inseparable from his way of thinking about life, and focused on dissonance as a celebration of the resounding spirit. Assuming the role of mystic, his metaphysical approach to dissonance greatly influenced composers such as Cowell, Ruggles, and Ruth Crawford Seeger. Musicologist Carol Oja points out that like Rudhyar, Charles Seeger was also developing ideas on dissonance at this time, but in a much more formalized fashion.

Seeger developed a systematic theory of dissonant counterpoint; Rudhyar, on the other hand, expressed little interest in systems of any kind... Yet in many respects, the two men were not so far apart. Both sought to devise a dissonant form of music expression emblematic of the New World, and their ideas affected the same group of composers.<sup>11</sup>

Rudhyar expressed dislike for intellectualized thematic development, especially in symphonies that “try to extract from some initial statement every possible arrangement of notes still somehow referable to it.”<sup>12</sup> Thus, his works are often grand but not necessarily tightly organized. Like the pieces that will be played tonight, his

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<sup>10</sup> Dane Rudhyar, “Carl Ruggle, Pioneer- As Seen by a Fellow Modernist,” *Musical America* (Aug 1927); quoted on Rudhyar Archival Project, 7 April 2011, <<http://khaldea.com/rudhyar/rugglespioneer.html>>

<sup>11</sup> Carol Oja, *Making Music Modern: New York in the 1920's*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 99.

<sup>12</sup> Leyla Rael, Liner Notes, *Dane Rudhyar: Advent, Crisis & Overcoming, Transmutation*. Composers Recordings, 1994.

works focus on transformation, using flowing dissonant chords to build and form the “cumulative resonance” he speaks of in his writings.

Following the onset of the Great Depression, Rudhyar began concentrating his efforts in the field of astrology, an area in which he is perhaps better known. There was, however, a renewed interest in his music beginning in the 1970's, and he maintained a vibrant and productive musical output until the end of his life. He seemed unperturbed by any perceived success or lack of it in the field of music.

...I have the yin and yang approach to life...most of the Western world has run in the yang approach, where you are forcing your will upon life. Yin allows life to express, allows the universe to sing to you. And you don't oppose anything to it. You guide it, but must allow life to lead you.”<sup>13</sup>

***Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano*** (c 1914 or c 1917)  
Charles Ives (1874-1954)

Of all the composers on the program tonight, Ives is perhaps the most familiar name to listeners, enjoying the role of “grandfather” to modernist music in the United States. Although he composed his pieces at the same time that Ornstein was writing and concertizing, Ives did not have many of his works performed until much later. Instead, he labored in private obscurity, composing in his free hours when not at work at his insurance agency. Freed from having to write music in order to generate income, Ives seemed to relish being able to compose in any style he saw fit, stating much later that “I seemed to have worked with more natural freedom when I knew the music was not going to be inflicted on others.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Excerpt from interview with Dane Rudhyar. Perlis, 133-136.

<sup>14</sup> Charles Ives, *Memos*, ed. John Kirkpatrick, (New York: Norton, 1972), 128.

The music of Ives utilizes many of the techniques that would later be adopted by composers in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These include tone clusters, polytonality, polyrhythms, and quartal and quintal harmonies. This wealth of innovation may have stemmed from his unusual music studies with his father, the bandleader George Ives, who encouraged his son to write bitonal harmonizations of *London Bridge* and polytonal canons and fugues. Ives also received a firm grounding in Romantic theory and counterpoint from Horatio Parker at Yale University, training that was further reinforced by his work as a part-time church organist.

Unlike some composers who focus their energies on completing a single piece within a short period of time, Ives seems to have written whole groups of pieces at once. He would then revise these pieces over subsequent decades. This makes dating his works particularly difficult. In Ives' *Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano*, the first and second movements were written roughly around 1906, and then revised in 1910-12, 1914, and 1917. The third movement, started in 1909, was also revised in the same years. Therefore, the entire sonata was assembled circa 1914 or 1917 and finally premiered in 1928 through Cowell's New Music Society.<sup>15</sup>

Ives had the following to say about his sonata:

This sonata is in part a general impression, a kind of reflection and remembrance of the peoples' outdoor gatherings in which men got up and said what they thought, regardless of the consequences—of holiday celebrations and camp meetings in the 80's and 90's—suggesting some of the songs, tunes, and hymns, together with some of

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<sup>15</sup> The dates listed in this program are taken from James Peter Burkholder, et al. "Ives, Charles." *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*. 7 Apr. 2011  
<<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/14000>>. Interestingly enough, Ives himself states that, "I remember starting the first theme, just the first Sunday after (I) gave up playing in church, June 8, 1902..."; quoted in Charles Ives, *Memos*, 68. For more information regarding the dating of Ives' manuscripts based on handwriting and music paper types, see Gayle Sherwood, "The Choral Works of Charles Ives: Chronology, Style and Reception," Diss. (Yale University, 1995).



the sounds of nature joining in from the mountains in some of the old Connecticut farm towns.

The first movement may, in a way, suggest something that nature and human nature would sing out to each other—sometimes. The second movement, a mood when "The Old Oaken Bucket" and "Tramp, Tramp, Tramp, the Boys are Marching" would come over the hills, trying to relive the sadness of the old Civil War Days. And the third movement, the hymns and the actions at the farmers' camp meeting inciting them to "work for the night is coming."<sup>16</sup>

The composer's description of the piece and his use of song quotations serve to highlight his emotional approach to the composition, an aspect that is often overlooked given the work's technical complexity. By using familiar tunes, or at least ones lodged in our collective consciousness, the composer is able to summon up memories and emotions, concentrating and re-purposing them for greater effect. In many ways, this use of quotation also reflects his interest in transcendentalism, which believed in following the power of one's intuition in order to achieve an idealized spiritual state.<sup>17</sup>

In order to understand these pieces, one has to examine the way Ives wove his musical quotations into the very texture of the music, slowly highlighting and clarifying their presence over the course of a movement. A single hymn might provide the main thematic material for an entire piece, but instead of stating it outright at the beginning, Ives introduces it in fragments. He then develops these fragments, often pairing them with a contrasting countermelody paraphrased from the

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<sup>16</sup> Ives, *Memos*, 68.

<sup>17</sup> Although Ives' obviously quotes from many sources, it would be difficult to argue that the music is clearly programmatic. As J. Peter Burkholder states regarding Ives' *Second Symphony*, "... (it) is not a program symphony but a character piece. When it is so difficult to recognize the source tunes, and when they are so transformed that in most cases only brief fragments appear in their original forms, it is clear that the intended meaning is carried by the melodies themselves, not by the their associated texts." James Peter Burkholder, *All Made of Tunes*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 134.

very same hymn. J. Peter Burkholder calls this a “*cumulative form*, a thematic, non-repetitive form in which the principal theme is presented, not at the beginning as in traditional forms, but near the end and is preceded, not followed, but its development.”<sup>18</sup> Ives sometimes creates an original countermelody instead of paraphrasing one, but the overall approach remains the same. His use of cumulative setting is clearly the method favored for the majority of the violin sonata movements.

The first movement of the first sonata is an excellent example of this approach in action. At the opening of the work, slow and lyrical fragments introduce parts of the hymn, “Shining Shore.” While the first few bars of “Shining Shore” provide the movement's main thematic material, the second half of the hymn forms the countermelody. These two ideas are developed over the course of the movement, but only at the climax of the piece are they finally presented in their complete form. The main theme appears in the piano, while the violin plays the countermelody. A return of the introduction brings the movement to a close, but not before the violin plays a thematic fragment from the next movement.

The second movement also follows a general ABA form, but rather than using a cumulative setting, the song quotations swirl about in a much freer fashion. Many of the ideas in the second movement come from the song, “The Old Oaken Bucket.” The text of the song is quite moving, and lyrics such as “How dear to my heart are the scenes of my childhood,/ When fond recollection presents them to view,” may have helped Ives envision the mood he was trying to capture in the music.<sup>19</sup> A faster contrasting middle section borrows from “Tramp, Tramp, Tramp,” before the music

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 137.

<sup>19</sup> One can find numerous editions of “The Old Oaken Bucket” on the Library of Congress “American Sheet Music” website. <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/smhtml/smhome.html>

returns to the opening material. Before the very end, a final rude interruption in fortississimo (*fff*) of “Work Song,” foreshadows the third movement.

The final movement actually uses two cumulative settings. The first one, forming the beginning and ending of the movement, sets the hymn, “Work Song.” A contrasting middle section serves as the emotional heart of the piece, and cumulatively sets yet another Lowell Mason song, “Watchman Tell Us of the Night”. In the violin sonatas, Ives' musical quotations usually appear without words. In this one, however, he takes the unusual step of including the song text in both the violin and piano parts. “Watchmen, tell us of the night, what its signs of promise are./ Traveller, o'er yon mountain's height, See that glory beaming star!/ Watchman, aught of joy or hope?/ Traveller, Yes!/ Traveller, Yes!/ Traveller, yes it brings the day, Promised day of Israel./ Dos't thou see its beauteous ray? Traveller, See!”<sup>20</sup>

## **PROGRAM II**

Thursday, December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2010 / 8:00 PM / Ulrich Recital Hall

### **Whimsy (1920)**

Wallingford Riegger (1885-1961)

“My advent as a composer can hardly be described as meteoric.”<sup>21</sup> -Wallingford Riegger

Riegger actually began his musical career as a cellist and conductor; he sat principal cellist of the St. Paul Symphony Orchestra for three years before traveling to Germany in 1914 to become the assistant conductor of the Würzburg Stadttheater. Returning to the United States, he was unable to find work as a conductor, and found

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<sup>20</sup> Charles Ives, *First Sonata for Violin and Piano*, (New York: Peer Music, 1953).

<sup>21</sup> Richard F. Goldman and Wallingford Riegger, “The Music of Wallingford Riegger.” *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Jan., 1950), 40.

himself in increasingly isolated teaching positions.<sup>22</sup> Although he had studied composing as a student, it was only now that he turned to it with any serious intent. At the age of 35, he produced his opus one, a romantic piano trio which won the Paderewski Prize in 1921. A later piece, *La belle dame sans merci*, made him the first American to win the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge prize in 1924.

Even with these initial successes, his changing musical taste caused him to veer away from this early romantic style to one that was more modernist and dissonant. This did not always sit well with audiences. In 1929, his *Study in Sonority*, (for ten violins or multiples thereof) was premiered by Leopold Stokowski to loud catcalls.<sup>23</sup> Regardless, Riegger remained committed to the cause of ultra-modernism, devoting himself to the Pan American Association of Composers and to Henry Cowell's *New Music*. Meanwhile, he continued to work as an editor and arranger in order to pay the bills. In 1944, he wrote a series of piano works, entitled *New and Old*, through which he sought to “focus attention on the continuity of musical evolution,” and show that modernism did “not imply a complete break with the past.”<sup>24</sup> Partially a treatise and partially a collection of piano pieces, each work in the volume illustrates specific modernist compositional practices, such as “The Augmented Triad” or “Dissonant Counterpoint.” Towards the later part of his life, he met with greater financial and critical success. He composed numerous works for

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<sup>22</sup> Isolated is a matter of perception and historical context. His positions teaching positions included Drake University, Des Moines, 1919–22, the Institute of Musical Art, 1925–6 (later renamed Juilliard), and Ithaca College, 1926–8.

<sup>23</sup> Regarding Riegger's work, *Dichotomy*, the critic Walther Abendroth wrote, “It sounded like a pack of rats were being slowly tortured to death, and meanwhile, from time to time, a dying cow groaned.” *Allgemeine Musikzeitung*, Berlin, March 25, 1932; quoted in Nicholas Slonimsky, *Lexicon of Music Invektive: Critical Assaults on Composers Since Beethoven's Time*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2000), 142.

<sup>24</sup> Wallingford Riegger, *New and Old: Twelve Pieces for Piano*, (New York: Boosey and Hawkes, 1947), preface.

Martha Graham, and also received a New York Music Critics' Circle Award for his Symphony No. 3.

*Whimsy* is a virtuosic fantasy that dates from Riegger's early period, making use of a harmonic language influenced by Debussy and Ravel. It exists in two version, one for violin and one for cello. The violin version, which we will hear tonight, is similar to the cello version save for the use of octaves and pizzicati that allow for a more spectacular effect.

**Mood** (1918, ed. 1975)  
Carl Ruggles (1876-1971)  
(edited by John Kirkpatrick)

“I remember going to see (Ruggles) one time, and I stayed outside while he played an eleven-tone chord- ten with the fingers and singing a raucous tone to make the eleventh- then he'd stop and then he'd do it over again. I waited fifteen minutes or so, and then I went in and I said, 'Why were playing that chord over and over?' He said, 'I'm giving it the test of time...If I could stand it myself after playing it fifty or sixty times, I don't see why you have to wait fifty or sixty years to find out whether it's good or not.'” -Henry Cowell<sup>25</sup>

Born to one of the oldest families in Massachusetts, Carl Ruggles is one of the more colorful characters of this period. A close friend of Ives and Cowell, Ruggles was known for being outspoken, cantankerous, and opinionated, often preferring to compose using “crayons, mostly red and blue, on brown paper of various sizes.”<sup>26</sup> In addition to teaching at various private schools and universities, Ruggles was an active lecturer and painter, selling works to private and museum collections. His orchestral suite, *Men and Mountains*, was published in the first issue of Cowell's *New Music Edition* in 1924, and his largest orchestral composition, *Sun-Treader*, was premiered

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<sup>25</sup> Excerpt from interview with Henry Cowell. Perlis, 123.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 122.

by Nicholas Slonimsky in Paris and Berlin in 1936. Regarding Ruggles' music, Cowell was very complimentary:

The sense of sonority which was so consistently developed all through the writings of Ruggles meant that at all points there had to be at least one very dissonant tone, among others which in themselves might form triads or other chords of not too dissonant a nature, so that he had a real woven texture in which he was able to balance dissonance and consonance and make a fabric out of this...I only hope history will show that he's written a large enough body of works so that his fame will endure, because it should be deserved. If Schoenberg had been just a very nice, pleasant man and not at all neurotic, he might have written music as pleasant as Ruggles.<sup>27</sup>

Ruggles experimented with new methods of contrapuntal dissonance. His approach did not always follow Cowell's method of dissonant counterpoint. Regardless, in his book, *New Musical Resources*, Cowell singles out Ruggles for his innovative developments.

Carl Ruggles has developed a process for himself... which embodies a new principle and is more purely contrapuntal than a consideration of harmonic intervals. He finds that if the same note is repeated in a melody before enough notes have intervened... there is a sense of tautology, because the melody should have processed to a fresh note instead of to a note already in the consciousness of the listener. Therefore Ruggles writes at least seven or eight different notes in a melody before allowing himself to repeat the same even in the octave.<sup>28</sup>

The need to cycle through tones is vaguely reminiscent of Schoenberg, but it is method that follows an intuitive rather than purely logical process. Cowell goes on to state that it is impossible to predict whether “any of these processes will result in a system.”<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Excerpt from interview with Henry Cowell. Ibid., 123

<sup>28</sup> Henry Cowell, *New Musical Resources*, ed. David Nicholls, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 41-42.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. 42.

Throughout his life Ruggles had a habit of destroying his own works, so his compositional output is relatively small. Although skilled at the violin, *Mood* represents the only piece we know of written for his own instrument. It was arranged from sketches by his friend John Kirkpatrick, who found it in the 1960's while arranging the composer's papers. The piece employs an ABAC form, highlighted by the repeated return of a dark and brooding melodic motif.

**Sonata for Violin and Piano (1926)**

Ruth Crawford (Seeger) (1901-1953)

Ruth Crawford (Seeger) is best known not only as a composer, but also as a specialist in American folk music, editing and transcribing many important anthologies in the 1940's and 50's. In the 1920's she gained recognition as a modernist composer, and began learning dissonant counterpoint with Henry Cowell and Carl Ruggles. She then went on to study with Cowell's mentor Charles Seeger, whom she later married. In a letter to her student Vivian Fine, she expressed her excitement at the idea of using dissonant counterpoint.

Would you not be intrigued by the idea of writing counterpoint, not in an idiom which you will never use, but in an idiom which seems to be your spontaneous mode of expression? The principal excuse for counterpoint is that of discipline. You will have even more of this in dissonant counterpoint than in old modal counterpoint.<sup>30</sup>

In 1930 she was awarded a Guggenheim fellowship in composition, spending the year abroad in Berlin. Her compositional output waned in the 1930's as she diverted her energies to documenting folk music for the Library of Congress. A number of her

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<sup>30</sup> Letter from Ruth Crawford to Vivian Fine, November 7, 1929; quoted in John Spiker, "Substituting a new order": Dissonant counterpoint, Henry Cowell, and the network of ultra-modern composers," Diss. (Florida State University, 2010), 103.

children became professional musicians; of these, her stepson, Pete Seeger, is probably the most well-known.

The *Sonata for Violin and Piano* demonstrates the composer's love of irregular meters and harmonies. The movement titles show the mystical influence of fellow composer Dane Rhudyar, who like Crawford was interested in spiritualism and theosophy. The violin melody in the first movement prominently features seventh and ninth intervals. In the sonata's second movement, the composer makes use of rhythmic ostinati in order to set up a mesmerizing and mechanistic effect. A slow and desolate third movement leads attacca into the fourth, a quasi-rondo that ends with a return of the opening material from the first movement.

**Second Sonata for Violin and Piano with Accompaniment of Drums (1923)**  
George Antheil (1900-1959)

“Quite a number of observers have commented on my coolness during various riotous concerts...The reason was simple: I was armed...I had played a concert at the Philharmonie in Budapest, and the audience had rioted...at my second appearance, I walked out on the concert platform, bowed...and produced my ugly little automatic. Without a further word I placed it on the front desk of my Steinway and proceeded with my concert. Every note was heard...” -George Antheil<sup>31</sup>

Whether truth or hyperbole, Antheil's exploits are well-documented in his highly entertaining biography, *Bad Boy of Music*. Beginning his musical career in Europe as a pianist, he quickly developed a reputation as a composer for writing mechanistic music in a thoroughly modernist style. On October 4, 1923, a performance of his piano pieces at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées resulted in a riot, guaranteeing his notoriety. During this time, he also developed connections with other modernist artists, including Joyce, Pound, Yeats, Satie, and Picasso. He is best

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<sup>31</sup> George Antheil, *Bad Boy of Music*, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1981), 5-6.



known work for his work, *Ballet Mécanique*, originally written for sixteen player pianos in four parts, two regular pianos, three xylophones, electric bells, propellers, siren, bass drums, and tam-tam. Returning to the United States, he was unable to achieve the same level of success that he had attained in Europe, especially after his music changed to a more neo-romantic style. Settling in Hollywood, he wrote his biography, contributed regularly to *Esquire* magazine, and along with actress Hedy Lamarr, patented a frequency-hopping torpedo guidance system.

The *Second Sonata* was written for violinist Olga Rudge, mistress to Ezra Pound. Antheil supplied the following liner notes regarding the piece for a 1927 Carnegie Hall performance:

...a composite composition somewhat relative to the Picasso 1918 cubist period in which Picasso assembled into one picture banal commonplaces as café tables, mandolines, bit of actual newspaper, etc. The piano is treated percussively and is a many-teethed and pointed instrument against the, in this case, banal violin. The spirit of the music represents one phase of America- cubistic tin-pan alley. The thematic material in both original and from sentimental tunes long since become ridiculous. The whole goes into a final duet between bass drum and violin, in which the piano is abandoned, having gradually worked up to the percussive state where it finds its most complete expression in the drum rather than upon the keys.<sup>32</sup>

Antheil quotes Tin Pan Alley songs such as “In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree,” and “Silver Threads Among the Gold.” Other sources include “Come Back to Sorrento,” and Debussy's *Rêverie*. The piece ends with fragments from “Streets of Cairo” (also known as “The Hootchy-Kootchy Dance”) played over a quasi-habanera rhythm in the drums.

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<sup>32</sup> “Sonata for Violin, Piano and Drum,” Program Notes, Carnegie Hall Concert, April 10, 1927, Antheil Estate; quoted in Linda Whitesitt, *The Life and Music of George Antheil, 1900-1959*, (Michigan, UMI Research Press, 1983), 98.

**String Quartet No. 3 “Mosaic Quartet” (1935)**  
Henry Cowell (1897-1965)

The term “dissonant counterpoint” has already been used repeatedly in this program, yet it is not so easy to define what that means. In musical writings of the period, the phrase was often “applied to such diverse composers as Hindemith, with his neoclassic models, and Carl Ruggles, with atonality as his goal.”<sup>33</sup> For its creators, dissonant counterpoint was not meant to be a catch-all phrase, but actually denoted a much more rigorous system. Charles Seeger, one of the developers of the system, stated that it was “a new counterpoint in which you prepared and resolved consonance, not dissonance, and the first-species counterpoint was all dissonance.”<sup>34</sup>

In *New Musical Resources*, Cowell provides similar guidelines.

The first and last chords would be now not consonant, but dissonant; ...although consonant chords were admitted...In this system major sevenths and minor seconds and ninths would be the foundation intervals; major seconds and ninths, diminished fifths, and minor sevenths might be used as alternatives; all thirds, fourths, fifths, and sixths would only be permitted as passing or auxiliary notes. Octaves would be so far removed from the fundamental intervals that they would probably sound inconsistent and might not be used except in the rarest circumstances.<sup>35</sup>

Cowell and others felt that the emancipation of dissonance was the next logical step in the evolution of harmony, and that the creation of dissonant counterpoint would allow American composers to assert independence from their European origins. Even in the midst of turning the rules of counterpoint upside-down, this system could still

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<sup>33</sup> Judith Tick, *Ruth Crawford Seeger: A Composer's Search for American Music*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 83.

<sup>34</sup> Excerpt from interview with Charles Seeger. Perlis, 143. In his dissertation, John Spiker lays out a compelling case that that Cowell and Seeger both had an active part in its development, although each later tried to distance himself from the other. See Spiker, "Substituting a new order": Dissonant counterpoint, Henry Cowell, and the network of ultra-modern composers."

<sup>35</sup> Cowell, *New Musical Resources*, 39.

logically account for the use of consonance, a trait they felt was lacking in the music of Schoenberg.

Dissonant counterpoint plays a large part of Cowell's *Mosaic Quartet*. For example, in the first movement, most vertical harmonies contain at least one dissonant interval. Other movements of the piece display a much freer of consonance. The main preoccupation of this piece, however, is its use of form. It consists of five movements which “may be played in any desired order,” opening up a whole range of possible interpretations regarding the piece's overall structure. As Cowell states, “One suggested way of performance is to alternate movements... Each movement must be understood as being a unit within the total mosaic pattern of the form.”<sup>36</sup>

### **Second No. 2 for Violin and Piano (c 1917-1921)**

Charles Ives (1874-1954)

“Ives was the most paradoxical person I have ever known...he could write in perfectly conventional language and give it a kind of turn and a kind of fantasy that we value still today. But also he could write the most outrageous music in the view of his times. In his human relations he had one of the kindest hearts that ever existed, but he is at times positively cruel to performers.

...The two composers I knew well- Ruggles and Ives- I can see now that they were both unaware of coming to a strange stopping place in their composing: Ruggles to the inability to integrate a musical form in his own style after 1945; Ives to a blind spot in his failing to grant his masterpieces certain rights of their own. I see that I've referred to my deep affection for Ives in the past tense- not true at all. My love and reverence for him is now stronger than ever.” -John Kirkpatrick<sup>37</sup>

The first and second movements of Ives' *Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano* were written roughly around 1914, and then revised in 1920-21. The third movement,

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<sup>36</sup> Henry Cowell, *Mosaic Quartet*, (New York: Associated Publishers Inc., 1962), cover page.

<sup>37</sup> Excerpt from interview with John Kirkpatrick. Perlis, 25-26.

started in 1915-17, was also revised in the same years.<sup>38</sup> Ives' description of this sonata in his book, *Memos*, is the briefest of the four.

The Third Violin Sonata (called the Second) has a second movement based, to a great extent, on old ragtime stuff, [which] was written about the time that I started and wrote so many of these ragtime dances, all of them a great deal the same, around 1902 and 1904. But the other movements were finished after the First Sonata (probably referring to Ives' Pre-First Sonata), and copied out in 1909 and 1910.<sup>39</sup>

This sonata is the only one of the four to have actual titles for movements. The first title, "Autumn," comes from the hymn that forms the basis of this movement's cumulative setting. The themes taken from "Autumn" are paired with a paraphrased countermelody derived from the same song. The music alternates between slow introductory and fast developmental sections, building up to a culminating moment at the end of the movement where the hymn finally appears in full glory.<sup>40</sup> In the second movement, called "In the Barn," Ives' own fiddle and ragtime tunes are freely interspersed with quotes from "Turkey in the Straw," "Sailor's Hornpipe," "Money Musk," "The White Cockade," and a slightly twisted version of "Battle Cry of Freedom." The whole movement has the festive, fast-paced, and mercurial feeling of a barn dance. The last movement, entitled "The Revival," highlights the hymn,

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<sup>38</sup> Burkholder, "Ives, Charles" *Grove Music Online*. Ives maintained a number of lists throughout his life detailing his works and dates of composition. One list states that the Second Sonata is 25 minute work, whose dates are 1902-1909. In another, later list, the sonata is now 15 minutes long, and the dates are 1903-1909. See Ives, *Memos*, 150, 161. Based on Gayle Sherwood's paper analysis, the work on the first version of the first movement began in 1907, and it seems unlikely that the work (at least the first movement) predated 1907. See Sherwood; quoted in Burkholder, *All Made of Tunes*, 454.

<sup>39</sup> Ives, *Memos*, 69.

<sup>40</sup> According to Clayton Henderson, Ives may have also used a fragment of Steven Foster's "Oh! Susanna!" in measure 19. See Clayton Henderson, *The Charles Ives Tunebook*, Bibliographies in American Music, 14 (Warren, Michigan: Harmonie Park Press., 1990). Burkholder argues that Ives "probably did not intend such a reference," given that the music is attributable to the theme and countermelody derived from *Autumn*. More importantly, "there is no reason of program or character for introducing this minstrel song into a movement based on this hymn..." Burkholder, *All Made of Tunes*, 455.

“Nettleton.” Many other texts have been set to this same tune, but most people will probably recognize the melody as “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing.” Unique to this third movement is the absence of a countermelody. Therefore, all motives are drawn from the hymn's opening few bars. These ideas often appear in canon, and the violin and piano alternate playing the beginning (bars 1-4) and bridge (bars 8-10) of the hymn. With each repetition, Ives varies the texture and activity of the music, carefully pacing the dynamics in order to carry the momentum forward to a final statement of the theme.<sup>41</sup>

### **PROGRAM III**

Monday, March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2011 / 8:00 PM / Gildenhorn Recital Hall

#### **Suite for Violin and Piano (1937)**

Johanna Beyer (1888-1944)

Despite being active in contemporary music circles of the time, surprisingly little is known about Johanna Beyer, which may have been due in part to her “quiet and painfully shy nature.”<sup>42</sup> A German immigrant who received a thorough but conservative musical training from her home country, Beyer came to the United States in 1924. She proceeded to study at Mannes College, where she came under the influence of Henry Cowell, enrolling in classes along with fellow students Sidney Cowell and John Cage. After Mannes, Beyer maintained connections with Cowell, and went on to study with Dane Rudhyar, Ruth Crawford, and Charles Seeger.

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<sup>41</sup> According to Lawrence Perkins, the movement can be seen as a series of verses and refrains, the former using the first 4 bars of “Nettleton” and the later using bars 8-10. See Lawrence Perkins, “The Sonatas for Violin and Piano by Charles Ives.” M.M. Thesis, (Easman School of Music, 1961).

<sup>42</sup> John Kennedy and Larry Polansky, “‘Total Eclipse’: The Music of Johanna Magdalena Beyer,” *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 80, No. 4 (Winter, 1996), 720.

The *Suite for Violin and Piano* clearly shows the influence of Beyer's teachers, with its emphasis of poly-rhythms, dissonant counterpoint<sup>43</sup>, and dark brooding qualities. The three-movement suite begins with a lone violin melody that returns in various guises to anchor and unify the movements. In the first movement, the violin plays in patterns of four, while the piano enters with repeated octaves in patterns of three. The independence of these rhythmic trajectories is the very basis for their interaction. This idea is further explored in the second movement, though this time the roles are reversed; the piano is now in four, and the violin in three. A violin cadenza takes us to the end of the second movement, with octaves in the piano once again echoing the opening material. In the final movement, melodic material alternates freely between violin and piano before a final statement of four against three brings the work to a close.

**Sonata No. 4 for Violin and Piano “Children's Day at the Camp Meeting” (c 1911-1916)**  
Charles Ives (1874-1954)

“Once a nice young man said to Father (George Ives), “How can you stand it to hear old John Bell (the best stone-mason in town) sing?” Father said, “He is a supreme musician.” The young man was horrified– “Why, he sings off the key, the wrong notes and everything– and that horrible, raucous voice– and he bellows out and hits notes no one else does– it's awful!” Father said, “Watch him closely and reverently, look into his face and hear the music of the ages. Don't pay too much attention to the sounds– for if you do, you may miss the music. You won't get a wild heroic ride to heaven on pretty little sounds.” -Charles Ives<sup>44</sup>

Ives' statements regarding *Sonata No. 4 for Violin and Piano* are illuminating, not only for their content but also as a demonstration of the composer's colorful vernacular and unmistakable personality.

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<sup>43</sup> For more information on dissonant counterpoint, see notes to *Quartet Mosaic*.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 132.

The Fifth Sonata (called the Fourth) is but an attempt to write a sonata which Moss White<sup>45</sup> (then about twelve years old) could play. The first movement kept to this idea fairly well, but the second got way away from it, and the third got about in between. Moss White couldn't play the last two, and neither could his teacher. It is called "Children's Day" because it is based principally on the church hymns sung at the children's services.

At the summer Camp Meetings in the Brookside Park, the children (more so the boys) would get marching and shouting the hymns—as *Work while the day is...*, *Bringing in the sheaves* (not in this sonata), *Gather at the River*, etc. And the slow movement [recalls] a serious time for children, *Yes, Jesus loves me*—except when old Stone Mason Bell and Farmer John would get up and shout or sing— and some of the boys would rush out and throw stones down on the rocks in the river. At the end of the slow movement, sometimes a distant Amen would be heard— the violin holding the last E, and the piano playing the A and middle C# and the lower C# to B. But this Amen is a very much ad libitum matter and may not be wanted except on a few occasions (or when the spirit moves!)— seldom if ever by the Methodists or the Baptists (Yes, by the Congregationalists and Episcopalians)— when they were leading the meeting!

It was composed quickly within two or three weeks in the fall of 1916. The last movement in some ways is the best, and part of it was put into a song in 1921. (Since writing this, I have found a manuscript which makes me remember Dave Twichell and Saranac Lake in the summer of 1905— after prayer meeting— and making a little tune for the trumpet and piano, *Shall We Gather at the River*, a tune Dave was very fond of— and they happened to sing it at the meeting that night. This was later worked in the *Fourth Violin Sonata*.)<sup>46</sup>

Instead of a two week period in 1916, the piece actually appears to have been composed over the course of years. The first movement of Ives' *Sonata No. 4 for Violin and Piano* was written roughly around 1911-1912; the second in 1914-15; and the third movement circa 1916. The first movement of the piece uses music from the hymn "Tell Me the Old, Old Story," which Ives mistakenly identifies as "Work while the day is..."<sup>47</sup> The movement also borrows from of a piece by Ives' father, George

<sup>45</sup> Ives' nephew, Moses White Ives (born 1905)

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 72

<sup>47</sup> The two songs are rhythmically identical, which explains the oversight. See William Thompson, "The Fourth Sonata for Violin and Piano, 'Children's Day at the Camp Meeting' by Charles Ives: Contextual, structural, and stylistic considerations." DMA dissertation, (Rice University, 2003), 75-77.

Ives. Perhaps the son became excited when he realized his father's *Fugue in B-flat* fits in perfect counterpoint with "Tell Me the Old, Old Story." Regardless of the reason, the fugue was appropriated to act as a countermelody to the main theme. Increasing the complexity of the work further, Ives chose to write yet another countermelody, a simple chordal vamp which opens the very beginning of the sonata. As the first movement develops, the baroque counterpoint of George Ives' piece gains dominance. One can clearly hear the fugal imitation in the middle of the movement. As with other cumulative settings, Ives handles the pacing so that full statements of these passages are heard only at the culminating end of the movement.

The second movement features some of Ives' most beautiful writing, and is extremely intricate while also wonderfully simple. "Jesus Loves Me" forms both the main theme of the piece as well as its embellished countermelody. Most impressive is the way the music embraces a multitude of contrasting ideas simultaneously.

Although the movement uses cumulative form, with statements of the hymn at the end, one can also see it as a set of variations on the same hymn, *and* a slow-fast-slow ternary movement with a contrasting piano solo middle section ("conslugarocko").<sup>48</sup>

In the third section of the ternary form, the main hymn is repeated three times, each one softer and than the previous, before the piece ends in a plagal cadence.

The third movement is a cumulative setting of "Shall We Gather at the River?" based on a sketch for cornet and strings from 1905. After the main thematic ideas are introduced at the beginning, the violin begins a simple countermelody in measure 19. This builds to a final statement of the hymn at the end of the movement. Interestingly, the work ends with an incomplete statement of the opening verse

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<sup>48</sup> "Thus it is truly a synthesis of all three forms." Burkholder, *All Made of Tunes*, 184.



("Shall we gather by the river?"). Burkholder states, "... (the) indefinite ending heightens the sense of questioning in the text of the verse and undermines the affirmation expressed in the refrain ('Yes, we'll gather at the river.')" <sup>49</sup> Given the work's subtle difficulties, one has to wonder how much success Moss White (or his teacher) had in navigating this piece for the first time!

**String Quartet No. 1 ("Quartet Pedantic") (1916) & Quartet Euphometric (1919)**  
Henry Cowell (1897-1965)

The "*Quartet Pedantic*" and *Quartet Euphometric* were pieces (along with Quartet Romantic) that allowed Cowell to experiment with innovations in meter and harmony. He later expanded and incorporated these ideas into his book, *New Musical Resources*, published in 1930.

The *Quartet Pedantic* makes use of dissonant counterpoint, reserving consonant harmonies for passing tones that are "resolved" into dissonant ones. The later half of the first movement, marked *allegro non troppo*, is based entirely on canonic imitation. Cowell writes that the second movement is "homophonic and comparatively short... Chords are usually in five parts; their basis is consonant but each includes one or two dissonant tones that are not resolved." <sup>50</sup> The composer's note at the beginning of the score also helps to explain the "Pedantic" title of the piece. He states that "dissonance and even counterpoint in contemporary composition were regarded with severity as 'uninspired' and were relegated strictly to the world of academic theory." <sup>51</sup> Unsatisfied with the name, and given the increasing prevalence

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<sup>49</sup> Burkholder, *All Made of Tunes*, 193.

<sup>50</sup> Henry Cowell, *String Quartet No. 1 (1916)*, (New York, NY: Associated Music Publishers, 1965), 2.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

and acceptability of dissonance in music, Cowell later abandoned the title altogether. This piece received its first performance at Aeolian Hall in New York by the Ralph Henkle String Quartet on February 2, 1926. Regardless of its theoretical underpinnings, the music's slow lyrical melodies and almost Bartok-like interjections give the work a richly evocative sound.

The *Quartet Euphometric* probably derives its name from a combination of metric, meaning meter or measurement, and the latin term *euphonos*, meaning well-sounding. This piece is a product of Cowell's experiments with innovative rhythmic notations, making use a 6<sup>th</sup> note (really just another way of writing triplet quarter notes) and layering different time signatures between simultaneous instrumental parts.

Cowell's ideas are based on the notion that, like overtones, different rhythmic units have pulses that can be “in harmony” with one another. When two sounding tones are a third apart they vibrate at different speeds, but line up every 5:4 vibrations. In the same way, two rhythms, one five notes and one four, can occupy the same space and line up at the end of the measure. In essence, he found a new way to create simultaneous layers of contrasting tempi. To manage this complexity for the listener, the composer reserves moments of greatest rhythmic unity in order to clarify musical climaxes and delineate different sections.

As Cowell himself states, “There is, of course, nothing radical in what is thus far suggested. It is only the interpretation that is new; but when we extend this principle more widely we begin to open up new fields of rhythmical expression.”<sup>52</sup> These “new fields of rhythmical expression” generate a complexity that stretches the

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<sup>52</sup> Henry Cowell, *New Musical Resources*, 51.

very limits of both listener and performer, and would leave some composers, like Conlon Nancarrow, to go searching for other means of producing music.

**Toccata for Violin and Player Piano (1935)**  
Conlon Nancarrow (1912-1997)

Like Ives, Conlon Nancarrow was a composer that labored for years in private obscurity. To this is an added wrinkle: the majority of Nancarrow's output has been dedicated to only one instrument, the player piano. After returning from the Spanish Civil War fighting on the side of the communists as part of the Lincoln Brigade, Nancarrow had his passport revoked. He moved to Mexico City, where he lived until his death. Before leaving the United States, however, he encountered a passage from Cowell's *New Musical Resources*.

An argument against the development of more diversified rhythms might be their difficulty of performance...Some of the rhythms developed through the present acoustical investigation could not be played by any living performer; but these highly engrossing rhythmical complexes could easily be cut on a player-piano roll. This would give a real reason for writing music specially for player-piano, such as music written for it at present does not seem to have...<sup>53</sup>

With this passage began the career of a composer dedicated to the exploration of rhythmic complexity. In 1948, he bought a player piano and began producing what would eventually include over 50 studies for player piano. Although he gained greater recognition towards the end of his life, he is certainly not a household name. His influence, however, is felt among a whole generation of composers. As the Hungarian composer György Ligeti once wrote of Nancarrow, “This music is the greatest discovery since Webern and Ives... something great and important for all music

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 65

history! His music is so utterly original, enjoyable, perfectly constructed, but at the same time emotional... for me it's the best music of any living composer today.”<sup>54</sup>

Nancarrow's *Toccata for Violin and Player Piano* is an enjoyable “short ride in a fast machine” that displays some of the intriguing and whimsical sounds which the composer was able to coax out his instrument. Although not nearly as rhythmically complex as some of his other works, it stays true to its title as a free-form display of manual dexterity.

**Second No. 3 for Violin and Piano (c 1914)**  
Charles Ives (1874-1954)

Ives actually considered this piece a “slump back” due to a bad run-in with a “prima donna solo violinist” who reacted badly to the composer's music. In a moment of doubt, he created a piece where “the themes are well enough, but there is an attempt to please the soft-ears and be good...the sonata on the whole is weak sister.”<sup>55</sup> Although this was not the composer's favorite sonata, it was still good enough for Ives to program it at a private Carnegie Hall recital.<sup>56</sup> In many ways, the Romantic harmonies found in this piece almost serve better to convey the kind of Romantic intentions Ives had in his music. Additionally, this piece still contains many of the elements that we have come to associate so characteristically with Ives: complex rhythms, rich counterpoint, and the quotation of American hymns.

The first movement of this sonata differs from all other sonata movements in that it uses a verse-refrain form. Ives states that it is a “magnified hymn of four

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<sup>54</sup> György Ligeti in a letter to Charles Amirkhanian from January 4, 1981; quoted in Kyle Gann, *The Music of Conlon Nancarrow*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 2.

<sup>55</sup> Ives, *Memos*, 70-71.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. 69, n. 1

different verses, all ending with the same refrain.”<sup>57</sup> During the verses Ives feels free to explore and transform thematic material derived from the hymn, “I Need Thee Every Hour.” Contrasting this are short refrains paraphrased from “Beulah Land.” Each verse clarifies and strengthens the presence of the hymn, and like other cumulative settings, the clearest statement is saved for the final one.

The second movement “may represent a meeting where the feet and body, as well as the voice, add to the excitement.”<sup>58</sup> Thus, it includes some obvious ragtime influences, with syncopated melodic figures over a regular bass line. A combination of hymns fragments from “There’ll Be No Dark Valley” and “The Beautiful River” form the main theme of this piece. A full statement of the theme appears towards the end of the movement, bringing the music to a brief codetta and then the finish.

Ives states that “the last movement is an experiment: The free fantasia is first. The working-out develops in to the themes rather than from them. The coda consists of the themes for the first time in their entirety and in conjunction.”<sup>59</sup> The term “experiment” is probably intended as a warning to new listeners. He had already been composing in this way for number of years, and his summary of the movement is a clear explanation of his approach to cumulative form. The third movement is divided into three sections, each one beginning with a piano interlude. Two piano postludes also end each of the first two sections. The final section of the movement culminates in two statements of the hymn, “I Need Thee Every Hour.”

Like some other composers, such as Copland and Sibelius, Ives' prodigious output of music came to an inexplicable halt towards the later part of his life. He

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

stopped composing by early 1927 and spent the rest of his life seeing to the revision and publication of his music. After 30 years of work, Ives had amassed a large amount of money and was therefore able to support both his own work and that of other musicians. For example, Ives provided the funds that kept Cowell's New Music Edition operating. Additionally, after winning the Pulitzer Prize in 1947, Ives distributed part of the prize money to the young composers Lou Harrison and John Becker.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> James Peter Burkholder, ed. *Charles Ives and his World*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 269.

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