

Philharmonic [1,190]).¹⁰ Flagged by de La Grange as “one of the most faithful and complete portraits of Mahler ever written by someone who knew him well,” Fried’s words illustrate what makes this mega-book as indispensable as it is frustrating.

It was not his strong points which I admired and loved so much about him. Rather, it was his weaknesses. And these were the more moving and tragic because they were rooted in and determined by his humanity. He was searching for God. . . . He believed that he had a divine mission, and wholly imbued by the idea. . . . Again and again he spoke to me about this when we went for walks together in Toblach and then his whole being was suddenly overcome with an unearthly rapture. . . . He needed a servant, a disciple, on whom he could test the reality and genuine nature of his religious mission. His subconscious constantly sought someone like this in his vicinity, and used the latter’s inner elation and transfiguration to measure the truth and the significance of his religious powers. And if I provided neither answer nor echo whenever I was unable to agree with some opinion or mood, then his face froze in a strange kind of way, and he retreated in an impenetrable manner into the shell of his supernatural dwelling, a child which, cheated on earth, mourned its divine origins. For me such moments were devastating. . . . Thus he was continually engaged in struggle and in strife. . . . And for this reason the much-derided despot, like any other truly lonely and unearthly human being, needed such an abundance of warmth, admiration and love in his art. At heart he was really soft and had a craving for love. And yet he never made the slightest compromise or concession whenever it was a question of carrying out his most high office in the cleanest and purest manner imaginable. And here he was pure in a superhuman way (470).

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Charles Ives Reconsidered. By Gayle Sherwood Magee. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008.

Gayle Sherwood Magee’s provocative and insightful new biography of Charles Ives examines the man, his legend, his music, and its reception. An important work, it demonstrates once again the role of context (indeed multiple contexts) in our understanding of this elusive personality and his multivalent, seemingly contradictory music and career. Drawing on Magee’s painstaking and comprehensive work to establish an independent, evidence-based framework for dating Ives’s compositions, *Charles Ives Reconsidered* is particularly concerned with how Ives was defined by his time and how he changed as a composer, as a person, and as a public figure during his long life. So much of the mythology surrounding Ives has tended to put him outside of his temporal and physical context: he anticipated the discoveries of European Modernists; he was isolated from and rejected by the musical establishment. Yet

¹⁰ Among Fried’s recordings is the first ever made of Mahler’s *Resurrection* Symphony—a potent 1924 reading that transcends historic interest.

Magee shows how directly he was connected to contemporary aesthetics, life, and ideals.

Her thoughtful discussion of Ives's use of hymn tunes and their continuum of contextual and autobiographical meanings is one example. Magee places hymns such as Charlotte Elliott's "Just as I Am" and Bennett and Webster's "In the Sweet By and By" in the context of their role in the religious and social structures governing (father) George Ives's musical career, and then looks at the influence of this context on his son. Considering musical structure and threads of meaning that stretch back to the Civil War and on to the Second Great Awakening and the surge of immigration in the late nineteenth century, she illuminates the complex network of meanings that such seemingly simple pieces held for Ives. When she uses this newly refined understanding of Ives (father and son) and hymnody as a lens to sharpen our perspective on the relationship between Charles Ives and his composition professor, Horatio Parker, the power of her method becomes clear.

Magee surveys the depth and substance of Parker's contribution to Ives's compositional craft and notes that the famously fastidious Parker "deliberately *broke* the rules" in order to allow Ives into his free composition class at Yale: "With a demanding, 'hard-boiled' (Ives's term. . .), no-nonsense teacher like Parker, the importance of such a favor cannot be overestimated. Without this final, cumulative course, Ives would not have had the technical ability to pursue his later compositional vocation" (48). Ives promoted his association with Parker up through the early 1920s. As Magee demonstrates, it is the appearance of Henry Cowell and the circle of Modernists with which Ives began to associate by the early 1930s that caused Ives to de-emphasize Parker's importance. By documenting the shift away from his former teacher, Magee shows how directly Ives responded to and evolved with the demands of his environment, whether it was the social and musical scene at Yale, the conservative church-music setting that produced his Parkeresque cantata, or the new world of dissonance and ultramodernism espoused by Cowell and Nicolas Slonimsky.

One of the book's strengths is revealed by the way Magee incorporates details of musical style and structure. Rather than engaging in a full "life-and-works" survey, she uses musical and contextual analyses as detailed and revealing evidence. For instance, her discussion of Ives's cantata, *The Celestial Country*, points out its internal stylistic contradictions and the conflicting influences of Parker and Dudley Buck, influences that embodied the conflicting social and musical strata that Buck and Parker occupied. The failure of this "impossible reconciliation" (66) contributed substantially to Ives's decision to resign from his job as an organist and choir master and to begin "a nearly complete withdrawal from music" (67) that would continue for several years. In this case, and throughout, Magee's analyses and descriptions of Ives's music contribute great depth to the narrative.

Among the most substantial contributions of *Charles Ives Reconsidered* are its convincing examination and explanation of Ives's neurasthenia, the case it makes for the importance of the First World War as a context for Ives's works of the late teens and early twenties, and, particularly, Magee's discussion of the progression of Ives's style based on the new chronology that she developed in concert with James

Sinclair and J. Peter Burkholder (4). In proposing three style periods (1886–1902, 1907–18, and 1919–29), Magee states,

Ives's music has been impossible to categorize effectively because of the contradictions and apparent lack of any dominant aesthetic at any particular period in his career. However, the revised chronology allows a new, somewhat clearer understanding of how he approached composition at various times in his life, and thus substantially redraws the outline of his career, particularly in contrast to the earlier defined tropes of the Ives Legend that emphasized his isolation, American Identity, the neglect of his music, and the precedence and centrality of his experimental works. (173)

This chronological and stylistic categorization of works based both on style and on compositional context sheds light on one controversial and not well-understood area: Ives's multiple, sometimes multilayered revisions of his works. Magee proposes a model in which works such as *Three Places in New England*—compositions that Ives worked on over a period of years and then revised substantially at a much later date—“occupy what can be thought of as a three-dimensional chronological space analogous to the spatial and collage effects in some of these compositions” (160). The resulting “heteroglossia” provides a fascinating way of understanding these pieces: part of their uniqueness and complexity stems from this conversation over time.

The image of Ives as a revisionist or even as the perpetrator of “a systematic pattern of falsification” concerning the dates of his works and his status as a pioneer of dissonant techniques has sparked heated debate and generated a series of scholarly disputes.¹ It is perhaps fitting that a book that does so much to question and establish contexts for Ives's life and works should itself be so caught up in the context of occasionally strident academic controversy. No stranger to this dynamic, Magee begins by noting that her ideas may seem “unconventional, perhaps heretical” (6). She does not shy away from the controversial aspects of Ives: In addition to dating and revision of works, she deals with questions of his misogyny, his rejection of Parker, and the circumstances surrounding the adoption of his daughter. She interprets it all by systematically examining the entire edifice of legend that has been constructed around Ives over the decades, some of it from his own blueprints. In the process of dissecting the idealized versions of Ives, Magee's tone occasionally anticipates a strong negative response. These instances constitute a minor distraction from the work, however.

Charles Ives Reconsidered demonstrates that there is still much to be learned about Ives and the multiple contexts of his life and works. By grounding him in his time and showing how he evolved and developed in outlook during his career, Magee makes a substantial contribution to Ives studies. She sums up the project powerfully: “Ives emerges as an extremely complex individual—a flawed, brilliant, naïve, shrewd, insecure, compassionate, ambitious, deceitful, trusting,

¹ See Maynard Solomon, “Charles Ives: Some Questions of Veracity,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 40/3 (Fall 1987): 463. Elliott Carter described Ives increasing the dissonance in earlier works in “The Case of Mr. Ives,” *Modern Music* 16 (1939): 127–76. Magee surveys the dating controversy, the broader Ives Legend, and their implications on her work in *Charles Ives Reconsidered*, 1–6.

earnest human being—who wove his life and times into some truly remarkable compositions” (180). The Ives we see here is vital and real, and the model for looking at the music from across the whole time span of its composition is exciting. Magee suggests that understanding this “unvarnished” Ives provides a challenge, but the man himself becomes more accessible and fascinating in her account, and the music sounds forth in all its beautiful complexity.

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A Power Stronger than Itself: The AACM and American Experimental Music. By George E. Lewis. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008.

For over forty years members of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) have, as George Lewis puts it in his new history of the organization, tried to “survive and even thrive while (a) pursuing their art and (b) controlling the means of its production. These goals are, in fact, intertwined with another important goal—that of affecting the discourses surrounding and mediating the activity of the African American artist” (497). A longstanding member of the organization himself, Lewis’s magnificent volume builds on this project, written as it is, “in the hope that this work will help the AACM and the communities it has touched to realize just what they have accomplished, as well as all that they might accomplish in the future” (xxxvi). In doing so he builds on a tradition of critical interventions by AACM members that includes Wadada Leo Smith’s *Notes (8 pieces) Source a New World Music: Creative Music* (1973), Anthony Braxton’s *Tri-Axium Writings* (1985), and Lewis’s own essays. And these goals are, by his own definition, intertwined with the ambitious scholarly project of “encouraging the production of new histories of experimentalism in music” (xiii).

Although this book is not the first historical study of the AACM, it is the most substantial, succeeding brilliantly in charting the group’s institutional, social, philosophical, and aesthetic development over time in the face of its unintelligibility to a variety of critical and scholarly assumptions about the production of African American music. By situating this story within both social and discursive networks, we learn why the AACM has not received its full due, and Lewis’s narrative calls, both through example and through exhortation, for a history of experimental music in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries that is more attentive to black-created experimentalism, political economy, racial and gendered ideologies and practices, and the complex web of social and personal relationships that energize and sometimes constrain the production of art and the utopian dreams with which it coincides.

A Power Stronger than Itself succeeds, at one level, as a rigorous documentary history that broadens our understanding of the AACM’s emergence and activities