

The Vocal Music of Charles Ives: The Connections
Between History, Style, and Performance Technique

by

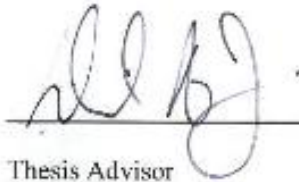
Adam McAllister

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Thesis Advisor

12.6.12

Date



Committee Member

12-6-12

Date



Committee Member

12/6/12

Date

Abstract

Charles Ives' vocal music is not commonly included as standard vocal repertoire for undergraduate and graduate students. The songs chosen for analysis in this paper all have in common a mixture of some degree of modernism alongside traditional elements that give the pieces an accessibility that is rarely found among modernist composers. The five songs: *A Christmas Carol*, *At the River*, *Serenity*, *Charlie Rutlage*, and *General William Booth Enters Into Heaven* range in difficulty at multiple levels and will provide the building blocks for how a student should learn and study a piece of music: through style, historical analysis, and performance technique.

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Introduction

The songs of Charles Ives (1874 - 1954) are not widely performed by undergraduate voice majors. A survey of the most widely used vocal music anthologies for undergraduates can be used to gauge the demand for Ives songs among vocal teachers and students alike and as the Appendix 1 shows, the demand is low indeed: most of the books do not include a single Ives song. One reason for this may be that, for many undergraduates, their understanding of Ives music is based mostly, if not solely, on the study of one of his most modernist, complicated songs, such as *General William Booth Enters Into Heaven* (See Appendix 1). This is an unfortunate state of affairs, because Ives' songs are perfectly suited to meet the educational needs of voice students of all types, from the beginner to the more accomplished performer, due to their extraordinary range in style and technique. On the one hand, the traditional elements in his song make them accessible. On the other, there are modernist elements that challenge the student through musicianship and interpretation.

The existing literature of Ives' songs tends to focus on theoretical analysis and historical background, but there has never been an in-depth study of Ives vocal repertoire from a pedagogical perspective. This paper will

therefore examine five of Ives' songs that demonstrate Ives' extraordinary range in style, compositional technique, and overall interpretive and technical demand, including the simple, hymn-like song *A Christmas Carol*; an actual arrangement of a hymn tune in *At the River*; a modern take on chant form with *Serenity*; an exercise in story telling in *Charlie Rutlage*; and *General William Booth Enters Into Heaven*, perhaps Ives' most challenging song at every level.

Each song was analyzed first from a pedagogical perspective. Particularly in understanding what was challenging about the pieces and what was learned from studying the piece. Secondly, each piece was studied from an analytical perspective, beginning with the vocal line. The vocal line was analyzed by determining which sections of the piece were in correlation with the key and which sections were different from the key. Then an analysis of the accompaniment was conducted in order to find the sections of the piece that were also part of the key. Finally an analysis was done in order to determine whether the accompaniment supported the vocal line and thus those measures were focused upon in order to determine the importance of those measures in learning the pieces and challenges set before the performer.

Chapter 1: A Christmas Carol

Charles Ives wrote *A Christmas Carol* for his daughter Edith in 1894. The song is a lullaby in two verses that captures the poem's simple charm. The musical language is, for the most part, traditional, with undulating melodic and rhythmic patterns typical of a lullaby, and diatonic harmony. The accompaniment mostly supports the vocal line as well, making the piece eminently suitable for a beginning student. There are, however, challenges in terms of technique and interpretation. Mary Bell, a mezzo-soprano who performed many of his songs, made reference to an occasion where Ives played some new songs for her: "I recall vividly *A Christmas Carol*, and he talked a good deal about the rhythm of these songs."¹ The final phrase of *A Christmas Carol* introduces rhythmic irregularities that Burkholder explains: "catch the free style of singing, typical of unaccompanied spirituals."² There are syncopations in both voice and piano, with words falling on weak parts of a divided and subdivided beat.

¹ Vivian Perlis, *Charles Ives Remembered: An Oral History*. (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1974), 190. Mary Bell takes this from a letter who was a mezzo-soprano and a performer of Ives' music.

²Burkholder, *Charles Ives*, 21.

This poses a challenge to the singer because of the free-like style that the performer sings in; however the song does not look very free on the page. This poses the question; how does the performer make it sound "free?"

There are other more subtle rhythmic anomalies as well, such as the duple rhythms in conjunction with traditional rhythms where the beats occur on beats 1 and 3. An interpretation of this would be that Ives places this duple right before he reaches a place of rest; at this point it is the only breath mark that is placed in the whole piece. The duple provides just a slight change in the rhythm to enhance the words, "in our hearts" and in the phrase, "come to die."

The relatively slow tempo and soft dynamics challenge the student to sustain the melodic line with proper breath support. The phrasing of the piece is evident to the singer because of how Ives set the text, which is in two long verses. Therefore the singer needs to have an extended breath to get through the phrases. This is especially important at the end of the piece, where the singer must sustain a single note while the tempo slows. This creates a challenge for the young singer, but because of the simplicity of the notes and the rhythm, more attention can be placed on learning proper breathing techniques.

Good phrasing is essential when studying this piece, because the piece is in two verses, the phrases are more clearly outlined; therefore, the student is able to concentrate more on the emphasis of the words rather than trying to decipher where the phrases begin and end.

Ironically, the very thing that makes the piece so approachable for a beginning student can also present a problem: as the piece is entirely diatonic, without a single non-chord tone, the performance runs the risk of monotony. The many repeated notes can also encourage the singer to go flat, so intonation is of utmost importance.

Chapter 2: At the River

Charles Ives' arrangement of the traditional Christian hymn, *Shall we gather at the River* has always been one of his better-known and most widely performed songs. American composer Jerome Moross wrote in a commentary "we were always trying to play some of [Ives'] songs. I remember that was a big thing to play 'At the River'."³

The setting is derived from the last movement of Ives' Fourth Violin Sonata, subtitled "Children's Day at the Camp Meeting," and is grouped together in a collection of songs titled *Musical Recollections of Childhood*. The original

³ Perlis, 163.

hymn tune, written by Robert Lowry in 1864, deals with the Christian ritual of baptism, specifically in an outdoor setting such as a camp revival meeting, a tradition with which Ives himself would have been familiar.

The melodic line is presented unchanged throughout most of the first verse, until the phrase "flowing by the throne of God." Here Ives alters the melody rather abruptly on the word "throne," introducing chromatic pitches that result in an augmented second, and he displaces the rhythm as well, throwing the rhythms off so that they tie over the beat, appearing "late" compared with the original (See Example 1).

Example 1. Charles Ives, *At the River*, m. 12⁴



Ives then continues with the original melodic line at the refrain, "Yes, we will gather at the river;" once again, at the mention of the river's "flowing by the throne of God," Ives alters the tune in the same way as before. The piece concludes with a reiteration of the song's

⁴Ives, Charles. *At the River*. 1916, p. 2

opening question, one that is asked fervently more than once in the song: "Shall we gather at the river?" Again, Ives introduces rhythmic anomalies: rhythms in the vocal part seemingly delayed, causing syncopations against the underlying beat.

Hitchcock and Perlis have pointed out that *At the River* comes close to being a traditional binary form with normal tonal cadential articulations.⁵ Ives uses whole tone scales in the accompaniment to serve as transitions between the two major sections (measures 11 and 20), also providing a sense of uncertainty in the phrase, "flowing by the throne of God." Hitchcock and Perlis points this out, "These two inserts are actually taken from earlier portions of the song- they are themselves fragments- and the second one consists essentially of a return to the opening phrase."⁶

The harmony of Ives' arrangement differs from the original throughout the entire arrangement, with complex, chromatic harmonies substituting for the song's original tonal language. However, this is not true of the bass line, which is quite traditional; if the tune were played with the bass line alone, it would sound like a traditional

⁵ H.Wiley Hitchcock and Vivian Perlis, *An Ives Celebration: Papers and Panel of the Charles Ives Centennial Festival Conference*. (Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 1977), 149.

⁶ Hitchcock and Perlis, 149.

setting; it is only the upper portions of the harmony that are non-tonal. The bass line thus provides a sense of stability, anchoring the melody.

This piece is beneficial for vocal study for three reasons. First, the vocal line is mostly tonal and melodic in the traditional sense, with only the two chromatic phrases mentioned above. Second, it allows the student to learn a sense of independence, since he or she must sing a melodic line that is not always supported by the accompaniment. This also challenges the singer's intonation and pitch memory, since he or she cannot rely on the piano to provide consistent support.

Thirdly, this piece also allows the student to delve into the text and determine what Ives is trying to accomplish with the text and the melody. What does the student make of the unusual harmonies and the strange "warping" of the traditional tune? Is Ives trying to introduce a sense of uneasiness? Is it because a river is "uncertain?" Does it have something to do with the idea of the throne of God, an image that, traditionally, conveys a sense of calming and comfort? This also may affect how the rhythms are interpreted: are they syncopations, and therefore rhythmic? Or do they represent "delays," in which the singer momentarily loses track of the beat, allowing

the notes to hang on for longer than their usual value, and are thus to be performed like the rest of the notes in the song?

For a student who is already familiar with the hymn, additional questions about the interpretation of the hymn might be raised. Is Ives writing this in response to the text of the hymn? Is Ives writing this in response to the inner feelings that this hymn conveys on a spiritual level? Is it just in response to the ritual of baptism? These are questions that the student can ask himself or herself when studying this song.

In terms of vocal technique, the piece challenges the student to grow in his or her ability to maintain breath support in long phrases. While the song is marked *Allegretto*, there is a long tradition of presenting it in a slower tempo; the student must therefore rely on deep and low breathing in order to sustain the phrases all the way through the vocal lines.

Chapter 3: Serenity

Serenity is a combination of two stanzas taken from John Whittier's poem *The Brewing of Soma* written in 1848. It is not known exactly if Ives took the poetry from this set of poems or if it is a setting of the hymn *Dear Lord*

and Father of Mankind, written in 1884. Soma is a spiritual drink that was taken by worshippers of the Vedic tradition in order to gain a greater experience and knowledge of God, and the poem describes its brewing.⁷ Later in the poem, however, the true path to salvation is the focus with the poem conveying the importance of peace and serenity versus all of the chaos that is established in the poem. It is clear that the poet rejects non-Christian rituals of frenzy in favor of a Christian serenity.

Ives sets the two stanzas of text in modified strophic form, indicating that the piece should be performed "very slowly, quietly and sustained, with little or no change in tempo or volume throughout." Each stanza begins the same way, with chant-like repetitions of A-natural in free rhythm, the vocal line gradually expanding outward to a perfect fifth before moving back to A. The accompaniment oscillates between two unrelated chords with bell-like sonorities: an F Major triad with an added 6, and E Minor triad with an added (sharp) 6. The bell-like undulation has the effect of suspended motion in the first part of each verse because the harmonies do not lead to a clear tonic.

⁷ Soma: an intoxicating juice from a plant of disputed identity that was used in ancient India as an offering to the gods and as a drink of immortality by worshippers in Vedic ritual and worshipped in personified form as a Vedic god.

In measure 12, however, the accompaniment suddenly shifts to a clear F-major tonality for the last line of the stanza, "interpreted by love (See Example 2)." Ives introduces this tonal harmony for only one measure before returning to the bell sounds of the opening for the second stanza. The vocal line in the second stanza goes further than the first, rising to D and then E, this time incorporating G Major tonality. The melody ends a step above where it began, on B, adding to a sense of suspended time and disconnectedness by avoiding the confirmation of a pitch center.

Example 2. Charles Ives, *Serenity*, m. 12⁸



⁸Charles Ives. *Serenity*. 1919.

Ives places breaths within the piece, only twice, in unusual places. These two words are placed after Ives changes the harmonic progressions, perhaps to exude the importance of two words "love and peace." One might assume that these harmonic progressions provide the importance of the words, but the breath marks also lend to the emotional effect of the piece. Ives uses these breaths to place emphasis on the transition back into love and peace.

The rhythm of the piece also provides expressive depth to the piece. Ives pays close attention to the minutest details of text rhythm and accentuation, with a free alternation between duple and triple subdivisions of the beat in the vocal line. He constantly varies the rhythm, sometimes matching the absolute regularity of the dotted quarter-note pulse in the accompaniment, sometimes not. The unvarying nature of the accompaniment further permits these details of text and rhythm to be perceived by the listener and to achieve maximum expressive impact.⁹ Ives constantly varies the rhythm by sometimes matching the accompaniment and sometimes not. What is interesting is that Ives is completely on the beat in the instances where he is in complete tonal harmony between the accompaniment and the

⁹ Larry Starr, *A Union of Diversities: Style in the music of Charles Ives*. (Schirmer Books, 1992), 145.

vocal line.

This piece is of importance for study in the vocal repertoire because it presents a modern interpretation of a genre that still has value in the modern compositional world. It familiarizes the students with an approach that is typical of Ives, using traditional ideas and incorporating them into his music. In an educational context it is important because it presents the idea that chant did not die and is still used as a viable and concrete musical interpretation and idea. Serenity provides an example of the traditional affective and influential music of the modern idea.

As a vocal performer, breathing is always important, but in this song in particular, proper breath support is of utmost importance in order to achieve the correct mood of the piece because of the composer notes that are written into the score. It is very important in this song to develop the ability to sustain pitches and to have consistent intonation the performer needs to be able to have extensive breath control and support. In order to gain this control, the singer needs to learn to breath deep and push the breath down into the lower part of the lungs where the ribs can expand and towards the floor to maintain inhalation.

This piece also gives the performer a chance to expand his or her performance techniques by finding a way to portray the song and display the context of the piece through the voice, without a lot of physical movement. Even though the piece is expressive enough, it is important that the performer appear to be static, with as little emotion as the piece dictates. The performer cannot give any change in facial expression but rather should display a consistent facial expression because of the context of the piece.

This piece is also beneficial because it takes the student one step further in developing a good ear and intonation. The student must rely on pitch memory because the accompaniment for the majority of the piece does not provide any support.

Chapter 4: Charlie Rutlage

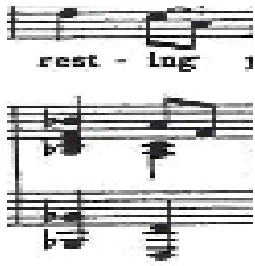
Charlie Rutlage is a song that encompasses a wide range of compositional techniques as well as performance practices. It is a setting of a poem that was collected by the American musicologist and folklorist John A. Lomax and published in 1911. Ives was apparently so taken with the poem that he ripped the page on which it appeared out of a library book so that he could take it with him. The poem tells the story of a tough cowboy named Charlie Rutlage who

attempts to saddle up an unruly horse, only to meet his own demise-the third such cowboy to meet this fate. The story is told in first person, with the narrator giving a firsthand account of what is going on in the life of Charlie Rutlage. After narrating the events of Charlie's struggle with the horse, the speaker expresses the hope that Charlie will reunite with his family in heaven, "at the shining throne of grace."

The song is in an overall ABA form, which provides a mental map for the singer to keep control of where the song is going and where he or she is in the song. Each A section opens in a kind of "cowboy" style with a "boom-chuck" accompaniment.¹⁰ While the opening harmonies seem simple, the tonality is ambiguous. Even though the accompaniment seems to center on F, the vocal line outlines a d minor triad, and the walking bass splits the difference by emphasizing both the F and the d. The harmony suddenly becomes clearer with the B-flat chord in measure 5 (See Example 3), but the harmony quickly strays from the regularity of the opening.

¹⁰ Starr, 112.

Example 3. Charles Ives, *Charlie Rutlage*, m. 5¹¹



There is a shift in tone in measures 14 and 15 where the text speaks of the “tough and brave” men who have died before Charlie, with a shift in the texture to a more chorale-like homophonic texture. Descending chromatic lines in both voice and accompaniment paint the picture of Charlie’s being “sent to his grave,” while also serving as a transition to the middle section.

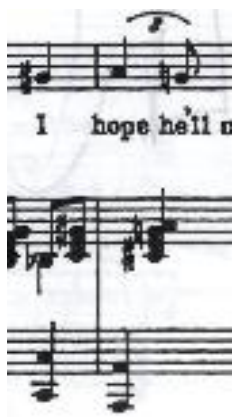
The B section adds a completely different element to the piece. In this section, the poet describes the actual events of Charlie’s battle with the horse, and Ives directs the vocalist to speak the text in rhythm. It seems simple, but the rhythmic complexities in speaking in rhythm is challenging, particularly given the complicated, graphically descriptive accompaniment that represents the battle musically in great detail. Ives even asks the accompanist to take part in the storytelling by

¹¹Charles, Ives. *Charlie Rutlage*, 1922, p.1.

interjecting dialogue: “yippee-ti-ya get a long little doggies, etc,” creating an unexpected third layer. At the point in the story where Charlie Rutlage dies, Ives adds a descending passage that encompasses every note on the piano, followed by an indication that the pianist should use both fists to pound on the piano.

Ives then returns to the diatonic music of the opening for the concluding A section, where the speaker hopes that Charlie will arrive at the golden gate. Here Ives emphasizes the words “hope,” leading up to it from a g-sharp augmented triad (See Example 4).

Example 4. Charles Ives, *Charlie Rutlage*, m. 46¹²



The triplet further emphasizes the word. Ives ends the piece finally in the accompaniment but then leaves the

¹²Charles Ives. *Charlie Rutlage*. 1922, p. 4

singer to sing at the final note with a fermata, as if the story were still going on, even though we leave it.

The challenges to the performers of this song are considerable. The main challenge begins in the recitative section where the words are spoken on pitches while the accompaniment plays. This is a challenge because the singer has to have precise rhythmic accuracy in this section. There is a balancing act between the voice and the piano. It becomes increasingly difficult because the tempos are marked faster and faster, while the accompaniment becomes more complicated. The song challenges the performer to sing without any harmonic support in the accompaniment; this lack of support challenges the singer to remember the beginning pitch from the recitative section.

It is also beneficial to the performer because of the story telling that is involved. Ives uses the accompaniment to support the story line but it is up to the performer to tell the story. Because the middle section is set as a recitative told in the first person, the singer becomes a kind of character himself, as if he were an actual witness to events happening before his eyes. The performer thus has some choices to make in presenting the song. Who is telling this story? Is it a fellow cow-

rancher, a friend of Charlie's, or a preacher? Should the song be presented in a Southwestern dialect? Is there a sense of irony in the piece? The characterization of this piece presents an opportunity for the performer to actively engage with the audience, which differs from the traditional practice of singing art songs.

Another challenge for the performer is the phrasing. The song is shaped in one long, ongoing narrative, essentially without any significant moments where the singer is allowed to rest. Good pacing is therefore of utmost importance. The danger is that the performer, caught up in the moment of delivering the exciting details of the story, will begin to over sing, or "over-speak" in the recitative section. The singer must learn, therefore, to have good breath control and learn how to project the spoken parts without screaming. Good breath control and pacing will allow the singer to make it to the end of the piece without faltering, with consistent vocal production and tone.

Chapter 5: General William Booth Enters Into Heaven

The American composer Carl Ruggles once said that "...if Ives never wrote but one song, he would have been a great

composer and that's "General William Booth Enters Into Heaven."¹³ The song is a setting of a poem by Vachal Lindsey (1879-1931) about William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army. In the poem, Lindsay imagines Booth playing the bass drum, leading a motley cast of social outcasts in a march to heaven, and fulfilling his mission as the founder of the Salvation Army to minister to those whom society has deemed untouchable: "walking lepers, drabs, drug fiends...and unwashed legions." Heaven is envisioned as the public square of an American city, where Jesus suddenly appears before the courthouse door, blessing the crowd. Booth "saw not," but "led his queer ones on." The march is taken up again, and disappears into the distance.

The styles and techniques employed in this song are extremely diverse. Ives evokes Booth's bass drum through dissonant cluster chords on the piano, a technique that Ives must have remembered from his boyhood, when his father encouraged him to practice the percussion parts he was playing in his father's wind ensemble by playing them at home on the piano with his fists. Beginning at measure 7, the poem asks, "Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?" quoting the hymn of the same name; as Gayle Sherwood Magee

¹³ Perlis, 176. Written by Carl Ruggles, a friend of Charles Ives.

has observed in her book, *Charles Ives Reconsidered*, "By suggesting the humble devotion of a hymn, it brings the message of the song home to us."¹⁴ The tune Ives quotes, however, is from a different hymn, "There is a Fountain Filled with Blood," that uses some of the same images and themes of spiritual and physical transformation that dominate late nineteenth-century gospel theology.¹⁵

After the sweetness of the melody of "Are You Washed in the Blood," Ives continues with a disjointed melodic line that reflects a kind of lurching march of the unwashed. There is a sudden outburst on the high E-flat at 'Drabs', followed by chromatic scales at "vermin eaten saints..." eerily painting the image of Booth's undead legions creeping up out of the ground to join the march.

Ives evokes the chaos and squalor of the slums by writing whole-note scales in the voice at measure 42 (See Example 5), while the piano plays off-beat figures that militate against the meter, suggesting "the milling about of the crowd, constantly moving without going anywhere."¹⁶

¹⁴ J. Peter Burkholder, page 28

¹⁵ Gayle Sherwood Magee, *Charles Ives Reconsidered*. (Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 2008), 107.

¹⁶ J. Peter Burkholder, 25.

Example 5. Charles Ives, *General William Booth Enters Into Heaven*, m. 42¹⁷



Ives quotes at least one secular tune as well: where the text speaks of "big voiced lassies [making] their banjoes bang," and Ives quotes "Oh, dem Golden Slippers", a minstrel song about going to heaven.¹⁸

This is followed by an "overexcited false start" on 'Are you?' which causes in turn an extra half-beat 'hiccup' in the march rhythm. Starr observes, "This is musical naturalism taken to hilarious extremes."¹⁹

At the appearance of Jesus in measure 82, the harmony suddenly comes to rest. Even though the harmonies are essentially tonal, Ives alters the rhythm into a duple in the vocal line against the simple time signature of the

¹⁷ Charles Ives. *General William Booth Enters Into Heaven*, 1922, P.3.

¹⁸ J. Peter Burkholder, 26.

¹⁹ Starr, 98.

accompaniment. The accompaniment quotes "There is a Fountain" in the left hand, this time including more of the tune, and capturing musically the idea of wholeness and salvation that the unwashed legions attain as they are blessed.

However, Booth "saw not, but led his queer ones on," and here Ives takes up the march again, finally presenting the full tune of the hymn "There is a Fountain" in the voice. The piece concludes with a return to the original question, "Are you washed in the blood of the lamb?" and another harmonic plateau, this time drenched in shimmering chromatic harmonies reminiscent of bells. The march continues in the accompaniment, disappearing into the distance.

The form that Ives employed in this song is complex, and can be analyzed as a sonata form, where the opening quote of "There is a Fountain" is developed in the middle section, recapitulating in measure 147.²⁰ For the development, Ives drops 'Fountain' and focuses on the second phrase of 'Are You Washed' by conjoining the hymn's repetitive descending major third melodic structure with Lindsay's circular image (round and round).²¹ Ives uses the

²⁰ Magee, 107.

²¹ Magee, 112.

hallelujah passages to point towards some form of harmony by adding triadic and whole tone elements that are centered on E major. This is unusual because tonal harmony has not been written once yet in this piece. But it can also be seen as an example of cumulative form, where a main theme does not appear fully formed at the beginning, but instead gradually coalesces over the course of a movement, appearing in its full form only at the end.²² This is a challenge in performance because of the gradual excitement that builds through the piece. The performer must not oversing and stay composed throughout the performance even though the piece continues to gradually get bigger.

This song challenges the performers' musicianship at the highest levels. The change in time signatures throughout the piece requires the performer to keep a consistent beat in some places, while in others it displaces the beat. The section beginning at measure 42 opens with a duple piano figure that shifts our sense of the downbeat one half of a beat early; the singer must then enter on the beat, singing quarter note beats against the piano's offbeat figures.

²² Burkholder, J. Peter, et al., "Ives, Charles," in *Grove Music Online* Oxford University Press (2001-), accessed November 14, 2012, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/14000>.

The singer must also learn to rely on pitch memory as he or she is required to sing whole-tone scales and pentatonic scales throughout the piece, while relying only on pitch memory rather than the accompaniment, which ranges from merely dissonant to atonal. Although Ives incorporates some more tonal melodic lines by using the hymns, they have been altered, and they are surrounded by artificial scales that are not supported by the hymn tune. Therefore, the performer has to rely on their ear to sing these scales into diatonic melodic lines and back out.

The singer must also convey the story of the piece without over-singing, create a sense of quiet strength, and perform with inner poise separate from the chaos that is presented in the accompaniment. While the accompaniment represents the chaos of the world around Booth, the vocalist needs to represent the contrast of Booth so resolute that he does not even see Jesus and the crazed mobs. The singer must decide whether or not to display the mobs, in an uncontrollable nature, or a controlled chaos represented by Booth's character. The vocalist should be confident and sure of himself in order to convey the message of the song. This is evident in Booth's single-mindedness, presented in the poetry, "Booth saw not but led his queer ones." The message of the song is not one of

chaos and disjointment, rather out of this disjointment comes peace and salvation. This comes across more so in the section where the narrator is speaking about Jesus coming from the courthouse door. Ives provides a more traditional harmonic accompaniment, which is the complete opposite from what is written before hand, with all of the chaos that is shown in the previous section. This is also apparent in the final section where the hymn tune, "There is a fountain filled with blood" is presented very clearly where the Unwashed is allowed to enter into Heaven, and Booth's mission is complete.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Charles Ives' vocal music spans an unusually wide range of style and performance technique, and it is precisely this characteristic that makes his songs so appropriate for study at all levels of undergraduate and graduate vocal performance. *A Christmas Carol* is an excellent piece for the beginning student, with only mild challenges in terms of rhythm, pitch, and overall interpretation. *At the River* goes one step further, with more rhythmic complexities, not only in the vocal line but also particularly in the accompaniment. The accompaniment is traditional in terms of the bass line, providing

guidance to the singer, but it introduces complex harmonies above the bass that challenge the performer's ear.

Interpretation also becomes more of an issue in this song because of the striking way in which the setting strays from the original on which it is based.

Serenity involves yet another challenge in terms of rhythm with its free-flowing style of chant-like melody. The harmony is similar in many ways to some of the harmonies in *At the River*, yet here there is no bass line to guide the singer. The modernist setting of a traditional hymn text challenges the singer as an interpreter to delve deeply into what the piece is trying to say.

Charlie Rutlage is more of a significant leap in terms of rhythm, performance technique, pitch memory, and interpretation. The song builds upon what the student has learned in *Serenity* by adding greater rhythmic challenges and more extensive performance techniques. Particularly in the section where the dialogue is spoken rather than sung, Ives challenges the performer because of the lack of support in the accompaniment. The piece is written in a narrative form, thus creating more interaction with the audience.

General William Booth Enters Into Heaven encompasses all of the features that are learned from the other pieces

in terms of rhythm, characterization, and intonation and takes each to the highest levels of virtuosity. Ives incorporates artificial scales in the piece as well as complex rhythms to again tell a story. The rhythm supports the story, particularly in the accompaniment creating the disjointment and chaos that is told in the story. The performer again learns to tell the story from a narrative standpoint and thus learns how to engage the audience while also keeping one's composure as a vocalist and performer on stage.

The songs chosen for analysis in this paper all have in common a mixture of some degree of modernism alongside traditional elements that give the pieces an accessibility that is rarely found among modernist composers. What the student learns will not only translate into better vocal technique, but also into ability in ear training, theory, and even history; while it is always important to understand the context of a piece of music, Ives' compositional technique of quoting different styles of music allows the student to further their knowledge in these areas. These five pieces challenge the performer to grow not only as a performer, but also as a musician first and foremost.

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