

CHARLES IVES: The Sonatas for Violin and Piano

Performed by Paul Zukofsky, violin, and Gilbert Kalish, piano

Volume 1: Sonata No. 1 (1903-1908) and Sonata No. 2 (1903-1910)

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SONATA NO. 1

ANDANTE - Allegro Vivace
LARGO CANTABILE
ALLEGRO

SONATA NO. 2

AUTUMN - Adagio Maestoso - Allegro Moderato
IN THE BARN - Presto - Allegro Moderato
THE REVIVAL - Largo - Allegretto

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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

CHARLES IVES: The Sonatas for Violin and Piano

CHARLES IVES THE SONATAS FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO

*Performed by Paul Zukofsky, violin,
and Gilbert Kalish, piano*

FIRST SONATA (1903-1908)

ANDANTE - Allegro Vivace
LARGO CANTABILE
ALLEGRO

SECOND SONATA (1903-1910)

AUTUMN - Adagio Maestoso - Allegro Moderato
IN THE BARN - Presto - Allegro Moderato
THE REVIVAL - Largo - Allegretto

THIRD SONATA (1902-1914)

ADAGIO, Verse 1 - ANDANTE, Verse 2 - ALLEGRETTO,
Verse 3 - ADAGIO, last verse
ALLEGRO
ADAGIO CANTABILE - Andante Con Spirito

FOURTH SONATA - "Children's Day at the Camp Meeting" (1905-1914)

ALLEGRO
LARGO - ALLEGRO (con slugarocko)
ALLEGRO

Recorded under the supervision of Samuel Charters at
Judson Hall, New York, June 16, 17, and 18, 1964.
Recording engineer David Hancock.

An Introductory Note

Samuel Charters

There is probably no better introduction to the music of Charles Ives than the four sonatas for violin and piano written between 1902 and 1914. In all of them there is the use of the compositional devices - the polytonality, atonality, complex multi-rhythms, tone clusters, twelve-tone row, metrical modulation, and microtonality - which disturbed or bewildered nearly all of his contemporaries, but in the sonatas the development of his musical ideas is so extended that his personal creative logic is more clearly evident than in many of his shorter pieces. The relationship between the four works is so strong that they might almost be thought of as a long single work; opening with the introspection and the dark musing of the First, brightening with the brilliant vigor and fire of the dance movement of the Second, musing again - with a quiet serenity - through the long song-like stanzas of the Third, then resolving with the optimism and free expressiveness of the Fourth, "Children's Day At The Camp Meeting." Themes, rhythmic material, compositional devices, and a use of interrelated quota-



CHARLES IVES about 1910

tions from the hymns and dance music of the period tie the four works into a rich and complex musical strand. Each of the sonatas is strongly individual, and stands very firmly on its own feet, but each of them also takes on a greater depth and a richer coloration from its relationship with the other three. Ives wrote and revised them at about the same time, even using the same melodic material from an earlier work as the source for movements in both the Second and the Fourth; so it is entirely possible that there was a larger artistic design running through their composition, even though it may have been only an unconscious one. It has perhaps been this "sensed" larger scheme which has made the sonatas more accessible, in a sense easier to understand in their general outlines, than many of his other compositions. The Fourth, in particular, offers fewer difficulties to the listener than almost any other of his works, and it illustrates many of the philosophic concepts that were at the heart of his musical thought.

With the score of the Fourth Sonata Ives has printed an extended description of the physical scene which he suggests he is attempting to portray in the music, the day for the children at a country religious gathering in rural Connecticut in the 1870's and 1880's. The description is so detailed and so explicit that the Sonata would be little more than a piece of banal program music like the "descriptive marches" of the period - if Ives had followed it. But he doesn't, at least in the descriptive sense. And yet, in his larger transcendental sense, the music contains everything he mentions, with a great deal more besides. Although Ives' theories of music were strongly personal his general aesthetic theories were greatly influenced by the transcendentalism of Emerson, Channing, and Bronson Alcott, which believed that the natural world was the expression of a larger universal reality. He is regarded as one of the first American composers to write music in an American idiom, but he would have been disturbed to find himself thought of as only "American" in his creative expression. He felt that the artist's only truth was to be found within himself, that what he might express as himself takes on the coloration of a place or environment, but if he has been honest in his artistic search the artistic truth that he has found will be a truth beyond any national or local tradition. Ives was too aware of the difficulties of "scene painting" to pretend that he could describe "... the west wind in the pines and oaks, the running brook... the distant voices of the farmers across the hill getting in their cows and sheep," but he did insist that an artist could capture some essence of the larger spirit that was at the heart of the experience that concerned him.

In the collection of essays that he wrote to accompany the publication of his "Concord" Sonata in 1920, *Essays Before A Sonata*, Ives discussed some of his philosophic attitudes toward music and art. In a concluding Epilogue he raised the question of how much a piece of music could be "descriptive."

The futility of attempting to trace the source or primal impulse of an art inspiration may be admitted without granting that human qualities or attributes which go with personality cannot be suggested, and that artistic intuitions which parallel them cannot be reflected in music. . .

That which the composer intends to represent as "high vitality" sounds like something quite different to different listeners. That which I like to think suggests Thoreau's submission to nature may, to another, seem something like Hawthorne's conception of the relentlessness of an evil conscience - and to the rest of our friends, but a series of unpleasant sounds. How far can the composer be held accountable? Beyond a certain point the responsibility is more or less undeterminable. The outside characteristics - that is, the points furthest away from the margins - are obvious to mostly anyone. A child knows a strain of joy from one of sorrow. Those a little older know the dignified from the frivolous - the "Spring Song" from the season in which the "melancholy days have come" (though is there not a glorious hope in autumn!) But where is the definite expression of late spring against early summer - of happiness against optimism? A painter paints a sunset - can he paint the setting sun?

He then went on to the Emersonian ideal of the duality of artistic expression, with its belief that a work of art is at once its substance, or content, or "soul," and its manner, or style, or technique. Music, he felt, should be like Emerson's essays, all substance, and that it was in its inner meanings that music could contain the essence of some moment of reality. The American composer Elliott Carter, in an essay entitled "Ives Today: His Vision and Challenge," which appeared in *Modern Music* in the May-June issue, 1944, recognized this duality in Ives' music.

On the surface of his work, the infinite complexity of nature, the rapidly changing moods of forest and plain, the web of counterbalancing forces appear confused and dissociated. But Ives' involved texture, while mirroring this superficial confusion, at the same time attempts to show the larger harmony of rhythm behind the natural process. . .

In the Sonatas there is the felt, the sensed "larger harmony of rhythm behind the natural process."

There is throughout the Sonatas, as there is in all of Ives' music, an extensive use of quotations from hymns, marches, popular songs, folk songs, even children's rhymes and some of the larger works of the European classical tradition. There has been considerable criticism of Ives' use of quotation, but it often has missed his point. Ives intended it much as he intended the "program" which accompanies the Fourth Sonata. The piece stands so completely without its descriptive notes that it is only with considerable difficulty that the piece can even be followed by someone who is reading the notes at the same time. The first movement of the Third Sonata develops from the old hymn "Beulah Land," but the hymn is probably unfamiliar to nearly everyone who would now be listening to the piece. However, it isn't necessary to be concerned with the old hymn. It has been completely absorbed into Ives' consciousness,

and he uses it as a natural expression of his musical ideas. As he described in his essay,

. . . if a man finds that the cadences of an Apache war-dance come nearest to his soul - provided he has taken pains to know enough other cadences, for eclecticism is part of his duty; sorting potatoes means a better crop next year - let him assimilate whatever he finds highest of the Indian ideal so that he can use it with the cadences, fervently transcendently, inevitably, furiously, in his symphonies, in his operas, in his whistlings on the way to work, so that he can paint his house with them, make them a part of his prayer-book - this is all possible and necessary, if he is confident that they have a part in his spiritual consciousness. With this assurance, his music will have everything it should of sincerity, nobility, strength, and beauty, no matter how it sounds; and if, with this, he is true to none but the highest of American ideals (that is, the ideals only that coincide with his spiritual consciousness), his music will be true to itself and incidentally American, and it will be so even after it is proved that all our Indians came from Asia.

The critics of Ives' use of quotation have confused him with the musical chauvinists whom Ives himself attacked for the shallowness of their thought. They wrote conventional music in a conventional idiom; then tried to give it a national character by quoting from folk tunes or popular songs. The history of American music has been cluttered with suites and toned poems and rhapsodies that have used a few stylistic elements of one or another of the country's musical sub-cultures and then attempted to pass it off as a national expression. Ives' concept was a larger one. He was like the man who could paint his house with Apache music. He had grown up with an American musical idiom, and when he composed he made no effort to shut himself off from this background. He did not hesitate to use whatever material came to hand in his effort to compose music that would be like Emerson's essays, "all substance." If a phrase of a popular song or a line from an old hymn shaped itself into his music he made no effort to get it out. Just as he had the radical idea that all sounds were valid - rejecting both the Nineteenth Century strictures of tonal law on the one hand and the equally restricting contemporary concept of the level of dissonance - he also felt that all music was valid, and that it was the artist's integrity and purpose that determined the use of whatever materials he might turn to. In this attitude Ives was very close to the later literary concept that helped shape the work of Eliot, Joyce, and Pound. As Eliot wrote in *Tradition and Individual Talent*, "For it is not the 'greatness,' the intensity of the emotions, the components, but the intensity of the artistic process, the pressure, so to speak, under which the fusion takes place that counts."

In the Sonatas quotation is used in almost every form. In two instances, in the final movements of the First and Fourth Sonatas, entire hymn melodies are included. In the manuscripts for both of them Ives has also included the words, with the comment - before the hymn "Shall We Gather By The River" in the Fourth Sonata - "to be followed by player as a song without words unintended to be sung.", but in the First Sonata the last movement builds to a musical climax with the hymn "Watchman Tell Us Of The Night", and the words, included in the printed score, have considerable value in suggesting to the performer what Ives intended throughout the music. It is one of his more diffi-

cult movements, but the moment of clarity which the hymn brings helps to resolve some of the music's complexities.

Many of the quotations are very short. A few notes in an inner voice in the piano accompaniment, or a rhythmically altered fragment in a rapidly moving melodic line often pass so quickly that they are unrecognized, even when it is a well known piece like "Columbia, The Gem Of The Ocean" or "Tramp, Tramp, Tramp, The Boys Are Marching." They have touched a responsive chord, evoked a fleeting memory, without intruding themselves on the music. The opening movement of the Third Sonata, however, is one of his most interesting uses of quotation. In this movement Ives has taken some of the phrases from the hymn "Beulah Land" and then gone on to develop the entire movement as a hymn. Instead of the conventional sonata form there is a strophic hymn form of four "verses", each of them followed by a short "refrain." The sections of the movement have even been labeled as verse and refrain in the printed score, and the music itself follows, in a very free form, the outlines of a hymn melody and refrain. Each of the verses begins with an arpeggiated chord in the bass notes of the piano and ends on a dominant seventh chord of the opening tonality of the refrain that follows it. It is a unique achievement and suggests numerous other possibilities for experiment within the sonata framework.

It may be, perhaps, that Ives' music will have to wait for its audience in some later year when, as he describes ". . . the school children will whistle popular tunes in quarter-tones - when the diatonic scale will be as obsolete as the pentatonic is now . . ." and the juxtaposition of the familiar and the unfamiliar in his music will no longer disturb his listeners and critics. When all of his themes have become as lost to memory as "Beulah Land" then it will be perhaps possible to hear the music as he conceived it, as a total expression, without limitations as to place or nationality. When that moment has come then perhaps Ives' musical achievement - the breadth and richness not only of these sonatas but of all his music - will emerge from the controversy which still obscures it.

THE SONATAS

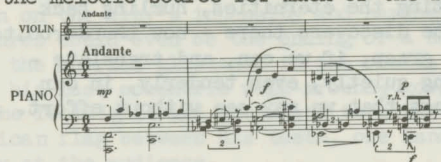
When Charles Ives left Yale in 1898 he had already made his decision to go into business, rather than to attempt to survive as a composer in the genteel musical world of America at the turn of the century. He took a job in New York as an insurance clerk for \$5 a week, and with a group of young men his own age moved into an apartment which they quickly called "Poverty Flat" on West 58th Street, between Eighth and Ninth Avenues. They later moved to an apartment on Central Park West, and it was during these years in their Poverty Flats that he did the initial sketches for much of his later work. He would come back from his long day at the office, pull off his coat and tie, and sit down at the piano to work until dinner. Then he would go back to the music later in the evening, sometimes working into the early hours of the morning. He and his brother Moss also had a shack on a mountain top near Danbury, and he did some composing there, as well as at Saranac Lake during the summers. The sketches for the violin and piano sonatas were largely completed between 1902 and the end of 1907, when Ives set up his own insurance agency with a partner, Julian Myrick. The next spring, in June 1908, he was married to Harmony Twitchell, and following his marriage returned to the compositions with a new enthusiasm. He

now rearranged the order of the sonatas and brought some of the movements to completion. The first movement of what he now numbered the First Sonata was completed in October of 1908, the second movement about the same time, and the third movement the next year. Two movements of what was now the Second Sonata had been completed in the fall of 1907, and he returned to it when he had completed the First Sonata, finishing his major revisions in 1910. The Third was extensively revised from a group of early sketches, including a ragtime piece for theatre orchestra that became the second movement, and completed in 1914. The group of sonatas was finally finished later in the year with the revision of what had been an early "first" sonata into what now became the Fourth, "The Children's Day At The Camp Meeting."

The First Sonata (1903-1908)

- I Andante
- II Largo Cantabile
- III Allegro

Of the four sonatas the First is the most difficult to follow. It is an introspective, uncompromising work, similar in its detachment to the piano work, The Three Page Sonata, written at Saranac Lake at about the same time as the sketches were done for the violin and piano piece. Although it is not strongly centered around a dominant tonality it opens with a clearly stated staccato figure in the piano in F minor that becomes the melodic source for much of the first movement.



There are fragmentary quotes from hymn melodies, among them, "Bringing In The Sheaves" and "Shining Shore", but the texture of the movement is generally dense and withdrawn, at moments almost disturbing in the repetition of the early motif.

The second movement begins in a serene mood, but within a moment it has begun to develop the sombreness of the first. The piano becomes more and more insistent, building to a lengthy forte section, while still playing only an accompaniment to the violin, which has continued with its soft melody. Then, in a single measure, the piano suddenly returns to its pianissimo accompaniment and the violin's melody is heard still in the mood of quiet serenity with which the movement began. It is a remarkable moment, one of the most startling and unusual in Ives' music, and its effect lingers through the rest of the movement, despite the suggestions of "Old Oaken Bucket" and "Tramp, Tramp, Tramp" that try to lighten the tone of the music.

The third movement is an extended, almost insistent, allegro that only briefly resolves some of the Sonata's mood of questioning introspection. The piano opens with a strident theme based on the hymn "Work, For The Night Is Coming" and it is soon joined by the violin in an extended development of the melody. The movement grows in complexity and difficulty, pausing only for a moment with the hymn "Watchman, Tell Us Of The night", by Lowell Mason. The words are printed with the score as a "song without words unintended to be sung" and they give a momentary coherence to the movement.

Watchman, tell us of the night,
What its signs of promise are:
Traveler, o'er yon mountain's height,
See that glory beaming star!

Watchman, aught of joy or hope?
 Traveler, Yes! Traveler, Yes!

Traveler, yes, it brings the day,
 Promised day, of Israel.
 Dost thou see its beauteous ray?
 Traveler, See!

Ives, however, is not suggesting any literal interpretation of the text. He does not intend for the listener to find a resolution to the sonata's darkness in the simple philosophy of Mason's hymn. He has used it for its melodic strength, just as he insists on his right to use any musical material that has a place in a composition. After the andante cantabile of the hymn there is a moment of adagio modo; then the music becomes more harsh and demanding, the violin rising to a crescendo with an insistent series of notes in intervals of an octave or a minor ninth. There is a return to the melodic material from "Work, For The Night Is Coming," but there is a relentlessness to the music as its mood refuses to resolve, and the final lingering notes express more a spent futility than a tranquil acceptance of the emotions that have driven the music. The last movement, as it brings the Sonata to its close, has some of the quality that Ives described in Emerson in the essays before the Concord Sonata.

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. . .

The Second Sonata (1903-1910)

- I Autumn (Adagio Maestoso)
- II In The Barn (Presto)
- III The Revival (Largo)

The Second Sonata is considerably more accessible than the First. Its breadth and dignity, as well as the uninhibited gusto of the village dance which makes up the second movement "In The Barn," seem to resolve many of the doubts and hesitations of the other work; although there is a note on the manuscript, "played 1911-Ed Stowall 'no go'. He didn't like it." Stowall was a New York musician to whom Ives occasionally showed some of his music, but he was not sympathetic to the composer's experimental ideas. The Sonata was written over several years and used material from earlier compositions, as well as a great number of quotations.

The first movement "Autumn" is dated July '03, Oct. '07 on the manuscript, and some of the material was taken from an earlier "Pre-First" sonata that was never completed. Two themes of considerable strength alternate throughout the movement with strongly marked changes in tempo. The opening theme, adagio maestoso,

is stated as a short introduction to the second theme, allegro moderato,

which develops into a hurried cadenza before the first theme returns for a largo passage, then gives away again to the second theme, this time even faster, as an allegro risoluta con brio. When the first theme returns a second time it has caught the mood of the second theme, and it has become a rhythmically complex statement *meno allegro con moto* and a final development uses material from both themes that rises to moving eloquence and then returns to the slow meditative mood with which the movement began.

The second movement, "In The Barn", was first written for a small theatre orchestra in 1902; then revised in November, 1907, for violin and piano. It is robust and noisy music sweeping dozens of the popular dance melodies of the period into a scherzo-like movement that has all the rowdiness and good humor of a harvest dance in a neighbor's barn. There are quotations from tunes like the "Sailor's Hornpipe", "Money Musk", "The White Cockade", "The Battle Cry of Freedom", as well as some startling ragtime "licks" in the accompaniment. Everybody in the barn dances to one tune or other, including some of the town drunks who have their own moments of slow confusion. In its evocation of some of the rowdier aspects of the American scene it is reminiscent of other Ives pieces, like "Putnam's Camp" in the orchestral set "Three Places In New England" with its mass brass band effects, or "Washington's Birthday" in the "Holidays" Symphony, with its clamoring use of patriotic tunes. In the original manuscript there is included on the last page of the manuscript a suggested "bass drum" part to be played on the lowest five tones of the piano as a frenzied counterpoint to the last moments of the dance as the music gets more and more excited and the dancers are trying any step that comes to mind to keep up. It is the thunderous sound of the drum, played by a second musician on the piano, that almost overwhelms the violin as it goes into a last wild rendition of "The Battle Cry of Freedom" and the movement comes to a breathless halt.

With the third movement, "The Revival" there is a return to the quiet strength of the first movement, and it moves through the gentleness of the New England hymnody for a lingering moment before returning to the exuberant optimism of the second movement. At the last moment the hymn melody returns as though Ives were insisting once again that the music and its emotional expression include the entire individual and that the fabric of our lives is a more complex one, often, than we consider it to be.

The Third Sonata (1902-1914)

- I Adagio
- II Allegro
- III Adagio

The Third is the longest of the sonatas, and in the breadth of its concept, and in the realization of its thematic material, it may be considered one of Ives' major works. It is in some ways a lengthened moment on which the other sonatas turn, and it seems to include some of the questioning of the First in its slow movements as well as the strength and assertiveness of the Second in its complex and difficult middle movement. Its use of the strophic hymn form for the first movement gives it a strong coherence to counter the swirling rhythms and tonalities of the allegro that follows it, and the resolution of the final adagio has

a quiet, lingering confidence.

This, however, is an impression of the Sonata with which Ives would strongly disagree. He didn't like it very much, and he went out of his way on three or four occasions to describe his own feelings about it. In a marginal note he wrote,

"This sonata #3 is not much good. It was finished just after a famous German Virtuoso violinist . . . M. . . by name was here in Redding to play Oct. 1914 the 1st Sonata. . . no resemblance to music he said (politely). . . So many similar complaints about it before that time. . . that I began to think there must be something wrong with me to like this and get so much fun (out) of it etc. so I tried to (make) a nice piece for the nice ladies. - Har 'tis - NG.

And later he commented to Henry Cowell,

This Sonata is a good example of the result such experiences with people trying over my music sometimes had. The last movement especially shows a kind of reversion; the themes are well enough but there is an attempt to please the soft-ears and "be good." The Sonata on the whole is a weak sister.

There are perhaps moments in the music which show too strong an affinity for some of the lesser French composition of the period, but Ives himself, on another reflection, would probably agree that he has been unnecessarily harsh on the piece, and that what he thought of as weakness could be better thought of as a quiet determination.

The opening adagio is an extended development based on the hymn tune "Beulah Land", and he has retained the structure of the hymn throughout the movement. The first section, marked Verse I in the score, is a freely extended treatment of the hymn tune, with an arpeggiated chord in the piano in the first bar which becomes the beginning motif of each return of the verse.

The first verse continues for seventy-six measures in a very free chromaticism; then ends on an obvious dominant seventh chord on F, which in the subdued texture of the music has a sudden and surprising effect. The sense of tonality is even momentarily strengthened as the seventh chord leads to a short refrain of eleven measures which begins in the key of Bb. With the end of the refrain the score is marked Verse II and the piano again introduces the hymn melody with its arpeggio, this time in an andante 3/4, rather than the adagio 2/4 which opened the movement. After a verse of sixty-one measures there is a seventh chord on Bb, and the eleven measure refrain follows in Eb. There is a third verse of seventy-one measures, this time in a 6/8 allegretto, ending with the seventh on F and the refrain in Bb. The final verse ends again with the F seventh and the Bb opening to the refrain; then the refrain, extended to thirteen measures, concludes the movement in A. It is a remarkable use of a native musical form within the larger concerns of a personal artistic statement and perhaps may be a beginning for the formulation of new formal structures in many areas of contemporary music.

The second movement has a short marginal note.

Some of this movement was in a Rag-Time Dance - Theatre Orchestra - a short piece and played in Globe Th - 14th in 1905 - put in this movement later.

The Globe Theatre was a New York music hall and vaudeville theatre.

As a sort of apology to the pianist he has added another note to the manuscript, "throwing the vs and clar strns and cornet into piano causes the awkward passages (it's easier for four hands.)" It might be easier for two pianists, and Ives had no objection to the performers trying anything that would help the music, but it is still difficult and taxing. The Sonata, generally, offers great scope to the pianists and in this dance movement the piano often seems to be driven by some insistent rhythmic force that refuses to let the performer hesitate for even a moment. There are occasional scraps of melody from other pieces, but the music is strongly oriented toward the theatre ragtime of the period. It is interesting to contrast the two dance movements, the barn dance of the second sonata and the ragtime dance of the third. The barn dance has a warm lyricism and an almost intimate quality, reflecting the gentle melodies of country folk dancing and the neighborly friendship of the dancers. It ends with the thundering confusion of the bass drum, but this calls to mind the small boys who sometimes manage to get to the drums before a dance ends and add their own exuberance to the music. The ragtime dance movement, however, has a different quality. The music is harder, more strident. It is musicians playing in a pit orchestra for a noisy ragtime singer, or playing hurried dance music for the patrons in a poorly lit cafe along Union Square. The music has left the country and come into the city and taken on the city's intensity and hardness. Its last measures could even be the ending of a bad vaudeville act, the hurried glissando in the violin as the dancer does his last eccentric walk-around, goes into a split at the footlights and gets back to his feet with an American flag between his teeth, one hand waving a derby at the audience.

The music has some of the quality of an improvised stage act, along with its other difficulties. Measures are marked "Repeat only if ragged" or "Play only if ragged." One measure is marked with repeat signs and there is a note "3 times too much?" Three times seems to be about right, but Ives probably wouldn't have minded if the performers settled for twice or went on to a fourth time. The movement is not only brilliantly successful within the Sonata, but it is an interesting prefiguring to the later dance movements of Roger Sessions and Samuel Barber in their sonatas for solo piano.

In the final movement, which Ives thought of as a reversion, there is a return to the hymn melodies, among them "Need" and "Happy Day". For a moment, as the movement ends, there is a clash between the jangling discord of the ragtime and the serenity of the hymn, but the hymn stills the wrangling, and Sonata ends in a mood of soft tranquility.

(Ill health prevented Ives from completing the editing of this Sonata, and the printed version differs in many places from his manuscript. The performers have found it necessary to go to the manuscripts at the Yale Music Library to re-edit parts of this piece, as well as to look at the manuscripts of the other three for possible variants of confusing passages. It was found necessary to make a number of changes in the Third Sonata, especially in the second movement, where some of Ives' more involved ragtime passages were less effective in the printed version than in the original.)

The Fourth Sonata (1905-1914)

"CHILDREN'S DAY AT THE CAMP MEETING"

- I Allegro
- II Largo
- III Allegro

The Fourth Sonata was in reality the first, before the extensive revisions which Ives made following his marriage. It was begun at Saranac Lake in August, 1905, and largely completed - using material from the earlier "Pre-first Sonata" - the next year. It is the shortest of the four, and considerably less difficult to perform. There is a charm to the music, as well, and it is often included on recital programs. While not as challenging as the others it still is very characteristic of Ives' music and has a remarkable fullness within its small limits. His own notes are the best description of some of the feelings and moods that went into its composition, only neglecting to say that he has included, as a tribute, a section of one of his father's fugues in the first movement.

NOTES ON FOURTH VIOLIN SONATA

This sonata is the fourth for violin and piano. It is called "CHILDREN'S DAY AT THE CAMP MEETING". It is shorter than the other violin sonatas, and a few of its parts and suggested themes were used in organ and other earlier pieces. The subject matter is a kind of reflection, remembrance, expression, etc. of the children's services at the out-door Summer camp meetings held around Danbury and in many of the farm towns in Connecticut, in the 70's, 80's and 90's. There was usually only one Children's Day in these Summer meetings, and the children made the most of it - often the best of it. They would at times get stirred up, excited and even boisterous, but underneath there was usually something serious, though Deacon Grey would occasionally have to "Sing a Caution".

The First Movement (which was sometimes played last and the last first) - was suggested by an actual happening at one of these services. The children especially the boys, liked to get up and join in the marching kind of hymns. And as these meetings were "out-door", the "march" sometimes became a real one. One day Lowell Mason's - "Work for The Night is Coming" got the boys going and keeping on between services, when the boy who played the melodeon was practicing his "organicks of canonicks, fugaticks, harmonicks and melodicks". In this movement, as is remembered, they - the postlude organ practice (real and improvised, sometimes both) - and the boys' fast march - got to going together, even joining in each other's sounds, and the loudest singers and also those with the best voices, as is often the case, would sing most of the wrong notes. They started this tune on "ME" so the boy organist's father made him play "SOH" hard even if sometimes it had to be in a key that the postlude was not in just then. The boys sometimes got almost as far off from Lowell M. as they did from the melodeon. The organ would be uncovering "covered 5ths" breaking "good resolutions" faster and faster and the boys' march reaching almost a "Main Street Quick-step" when Parson Hubbell would beat the "Gong" on the oaktree for the next service to begin. Or if it is growing dark, the boys' march would die away, as they marched down to their tents, the barn doors or over the "1770 Bridge" between the Stone Pillars to the Station.

The Second Movement is quieter and more serious except when Deacon Stonemason Bell and Farmer John would get up and get the boys excited. But most of the Move-

ment moves around a rather quiet but old favorite Hymn of the children, while mostly in the accompaniment is heard something trying to reflect the outdoor sounds of nature on those Summer days - the west wind in the pines and oaks, the running brook - sometimes quite loudly - and maybe towards evening the distant voices of the farmers across the hill getting in their cows and sheep.

But as usual even in the quiet services, some of the deacon-enthusiasts would get up and sing, roar, pray and shout but always fervently, seriously, reverently - perhaps not "artistically" - (perhaps the better for it). - "We're men of the fields and rocks, not artists", Farmer John would say. At times these "confurorants" would give the boys a chance to run out and throw stones down on the rocks in the brook! (Allegro con-slugarocko!) - but this was only momentary and the quiet Children's Hymn is sung again, perhaps some of the evening sounds are with it - and as the Movement ends, sometimes a distant Amen is heard - if the mood of the Day calls for it - though the Methodists and Baptists seldom called for it, at the end of their hymns, yet often, during the sermon, an "Amen" would ring out as a trumpet call from a pew or from an old "Amen-Seat". The Congregationalists sometimes leaned towards one, and the Episcopalians often.

The Third Movement is more of the nature of the First. As the boys get marching again some of the old men would join in and march as fast (sometimes) as the boys and sing what they felt, regardless - and - thanks to Robert Lowry - "Gather at the River".

A Note On The Performers

Contemporary American music is performed so little that someone who is interested in hearing performances of Ives - or of nearly any other American composer - finds himself following concert advertisements and notices of recital programs with determined persistence. Early in April, 1964, I noticed a small advertisement in the New York newspaper The Village Voice, "All-Ives Concert, Paul Zukofsky, violin, Gilbert Kalish, piano." The concert was to be given at a small church in Brooklyn Heights, Spencer Memorial Church, on April 8. I had trouble finding the church, and with my wife hurried in late, taking a program as I was getting out of my coat. It was only when we had sat down in a pew near the front of the church that I had time to look at the program. I had expected one of the violin and piano sonatas, perhaps some of the shorter pieces for piano solo, one of the theatre pieces in an arrangement for the two instruments. Instead, they were performing, in order, all four of the sonatas for violin and piano. The audience was small, the piano was out of tune, and the acoustics in the drafty church were very bad, but it was still a deeply moving and exciting concert. It was not only the music; although hearing all four sonatas together was a remarkable insight into Ives' genius. It was also the realization that two talented and sensitive musicians had believed enough in the music to give to it the long months of rehearsal that had gone into the concert. When I met them after the concert I asked them about the time they had spent and the pianist, Gilbert Kalish, smiled and said that it had taken them about a year and a half to learn the pieces, but that, as he had told his wife the night before, he felt that it had been worth it.

Paul Zukofsky is one of the most promising of the younger violinists in the New York musical world, and it is particularly interesting to find a young musician of his gifts who is concerned enough with contemporary music to devote considerable time to it. He plays, as well, a wide range of chamber works and concerti from the standard concert repertoire, but he is



Paul Zukofsky

seriously interested in composition, and this, as well as his wide musical interests, has drawn him into contemporary music. He made his Carnegie Hall debut in 1956, at the age of 13, and since then has performed regularly both in the United States and Europe. He studied the violin with Ivan Galamian, and in May, 1964, completed his M.S. at Juilliard School of Music. Critics and reviewers have consistently noted his warm tone, his brilliant technique, and his musical intelligence, qualities very evident in his performances of the Ives Sonatas. He was at Tanglewood in 1963 and 1964 with the Fromm Players, and presently is a Creative Associate at the Buffalo Center for the Creative and Performing Arts.

Gilbert Kalish, although just 29, has long been associated with performances of contemporary music, not only as a soloist, but as a member of the Contemporary Chamber Ensemble and the Aeolian Chamber Players. He is a native New Yorker, a piano student of Leonard Shure, and a graduate of Columbia University. He also finds modern music an exciting challenge, and he has participated in many first performances for the "Music Of Our Time" Series and at Composer Forum Concerts, as well as appearing as soloist in the Berg "Kammerkonzert" at Town Hall, with Joseph Silverstein and members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. His playing is not only skilled and intelligent, but marked with sensitive taste.

Their interest in playing Ives together began at a concert at Columbia in the spring of 1963, when they were asked to play one of the sonatas for an Ives program. The concert at Spencer Church, however, has led not only to this recording, but to another performance of the four Sonatas at the Gardner Museum in Boston in the spring of 1965. Zukofsky will also appear in New York in February, 1965, on the Young Artists Series at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and they will perform the Third Sonata as part of his program.

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Gilbert Kalish

photo by Ann Charters