

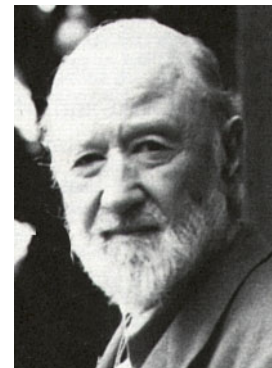
Composers of Great Band Works

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Charles Edward Ives (1874 - 1954)

Lifeline

- born in Danbury, Connecticut (October 20).
- had one brother, two years his junior (Joseph Moss).
- at 14, was a salaried church organist.
- at 17, wrote the organ piece *Variations on America*.
- left home at 18 to study for the Yale University entrance exam (he barely made it in).
- at 20, his father died.
- graduated from Yale at 23, then moved to New York to work with a life insurance company.
- after more than 13 years as a church organist, he “quit music” at age 27, devoting himself to his own unique style of composition.
- suffered a mental and physical breakdown at 31.
- married a minister’s daughter (her name: Harmony) at age 33.
- at 33 he started his own insurance company, which became the largest agency in the country.
- at 40, adopted a daughter (Edith Osborne Ives).
- had a heart attack at age 43.
- most of his creative output ceased by age 44; he remained virtually unknown as a composer until his late 50s.
- at 72, won a Pulitzer Prize for his *Third Symphony* - 36 years after he wrote it.
- died peacefully at age 79 in New York (May 19), while his wife and daughter held his hand.



Anecdotes and Trivia

- his father (George) was a Union bandmaster during the Civil War.
- his mother (Mary Elizabeth) was a locally prominent choir singer.
- as a boy, his dad would have him sing in one key, while his dad accompanied in another.
- enjoyed playing sports, especially baseball, football, and tennis.
- was terrified of cameras.
- graduated from Yale with a B average in his music courses, but a D+ in everything else.
- was a tall, gaunt man; very humble, quiet, and monetarily generous.
- was an innovator in the life insurance business, initiating many ideas that have now become standard practice such as a training school of agents and the concept of “estate planning.”
- once arranged to have two bands march around a park playing different tunes so he could hear what it sounded like when they approached and passed each other.
- Ives and his wife believed that their love for each other was a reflection of divine love and that his music was their means of spreading that love into the world.
- would hire groups to play his works so he could hear and revise them; the reaction of the players was a combination of laughter and outrage.
- published many of his works at his own expense and gave them away to anyone who requested a copy.
- wrote two pieces for band, *March Intercollegiate* (1892) and *March Omega Lambda Chi* (1896), both of which he derived from his earlier keyboard works of the same title.
- extant compositions include more than 40 orchestral works (including 4 symphonies), 23 keyboard works, 23 chamber pieces, 41 choral works, and 151 songs.
- once said “Music is life.”



Sources

Ives by The Charles Ives Society, Inc. (1998); *Charles Ives and His World* by J. Peter Burkholder (1996)
The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians (1980); *Charles Ives Remembered* by Vivian Perlis (1974)