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IVES 150  
October 16-20, 2024

Patti Bick 9/25/2024

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The Danbury Museum & Danbury Music Centre invite you to join our local, national, and international artists for a once in a lifetime celebration of Charles Ives's 150th birthday!

Concert schedule, details, and ticketing @ CharlesIves150.org

## Hello Friends!

It's officially autumn!

As you've probably heard, 2024 is the 150th birthday of Danbury's own Charles Ives. The Danbury Museum and the Danbury Music Centre have planned a most exciting series of concerts to commemorate the life and legacy of Ives. All events--even the concerts--are FREE. We are committed to removing economic barriers and making this a true community event. All the info, ticketing links, and artist bios are available at [CharlesIves150.org](https://CharlesIves150.org).

There are free tours of the Ives Birthplace from the 16th through the 20th, at 10:30am. Please book via [Eventbrite](#) to make sure there is space available. There are also self-guided Ives-related walking tours--maps are available at the Danbury Museum and on the [CharlesIves150.org](#) website.

The concerts we have lined up with our partners at the Danbury Music Centre are diverse and they interpret the Ives canon for the 21st century.

William Harvey and Frederic Chu will perform Ives Sonatas for Violin and Piano at the Ives Concert Hall. This is a ticketed event, please book your general admission tickets via [WestConn's ticketing system](#).

Pianist Lon Kaiser and soprano Jennifer Kayner Honan will perform on Saturday, October 19 from 1:30-2:30pm in the Danbury Museum's Marian Anderson Studio. Jennifer and Lon will present a charming and heartwarming hour long program of Charles Ives songs and music from the late 19th century and early 20th century in period clothing. Tickets for this event are free, and can be [booked via Eventbrite](#).

On Sunday, October 20, Ives's actual birthday, we have two very special concerts. The Danbury Symphony Orchestra will present a concert at 3pm at the Ives Concert Hall. (Please note this is a ticketed event, and general admission tickets can be booked via [WestConn's ticketing system](#).)

And finally, the grand finale of our celebrations, Canadian pianist and Latitude 45 recording artist (and our first tour guest at the Ives Birthplace all the way back in 2022!) will perform Ives Piano Sonata No. 2 at 6pm. Birthday cake and sparkling drinks will follow Louise's performance. This is also a ticketed event and general admission tickets may be booked via [West Conn's ticketing system](#).

We are pleased to have John O'Donnell with us again this month, writing about Charles Ives and his *Essays Before a Sonata*. Collections Manager and Assistant Director, Michele Lee Amundsen contributes a little "Harmony" to this Ives-themed newsletter.

We hope to see all of you at one of our events--these are once-in-a-lifetime opportunities! Thank you to all of our wonderful and generous sponsors: City of Danbury Cultural Commission (Presenting Sponsor); Western Connecticut State University, Savings Bank of Danbury, Donald and Patricia Weeden, The Amber Room Colonnade, Hopkins School, and the Rizzo Companies.

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Book tickets, see the schedule of events at [CharlesIves150.org](http://CharlesIves150.org)

# IVES 150

The Danbury Museum & the Danbury Music Centre invite you to join our local, national, and international artists for a once in a lifetime celebration of Charles Ives's 150th birthday.

### October 16 thru 20 - 10:30 am

*Daily tours of the Charles Ives Birthplace.  
Daily self-guided Ives tours downtown Danbury on your schedule.*

### October 18 at Ives Concert Hall, WCSU - 7:00 pm

*William Harvey (violinist) and Frederic Chiu (pianist),  
Ives Sonatas for Violin and Piano.*

### October 19 - 10:30 am & 1:30 pm

*Tour of Charles Ives Birthplace at 10:30, followed by graveside  
gathering at **Wooster Cemetery**.*

### 1:30 - 2:30 pm Jennifer Honan (soprano) and Lon Kaiser (pianist)

*present a program of Ives songs and music in period clothing in the  
**Danbury Museum's Marian Anderson Studio**.*

### October 20 at Ives Concert Hall, WCSU - 3:00 pm

*Danbury Symphony Orchestra Performance at Ives Concert Hall*

### October 20 at Ives Concert Hall, WCSU - 6:00 pm

*Canadian pianist Louise Bessette performance of Ives Piano Sonata No. 2*

All events are FREE thanks to our generous sponsors!

**Presenting Sponsor: City of Danbury Cultural Commission,**

*Western Connecticut State University, Savings Bank of Danbury, Amber Room  
Colonnade, Donald & Patricia Weeden, Hopkins School, The Rizzo Companies.*





Charles Ives by Halley Erskine. (Copyright 1951 Halley Erskine.)

## Ives 150

by John O'Donnell

It is a great joy to have the opportunity to write an essay about Charles Ives (1874-1954) who was a musical genius and achieved recognition on a global scale. Ives is a multifaceted subject, so I thought the best way to approach him was to read a book that he wrote in 1920 entitled *Essays Before a Sonata*. The sonata in question was the Piano Sonata No. 2, Concord, Mass., 1840-1860. This book is best thought of as an intellectual and musical autobiography as well as a statement of Ives's philosophy of art. It is rare that we are given extended insight into an artist's creative methods. I have only read two other books like this. The first is *Draft No. 4: On the Writing Process* who explores at length how he creates his wonderful creative nonfiction. The other is by the great German writer Thomas Mann who gave us a look into his creative process and influences with his work *The Origin of Doctor Faustus* which is an



autobiographical nonfiction book about his novel *Doctor Faustus* who is a German composer who makes a pact with the devil to aid his composing expertise.

To get an idea about Ives's iconoclastic temperament we should note his dedication of the book: "These prefatory essays were written by the composer for those who can't stand his music-and the music for those who can't stand his essays; to those who can't stand either, the whole is respectfully dedicated."

Ives was born in Danbury on October 20, 1874. The Ives family was prominent in Danbury, especially in business and civic improvement. A major influence on Charles Ives was his father George Edward Ives (1845-1894) who had been a bandleader in the Civil War. After the war George Ives directed bands, choirs and orchestras and taught music theory and a number of instruments. Charles was greatly influenced by listening to his father's marching band and other bands on the other side of the town square simultaneously. His father taught Charles harmony, counterpoint and guided his first compositions. George took an open-minded approach to theory, encouraging him to experiment in bitonal and polytonal harmonizations. He also bequeathed to Charles a lifelong interest in the Civil War. George likewise made Charles aware of the music of Stephen Foster. Charles became a church organist at the age of fourteen and wrote various hymns and songs for church services, including his "Variations on America" which is a challenging piece even to modern concert organists.

Charles moved to New Haven in 1893 and enrolled in the Hopkins School where he captained the baseball team. In September 1894 he entered Yale University and studied music under the composer Horatio Parker who was also a pianist had a very great reputation in the musical world. Parker finished his musical education in Europe which was very common at this time. He studied at the Royal Music School in Munich. He was a prolific and versatile composer who championed music in a conservative, Germanic tradition. On November 4, 1894, George Ives died which was a catastrophic blow for Charles. But he continued his musical experimentation. He wrote his Symphony No. 1 as his senior thesis under Parker's supervision. But Charles Ives had his own ideas on how he wanted to compose. He was not going to fall under the sway of European musical culture. He would free American musical culture in a spectacular way.

Ives is surely an original in that he knowingly avoided the trap that earlier American composers had fallen into. They had largely looked to the German symphonic tradition for idioms to adapt and emulate as Horatio Parker had done. Ives instead drew from his Danbury boyhood. He recalled the sounds of brass bands, church choirs, crowds cheering loudly on a village green, a church

bell tolling in the distance , haunting echoes of a specific New England time and place he exploited in harmonically and rhythmically complex ways. He used the vernacular and the modern in ways that few other composers had shown the ability to employ in their work.

In the book and in the Sonata that accompanies it, Ives shows that not only is he a skilled composer (although very difficult: he called the Sonata a fiendishly difficult piece to perform) but his grasp of New England philosophy, religion, Concord Transcendentalism (which centers around the belief that spirituality cannot be achieved through reason and rationalism but instead through self-reflection and intuition) and his New England history knowledge shows him to have been a very serious scholar outside of his chosen profession. What he does is to give us impressionistic but profound insights into Emerson, Hawthorne, the Alcotts and Thoreau, who are a veritable pantheon of the summit of intellectual and literary history. And he matches music to all these people very successfully. So, the book and the music are conjoined to fully explain the centrality of Concord Transcendentalism.

Ives himself in this book (page 38) gives us an idea of the importance of his father, the Civil War and growing up in Danbury left an indelible mark on his life and music: “the early morning of a Memorial Day, a boy is awakened by martial music and a village band is marching down the street, and as the strains of Reeve’s (David Wallis Reeve who was one of the important developer of the American march style) majestic Seventh Regiment March come nearer and nearer, he seems of a sudden translated--a moment of vivid power comes, a consciousness of material nobility, an exultant something gleaming with the possibilities of this life, an assurance that nothing is impossible, and that the whole world lies at his feet. But as the band turns the corner, at the soldiers’ monument, and the march steps of the Grand Army become fainter and fainter, the boy’s vision slowly vanishes...but the experience ever lies within him in its reality.”

**John O'Donnell first became a history devotee while in elementary school. He was raised in Brooklyn and frequently went to Prospect Park which has a Revolutionary War monument. He was hooked!**

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*Harmony & Charles Ives by Halley Erskine. (Copyright 1951 Halley Erskine.)*

## Harmony

by Michele Lee Amundsen

As we set out to celebrate the 150th birthday of Charles Edward Ives, a man well known for embracing the emancipation of dissonance, it feels perfectly Ivesian to write about Harmony.

Harmony Twichell was born in 1876 to Julia Harmony Cushman Twichell and Reverend Joseph Hopkins Twichell in Hartford, CT. Harmony was at first educated at home and then she attended Hartford High School. From 1893-1896 a family friend paid her tuition and fees allowing her to attend Miss Porter's School in Farmington, CT, where her roommate and best friend was Sally Whitney, the granddaughter of Eli Whitney, inventor of the cotton gin.

Harmony and Sally would remain dear friends until Sally's early death in childbirth.

After graduating from Miss Porter's, Harmony engaged in pursuits not atypical for a young woman of her position: painting, poetry, singing, playing the piano, sometimes accompany her father on his travels, and even ghost-writing a newspaper column.

Like other well-educated middle class women of her time, Harmony chose to delay marriage for a time and take up a profession. In 1898 Harmony decided to become a nurse and she would spend the next two years studying in Hartford and working in the city hospital. Progressive ideals and the reform movement had resonated strongly, and she would spend much of the next years working in settlement houses (like the **Henry Street Settlement** in New York City) and trying to improve public health, particularly fighting tuberculosis. In 1901, having graduated the year before, Harmony took a position with the Visiting Nurse's Association of Chicago.

The rigors of nursing took a toll on Harmony and she began to consider settling in to home life, becoming engaged to Reverend Walter Lowrie. She was approaching "spinsterhood" (at the age of nearly 30) but she realized after a few months that Reverend Lowrie was not the one and the engagement was called off.

Harmony had met Charles Ives before, he was a great friend of her brother, Dave Twichell, at Yale. In July of 1905, Ives took her to hear Dvořák's New World Symphony in Hartford. Ives biographer, Jan Swafford in *Charles Ives, A Life in Music* says of the evening, "That was the night they called 'La Vita Nuova' when their lives turned a corner..."

Their courtship was in no way impetuous. It would end up being long—more than two years— and tend toward caution. After all, Harmony had broken off a recent engagement and Ives was seeing other girls and the course of true love never did run smooth. However, as J. Peter Burkholder notes in *Charles Ives: The Ideas behind the Music*, "when commitment came it was complete and life long."

In Harmony Twichell, Ives found unconditional love and acceptance. She was a pillar in his life as his father had been; where his father had been brilliant and inspiring, however, he was also demanding. Harmony admired and understood Ives, as an artist and person.

While Ives rarely told her in detail what he was working on, her confidence and



commitment to his music was unwavering. Because Harmony was never in doubt that Charles Ives was a genius, he himself was never in doubt. They shared similar ideals for what music might accomplish. Harmony understood, in a meaningful way, what was most important to Ives and because his music reminded her of him, she loved them both.

Burkholder notes “Charles Ives looked upon his wife as his greatest source of inspiration” and goes on to conclude that Ives “conceived his largest, greatest, and most characteristic compositions in the decade after their engagement.”

On June 9, 1908, Harmony Twichell and Charles Ives married at the Asylum Hill Church in Hartford in what was called a “quiet, solemn service.” They would live much of their lives in sight of one another, often within arms reach.

Harmony Ives died in April of 1969, aged 92, and is buried alongside her husband in the Ives family plot in Wooster Cemetery. Harmony’s words survive in diaries and letters.

“One thing I am certain of is that, if I have done anything good in music, it was, first because of my father, and second, because of my wife. SHE urged me on my way—to be myself! SHE gave me not only help, but a confidence that no one else since father had given me.” — Charles Edward Ives (*Ives Memos*, 114, edited by John Kirkpatrick, as quoted in Jan Swafford's *Charles Ives, A Life in Music*.)

**Michele Lee Amundsen is the Collections Manager and Assistant Director at the Danbury Museum and a burgeoning Ives aficionado.**

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