



The Third Symphony of Charles Ives (Cms Sourcebooks in American Music)

Mark Zobel

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Boyhood in a small Connecticut town, the imprint of a free-thinking father, a formal music education at Yale University, a lucrative career as a New York City insurance executive, and a personal philosophy balancing individuality and idealism: these are the conditions that formed and informed the controversial music of Charles Ives. His works were rescued from obscurity--in many instances, long after their creation--and introduced to the concert world. For some time the accomplishments of this Yankee renegade have been recognized as central to the American musical experience. His Third Symphony, conceived early in the twentieth century and only given its premiere in 1946, was identified by the composer himself as a pivotal effort in his compositional odyssey and, perhaps ironically, earned him the Pulitzer Prize in 1947.

In this study Dr. Zobel reviews the complicated narrative of the Symphony's composition, explains why Ives considered it a turning point between the "old ways" and the "new ways," explores the structural implications of its camp-meeting program and the sophisticated manipulation of hymn tunes in its fabric, and places it in the context of Ives's idiosyncratic worldview. In the process he interprets the timing of its first public performance as a means to appreciate evolving attitudes toward modernism in the American musical establishment. The text is enhanced by a sampling of critical commentary dating from the past sixty years and a later one with these details of Ives's original conception restored.

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