



Dave Frank School of Jazz

In-person in NYC or Skype lessons worldwide

The Piano Music of Charles Ives

Charles Ives (1874-1954) is America's greatest composer. His composed works include numerous pieces for piano, four symphonies, works for orchestra, violin sonatas, pieces for organ, choir, and string quartets. Part rebel, part rogue, part space traveler and a total trailblazing genius, Charles Ives' music is an unexplainable adventure in wild dissonances, uneven rhythms, unexpected musical contrasts and religious reverence. His unswerving commitment to breaking new ground in the exploration of sound and in following his unique musical path despite the derision of the world around him has left us with an incredible legacy of gorgeous, challenging music to enjoy and ponder. Tonight we will focus on his piano pieces in the light of his pioneering work in the use of dissonance to widen the musical palette of western music. Because the person of Charles Ives is so interesting and unique, I'd like to share with you some of his life story, his own thoughts and words about the art of music, and some reminiscences of those that knew him.

HIS LIFE

Charles Ives was born and raised in New England, and spent his formative years in Connecticut and New York City. His father, the extraordinary George Ives, was a band leader, cornetist, and in his own right a musical non-conformist and legendary character. (It was from his father that Charles Ives was opened to such musical concepts as bi-tonality, uneven rhythmic sequencing, and quarter-tone music, to name a few.) Charles Ives studied composition at Yale from 1894-1898, and upon graduation moved to New York City and began his chosen career - as a life insurance mogul! As a partner in the hugely successful firm of Ives and Myrick, Charles Ives was a pioneer not only in the world of music but in the world of life insurance! He invented the use of actuarial tables to compute the amount of life insurance a person should carry (an essential part of the life insurance business even today), and was one of the first in the industry to come up with the concept of "estate planning".

He married his wife, Harmony and had a full family life including a daughter and large extended family. He suffered a major heart attack in 1918 at the age of 44 (in some part due to his excitable nature), and spent a good deal of his life after that point with serious health problems including a heart condition, diabetes and a type of palsy. A New Englander through and through, Ives was loved and revered by friends, family and a small clique of musical contemporaries – including Aaron Copland, Henry Cowell and Nicholas Slominsky –for his generous nature, blazing musical genius, great exuberance in life and music, and for his wicked sense of humor. Ives spent most of his time after his retirement in 1930 in his home in West Redding, Connecticut, and died in 1954 of natural causes.

CHARLES IVES DISSONANCE TECHNIQUES

Dissonant intervals

The common dissonant intervals in music are the min2nd, augmented 4th, Maj7th, and the b9th. These intervals can be used alone, in larger chords or in combination to achieve various degrees of dissonance.

Video Examples:

Mildly dissonant Chords that have these intervals in them – C E F# B
D Eb G C
F Gb B E

Dissonant intervals combinations as played - D Eb A Bb
A Eb E Bb
G D F# Ab

Using Stacked Intervals

The use of stacked intervals refers to building chords using pre-planned interval combinations. Chords can be built using sequential or varied intervals, one on top of the other in a chain. Common intervals to stack include min2, major 2nd, min3, maj 3rd, perfect fourths, augmented fourths, and fifths.

Examples from video –

Major and minor 3rds stacks:

C E G# B/D F# Bb D
C Eb G Bb/D F# A C#
F A C# E/G Bb D F
Ab C E /A b B D Gb Bb

3rds and 2nds stacks:

C E G B/Db Eb F G A
C Eb F Ab B/Db E F#
Eb G A Db/ E F# A B
F G A C/E F# G# B

3rds and 4ths stacks:

F Bb Eb/ Gb B D F
F B E/G C Eb Gb
Ab Db F/Ab Db Gb A

2nds Stacks:

G A B Db/Dnat Eb Gb Ab

G# A B/Db Eb F

D E Ab/Bb Eb F

USING BI-TONALITY

Bi-tonality refers to the use of 2 (or more) keys at the same time. In the video, examples shown of bi-tonality are:

2/1, 3/1, b5/1, b6/1, and 7/1 (1 in the LH and the other in RH)

TWELVE-TONE SPLIT

This technique is to split the 12 chromatic half-steps equally between the 2 hands. This wild combination can be played all together, LH then RH, or in various splits. Sounds like a piano falling down the stairs)

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<http://www.youtube.com/Dfrankjazz>

www.ustream.tv/user/Dfrankjazz

Comments, compliments, Complaints and criticism can be sent to:

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