

BOOK REVIEW

by
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Essays Before a Sonata and Other Writings by Charles Ives. Edited by Howard Boatwright. Calder and Boyars Ltd. 42s.

Following the death of her husband in 1954, Harmony Ives decided to present his manuscripts, excluding correspondence of a personal nature, to the Library of the Yale School of Music. From Ives' literary manuscripts Howard Boatwright has selected the longer and more complete prose works; together with brief introductions which place the works in biographical context and deal with editorial problems, as well as footnotes throughout giving details of lesser known persons mentioned in the text and sources of quotations; these form the present two-part scholarly volume.

Part 1 consists of Ives' *Essays Before a Sonata* which were originally intended to preface his masterly second pianoforte sonata, *Concord, Mass., 1845* - a group of four pieces, called a sonata for want of a better name, as the form, perhaps substance, does not justify it. The four corresponding essays, entitled *Emerson, Hawthorne, The Alcotts, and Thoreau*, are enclosed by a Prologue, posing pointed questions about the age-old programme music versus so-called absolute music dichotomy, and an Epilogue, which concerns itself with

various aspects of the difference between substance and manner in music, and also touches on questions of beauty and nationalism in music. Of the inner essays, *Emerson* and *Thoreau* are the longest, presenting Ives' personal portraits of these New England philosophers, while *Hawthorne* and *The Alcotts* are more like extended programme notes; each is prefaced by the opening of the corresponding sonata movement, which is a nice touch. However, the whole cycle has not the air of an objective character-study, but rather breathes the conviction of Ives' personal idealism. The theme of the Concord Transcendentalists - that of "the strength and beauty of innate goodness in man, in Nature, and in God" - urges Ives to hope that the time is coming..when music will develop possibilities inconceivable now - a language so transcendental that its height and depths will be common to all mankind.

That this transcendental idealism perfaded Ives' outlook on the whole of life is demonstrated in the essays which form Part Two of the book. Two of these deal with matters musical; *Some "Quarter-Tone" Impressions*, Ives' only essay about technical and theoretical problems in music reveals him to be a broad-minded and clear thinker, willing to experiment

seriously with new musical systems; the other, a *Postface to 114 Songs*, is a short, very moving essay in which Ives deduces, 'I have not written a book at all - I have merely cleaned house.'

A third essay, *The Amount to Carry*, is part of an important article intended for perspective insurance agents (written while Ives was a partner in the highly successful firm of Ives and Myrick); but this and the remaining essays primarily disclose Ives' urgent concern for the better expression of the 'majority of spirit', 'common-heart', or 'human-oversoul', to use some of his favorite expressions. In insurance terms, he saw in life-insurance a response to human need; in human terms, he looked to a "World People's Nation"; in political terms - as revealed in his largest single essay, *The Majority*, and in *Concerning the Twentieth Amendment* - he advocated, amongst other things, that certain laws, basic to society, should be passed by a system of country-wide referendum. This "belief in the innate goodness of mankind" is presented in Ives' racy, direct and personal style; the urgency of his writing makes compulsive reading, where transcendental philosophy prompts Ives to suggest such things as compulsory high-school education up to 18, or votes at 18, in addition to compiling a detailed questionnaire to ascertain the opinions of the Majority Mind - all this in 1920!

Howard Boatwright is to be complimented on not over-editing Ives' somewhat raw script, yet managing to supply adequate editorial comment. If there is one quibble about the presentation it is that there is no comprehensive bibliography (such as that found in the Henry and Sidney Cowell book - *Charles Ives and His Music*). In sum, a book warmly recommended to all music lovers - not only for insight into the mind of Charles Ives, but also for stimulating and provocative views on the problems of both music and life in general.

MINUTES OF S.G.A. MEETING

Thanksgiving recess officially begins at noon on Tuesday, 25 November, and ends at 6:00 p.m. on Sunday, 30 November. As the dorms and cafeteria will both be open during this time, some students will remain on campus. We discussed the possibilities of a special Thanksgiving dinner for those students who will be here. Mr. Hyatt mentioned that faculty members have expressed an interest in inviting students to their homes for dinner on Thanksgiving day. After a brief discussion of the subject, we established a volunteer committee to meet jointly with Mr. Hyatt and the elected dorm activities' representatives for the purpose of further discussing and planning social events.

As most of our members were absent from the meeting due to schedule conflicts, we discussed the need for alternate representatives and an assured meeting time of our own. The suggestion of having a faculty advisor, in addition to Mr. Hyatt, which was made last week, was also mentioned. Mr. Bill Greene was mentioned as a possibility for this position and we are asking the students for other names. Before choosing anyone, however, we feel that the responsibilities

of the position should be defined so that the advisor can be selected to fit the position.

We had a brief report from the constitution committee concerning its progress during the past week. Mr. Ward will speak to us at a later date of his ideas on the subject.

The letter from the students to Mr. Ward regarding health and safety at the new dorm site and the problems in the cafeteria was read and discussed. Agreed that we are in agreement with the points made in the letter, we endorsed it, as a student organization. We also agreed that, in regard to student petitions having S.G.A. backing, one of our representatives should go with the initiator of the petition for the presentation of it.

The absence of adequate communication within the school was discussed. It was suggested that the faculty be provided with copies of the minutes of S.G.A. meetings and that we ask for copies of the minutes of faculty meetings. In doing so, we hope that we can improve the communication between students, faculty, and administration.

(Cont. on page 5)

NUTCRACKER (CON'T. FROM PG.1)
three years performances have been sold out before the 21st.

Mail orders will be filled as they are received. People requesting tickets by mail may indicate first, second and third choice as to which performance they wish to attend. If performances are sold out, money will be refunded. Mail orders should include money or check and a self-addressed stamped envelope. Tickets are \$1.50 for children through high school age and \$2.50 for adults.

The ballet will also be performed in Durham and Raleigh. Music for the Raleigh Performances will be by the North Carolina Symphony Orchestra with Dr. Benjamin Swalin, conductor.