

FROM THE EARLY 20TH...

IVES Concord Sonata | **NIELSEN** Three Pieces, Op. 59

ENESCU Carillon Nocturne | **SCHOENBERG** Two Pieces, Op. 33

andrew rangell, piano



STEINWAY & SONS



Pitcher Charles Ives, left, and catcher Franklin Hobart Miles,
the winning combination that beat Yale for
Hopkins Grammar School.



FROM THE EARLY 20TH...

andrew rangell, piano

CARL NIELSEN

Three Pieces, Op. 59

1. I. Allegro fluente 3:12
2. II. Adagio 2:34
3. III. Allegro non troppo 5:04

GEORGE ENESCU

4. Suite No. 3, Op. 18: No. 7, Carillon Nocturne 7:08

ARNOLD SCHOENBERG

5. Klavierstück, Op. 33a 2:35

6. Klavierstück, Op. 33b 4:12

CHARLES IVES

Sonata No. 2 "Concord, Mass., 1840-60"

7. I. Emerson 16:26
8. II. Hawthorne 11:44
9. III. The Alcotts 5:36
10. IV. Thoreau 10:37

Playing Time: 69:08


CARL NIELSEN *Three Pieces, Op. 59*

It is noteworthy that neither Carl Nielsen nor Arnold Schoenberg were skilled pianists, yet both made distinctive and substantial contributions to the literature of the piano. Nielsen's last work for piano, Op. 59, was written in 1928, coincident with his clarinet concerto, and in the wake of his Sixth Symphony. Like those large-scale masterworks, these concentrated and closely-knit pieces reveal a searching, and even disruptive, sensibility. Here Nielsen's tonal language is fluid, ambiguous, disjunct, and wary of tonal centers. In the first piece, which opens with a scintillating treble figuration, Nielsen presents contrasting musics in an alternating procedure, to me reminiscent of late Beethoven. This movement's quietly droll conclusion is sprung only in the last measure, a cleverly deferred C major resolution. Movement two (Adagio) is a tiny fantasia, enfolding patchwork polarities of tonality and texture, and concluding with a hymn-like and beatific plagal cadence. The finale springs into life with an agitated three-note ostinato, which explodes, only seconds later, into two thumping (very Ivesian) low-bass clusters, representing a large drum! The three-note kernel eventually grows, with Beethovenian insistence, into mighty things, despite an intervening episode of wonderfully strange placidity and shifting tonal centers. At the end of a final build-up, an unexpected fanfare (in E flat major) bursts forth, providing a surprising and triumphal conclusion.

GEORGE ENESCU *Carillon Nocturne*

Enescu was one of the twentieth century's pre-eminent violinists, and beloved teacher of Yehudi Menuhin. He was also a concert-level pianist. And a great composer. *Carillon Nocturne* is the last of seven diverse movements comprising Enescu's Op. 18 Piano Suite (called *Pieces Impromptues*) which was published in 1916. It is a meditation which not only wonderfully captures the echoing sounds of monastery bells, but also evokes, in its central section, the specific Romanian flavor or ethos of the locality itself, the mountain pastures at Sinaia. Its overall form is symmetrical, but it evolves





unpredictably, with a coda featuring the startling emergence of deep, low bell sounds. The entire piece points forward to the remarkable, and kindred, final movement of Enescu's F sharp minor piano sonata, written eight years later. This deeply personal, floating evocation of time and place was written almost at the same moment of Ives' own evocation of Thoreau at Walden Pond – and shares its intimate spirit.

ARNOLD SCHOENBERG Op. 33, A and B

For Schoenberg, the piano was the medium of experiment, to which he turned at key points of his developmental journey. His last solo pieces (from 1929 and 1931 respectively) come, perhaps, as a reflective, more relaxed, afterthought to his brilliant, ground-breaking Op. 25 Suite, the first major work built using Schoenberg's new twelve-tone technique. Still, the Op. 33 pieces are highly eventful! It is not known whether the two were ever conceived to be grouped together, but the pairing is in fact felicitous. Each shares, in construction, two principal ideas, contrasted, developed, and (freely) recapitulated. In 33A, the primary tone-row is presented in lushly chordal (almost Messiaen-like!) progression. In 33B, the presentation is suavely linear, becoming somewhat jocular, even jazzy. 33A concludes in a gesture of brusque and forceful muscularity, 33B in a long swooning arc of dissipating energy. A spirit of fun and fancy, and even high drama, I think, inhabits these productions of twelve-tone rigor and severity.

CHARLES IVES Piano Sonata No. 2, "Concord, Mass., 1840-1860"

During the first two decades of the twentieth century, Charles Edward Ives, while sharing the helm of a newly-founded business in New York's burgeoning life insurance industry, was able to bring into existence an astonishing body of musical compositions. Astonishing in their particular fusion of recollections from the musical vernacular of Ives' early youth (hymns, marches, rags, patriotic songs, and ballads) with unprecedented new varieties of harmony, polyphony, rhythmic events, and

structural pathways. Ives forged, in effect, his own musical language – a bristling, far-reaching, and democratically inclusive one. He did this alone, and deliberately so, unaided by school or cohort, and isolated from the music profession and its established institutions. Free from the pressure of performance or commission, Ives' larger works tended to grow by slow, sometimes fitful, accumulation. This was, at least, the case with the two massive piano sonatas, which, together, stand in the forefront of Ives' most ambitious and fully-achieved works. These pieces, like so many of Ives' other creations, would not be heard or performed until decades after their completion. The *Concord Sonata* is even now the better-known of the two, if only for its pronounced extra-musical aura. Its four movements are *Emerson, Hawthorne, the Alcotts, and Thoreau*. Consolidated during the period 1911-1915, from various unfinished pieces dating back to 1904, the sonata was first published in 1920. A revised edition from 1947 is now the "standard" edition, but in fact Ives was to add many later emendations and new materials, especially to the Emerson movement, and professed pleasure in the work's seemingly never-finished state! The 1920 publication was, remarkably, accompanied by a book-length collection of essays (entitled "Essays before a Sonata") aimed at explaining the composer's views regarding the sages of Concord, and the larger matter of their musical representation. Discursive, idiosyncratic, emotionally charged, but also hilarious and judgment-filled, these writings demonstrate, sometimes indirectly, Ives' need to proclaim and defend his own values as a composer and artist. Excerpts of these essays appeared in the 1947 edition of the music. Here are some essential extracts:

The *Concord Sonata* "is an attempt to present one person's impression of the spirit of transcendentalism that is associated in the minds of many with Concord, Mass. of over a half century ago. This is undertaken in impressionistic pictures of Emerson and Thoreau, a sketch of the Alcotts, and a scherzo supposed to reflect a lighter quality which is often found in the fantastic side of Hawthorne."





Emerson "... is America's deepest explorer of the spiritual immensities... we see him standing on a summit at the door of the infinite, peering into the mysteries of life... truth was what Emerson was after – not strength of outline, or even beauty, except insofar as they might reveal themselves, naturally, in his explorations toward the infinite... His underlying plan of work seems based on the large unity of a series of particular aspects of a subject, rather than on the continuity of its expression. As thoughts surged to his mind, he fills the heavens with them, crowds them in if necessary, but seldom arranges them along the ground first... His symphonies of revelation begin and end with nothing but the strength and beauty of innate goodness – in Man, in Nature, and in God, the greatest and most inspiring theme of Concord Transcendental Philosophy, as we hear it."

(On Hawthorne) "... our music is but an extended fragment trying to suggest some of his wilder, fantastical adventures into the half-childlike, half-fairylike phantasmal realms."

(On the Alcotts) "... there is a commonplace beauty about Orchard House – a kind of spiritual sturdiness underlying its quaint picturesqueness, a kind of common triad of the New England homestead... All around you, under the Concord sky, there still floats the influence of that human-faith melody, reflecting an innate hope, a common interest in common things and common men, ... a conviction in the power of the common soul, which, when all is said and done, may be as typical as any theme of Concord and its Transcendentalists."

(On Thoreau) "... and if there shall be a program for our music, let it follow his thought on an Autumn day of Indian summer at Walden – a shadow of a thought at first, colored by the mist and haze over the pond:

Low anchored cloud

Fountain-head and

Source of rivers ...


Dew-cloth, dream drapery -

Drifting meadow of the air...

But this is momentary - the beauty of the day moves him to a certain restlessness... an eagerness for outward action... [finally, at the end of this day in which personal stirrings and strivings compete with the more meditative state of nature] it is darker - the poet's flute is heard out over the pond... looking out, he catches a glimpse of the 'shadow-thought' he saw in the morning's mist and haze, and he knows that by his final submission, he possesses the 'freedom of the night'..."

Ives, in the preface to his essays, introduces the Concord as "a group of four pieces, called a sonata, for want of a more exact name..." Yet the work can truly, if insufficiently, be described as a large, multi-movement, thematically unified, romantic piano sonata! Even though Ives once wrote "the nice German recipe... to hell with it." So much for European tradition. The sonata is epic in duration, some forty five minutes (give or take a few) in performance. Its four movements, in their arrangement, are decidedly asymmetrical: *Emerson and Hawthorne*, the most densely active, formally confusing, and generally challenging for both listener and performer, together approach almost half an hour in duration. *The Alcotts* and *Thoreau*, slow movements in effect, together occupy only a quarter hour or so. But, still, there is magic in this succession, and a rightness not to be demonstrated on paper or by the clock. And a profoundly satisfying conclusion. This has much to do with Ives' characteristic way of organizing his materials. We find in many of his larger works a predilection for, and wonderful mastery of, something now called "cumulative form," a mode of musical presentation in which the materials are introduced in a fragmentary, fleeting, or inchoate state, and developed, at length, into a unified or definitive final statement. The composer's four violin sonatas, for instance, demonstrate an astonishing variety and subtlety in the use of this organizational principle. In the *Concord Sonata*,





however, this sensibility is at work on a scale not previously attempted by Ives. The sonata teems with ideas big and small, some abstract (intervallic) figures, others fragmentary quotations from hymns, marches, songs, and most conspicuously, the four-note motto opening of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, ubiquitously present and in phenomenal variety. The Beethoven motif, extended and embroidered, occupies a defining position in the *Concord Sonata's* most pivotal theme, called by Ives the "human-faith melody." Present, in passing, throughout *Emerson* and *Hawthorne*, this theme appears in full throat at the *Alcotts'* conclusion, and yet again, as a distant flute solo over darkening Walden Pond, near the end of *Thoreau*. And these contrasting moments, arrival points of transcendent, frankly sentimental clarity, provide the emotional ballast to counterbalance the long difficult journey of the work's opening movements.

Finally, a brief description of each movement. *Emerson*, far and away the longest movement, rich unto confusion in its yield of themes and regions, is a kind of multi-sectioned marathon, with an ever-shifting variety of piano textures. The opening moments feature a dense, cadenza-like concatenation, introducing most of the thematic content of the entire movement! Complex as it is, the movement is graced by many areas of repose, several featuring an important and recurring "lyric theme." Finally, as if to offset the movement's opening turbulence, its last two pages seem to constitute a very long, very gradual, several-sectioned leave-taking, highlighting the latter part of the human-faith theme. A gripping two minutes, as the sound and fury of this movement fade slowly to silence.

Hawthorne's kaleidoscopic dream scherzo, careening and propulsive, also contains strategic dramatic instances of suspended animation, floating spectral textures. This is music of dislocation, taken to wild extremes. Many themes from *Emerson* emerge here, suddenly, but are gone as quickly. Beethoven is present, also several hymns, rags, Ives' own *Country Band March*, and (of course)

Columbia, the Gem. Tone clusters, both hushed and sweepingly violent, are featured. Finally, down a long and increasingly frantic home stretch, it all ends in a mad upward swoop!

The Alcotts' opening chords mark a welcome, warm, quiet zone of comfort – the parlor, the hearth, Beth Alcott playing at Beethoven's Fifth, Scotch airs, and the Wedding March from *Lohengrin*. The movement, however, is not entirely simple, moving quickly away from diatonic simplicity toward bi-tonal and whole-tone settings, and a fierce Beethoven C minor stretto. Finally a "Scottish tune" leads unexpectedly into a pealing, extended statement of the "human-faith" theme that Ives especially associated with *Concord*. After a feint at B flat, the movement's final quiet C major chord is perhaps the most simple and direct ending in all of Ives.

Thoreau, far more expansive than *the Alcotts*, reverts from home and hearth to nature and its mysteries, and somehow encompasses all that has preceded it, even while voicing many new themes, and in particular the mournful recurrence of a fragment from Stephen Foster's "Massa's in the Cold Ground." In contrast to the powerful assertion of the "human-faith" theme heard in *the Alcotts*, its frail musical voice, as floated out over Walden pond by Thoreau's flute, commands our rapt attention, while it lasts. This solo is supplanted by a poignant slow march to an ending of haunting, and deeply fitting, irresolution.

EPILOGUE

I was powerfully drawn to Ives even before 1971, when I began trying to figure out the First Sonata (which I like to call the "Un-Concord"). During my first go-around with the *Concord* (1975 or so) I made certain executorial decisions which have somehow remained in place through the present day. One was to supply, on piano, the optional viola part at the end of Emerson. Another was to use my own forearm (which seemed to be about the right size) for the black-key tone clusters in



Hawthorn instead of using Ives' prescribed 14-3/4 inch strip of board. I liked the notion of "leaning in" (to use a popular phrase) to get the job done. Lastly, when confronted with the optional flute solo in Thoreau, I seem to have immediately resolved to try whistling it. Which, for better or worse, is what I have done in performance for these forty years or so. I hope there may be, in this species of self-reliance, something of Emerson.

— Andrew Rangell



ANDREW RANGELL Long recognized as among our most eloquent and insightful interpreters of the major keyboard works of Bach and Beethoven, pianist Andrew Rangell has drawn acclaim for a variety of recordings, ranging from the music of Sweelinck, Farnaby, and Gibbons to that of Janacek, Enescu, Nielsen, Bartok, Valen, Christian Wolff, and many others. The present recording (Mr. Rangell's 30th disc) can be considered a counterpart, and complement, to his 2009 Bridge recording of Ives' First Piano Sonata, Nielsen's Op. 45 Suite, and John McDonald's *Meditation*

Before a Sonata (2003), a beautiful homage to Ives' *Concord*.

Andrew Rangell made his New York debut as winner of the Malraux Award of the Concert Artists' Guild, and has since performed and lectured throughout the United States, and in Europe and Israel. He has also taught on the faculties of Dartmouth, Middlebury, and Tufts University. In the 1980s, already recognized as a distinctive recitalist and collaborative artist, Mr. Rangell gained national attention – and the award of an Avery Fisher Career Grant – for his vivid traversals of the complete Beethoven sonata-cycle in New York, Boston, Cleveland, Rochester, Denver, and other U.S. Cities. A hand injury sustained in 1991 forced Mr. Rangell to gradually alter the trajectory of his career, and

eventually to place his highest priority on recording. In recent years he has created several DVDs for children – integrating his special talents as author, illustrator, narrator, and pianist.

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Photo of Andrew Rangell: Bill Fried

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Original art used on the album cover and booklet: Untitled, 1965 by Nadia Gould

Nadia Gould (1929-2007), a woman of many talents, was a beloved friend of my family for many years. – Andrew Rangell

