

A THEMATIC SURVEY OF THE FIRST MOVEMENT
(EMERSON) OF THE SONATA NO. 2 "CONCORD,
MASS., 1840-1860" OF CHARLES IVES.

by

YVAR-EMILIAN MIKHASHOFF

- I. Introductory remarks
- II. Thematic survey.

ML
410
194
103

Henry Cowell's book Charles Ives contains a chapter which is by many considered an analysis of the Sonata No. 2 "Concord, Mass., 1840-1860", better known as the "Concord Sonata". However, by our standards today, and by the retrospective made by Mr. Cowell, it can be truly considered no more than a perusal; he revealed some years later to Mr. John Kirkpatrick that he regarded the chapter as cursory at best, and in fact erroneous in a fundamental thematic identification. He states that the motive found which forms the opening five notes of the bass line is the basis of the entire movement, in conjunction with the motto theme of the Symphony No. 5 of Beethoven. In fact, the motive is of signal importance, yet is only one of seven which woven together form the fabric of the movement.

In an attempt to unravel the threads and form an analysis of this massive and complex movement, I have thought to make this essay more an explanation of the accompanying annotated score than a written analysis. The score is color-keyed in a manner that will make the occurrences and intersticings of the various themes easily apparent. As well, having spent several days with Mr. John Kirkpatrick in an effort to gain a greater overall comprehension of the work, I will also interperse many of Ives's marginal comments. That is, there exist sixteen copies of the original edition of the sonata that were in Ives possession and in which he made corrections and emendations, since he felt always that this was a "work in progress" and indeed did continue to re-think and correct the sonata until the time of his death. In addition, many of the actual changes in notes and rhythms are noted in this edition that I have prepared for my performances. Many of these changes were culled from these many emended copies, many were made by Mr. Kirkpatrick from Mr. Ives's suggestions, many I adapted from Mr. Kirkpatrick's

suggestions, and still others I made myself and later received the hearty approval of Mr. Kirkpatrick. The basis for these changes of course is the existence of two editions of the sonata; that of 1920 is much simpler in texture and design and was considered by Ives a sketch in most ways, and that of 1948 was prepared by Mr. Kirkpatrick under Ives's supervision. The word supervision is used advisedly, for Mr. Ives actually said very little directly about what he liked and did not like in Mr. Kirkpatrick's work; he regarded the work as a plastic creation which should be subject to the comprehension of the performer and to his judgement as to the most effective way to project the fundamental notions of the work. He often said that he hoped that no two performances of the sonata would be the same, that he too was constantly revising and rehearsing.

In addition, one will note that the score ~~seems~~ to be barred systematically in yellow. This barring is the endproduct of years of work on the part of Mr. Kirkpatrick, both from his knowledge, Ives's opinions, and the emended copies. I have included this information as a matter of curiosity. Mr. Kirkpatrick feels that this is a necessary function for the pianist who chooses to memorize the work. And though he feels that each pianist may bar it as he like, he urges his own system as being a product of perhaps the greatest familiarity with the work besides Mr. Ives himself.

As to the fundamental formal consideration of the work, we may state initially that this is a sonata-allegro movement with only two significant deviations from the overall notion. That is, the basic divisions of the work are three parts, but the first part, the Exposition, is doubled, as in the classical concerto and the last part,

a complex and knotty, though strict, Recapitulation, recalls the themes in nearly a reverse order. Perhaps this will better illustrate:

EXPOSITION I: All themes and motives presented in first page.

EXPOSITION II: Most themes and motives presented in a new texture. One new theme is introduced

These two units form the first thematic cluster.

SECOND THEMATIC CLUSTER: In actuality, no new material but a free fantasy on the preceding material.

CLOSING THEMATIC CLUSTER: In actuality, a type of development of some themes and motives not dealt with in the Second Thematic Cluster, found on the first page.

DEVELOPMENT: Begins with a peroration reminiscent of the opening and then an exploration of nearly all the material on the first page, developed and varied in an extremely sophisticated manner.

RECAPITULATION: This section begins unexpectedly and presents the themes and motives in more or less a reverse order from that in which they were dealt with in the development.

CODA: Begins with a fragment from the opening of the development section and then, over a chromatic bassline suggested many times before, there is a review of nearly all themes and motives contained in the piece.

It is interesting to note that the Coda is nearly a RECAPITULATION II, and corresponds to the notion of a double exposition. About the reasons for this double exposition, one need only recall that this work was originally conceived as a concerto for piano and orchestra, the EMERSON CONCERTO, and it was only ten years later that Ives decided to incorporate the work into the sonata as the opening movement. As a final note, all of the footnotes found in the last page of the second edition have been placed in their appropriate position in the score.

II.

As we have already noted, the seven motives that comprise the whole of this sonata are found in the first four braces of the work, with one exception. Each of these themes is connected, either through direct knowledge or educated speculation, with one of the principals of transcendentalism. The opening peroration, down to the middle of brace 2 contains two of these elements, colorkeyed DARK BLUE and BROWN. The Dark blue delineates that theme which Henry Cowell took as the root of the work; in fact it is simply an octave sequence in the bass which recurs principally in the bass and was thought of by Ives as Nature itself, as a source of creative inspiration. It carries with it a notion of nobility and progression, and it and its variants will conclude the work. The four-note motive in BROWN was referred to directly by Ives as "that human faith melody". It has reference to the transcendentalist notion of the perfectibility of the human race. Musically speaking, this motive is all-pervasive and occurs in innumerable places, positions, dynamics and occasionally in inversions of itself. On the larger scale, it is to be noted that this is one of the two themes that pervade the entire four movements of the sonata. These two motives form the opening up- and down-sweep which Ives has called "a transcendental journey". The movement is punctuated with them and they occur at the three decisive points in the sonata.

The ~~down~~sweep of this "journey" which occurs at the beginning of the second brace leads us (after its suggestion of a motive to come, delineated in a dotted red line) to a new broader statement of the human faith melody beneath the initial appearance of the theme outlined in GREEN which we will call democracy; Ives noted marginally:

"the rhythm should stir". This motive occurs always in the treble, nearly always forte, and in rather broad style. ~~The~~ rhythmic design is almost always intact, excepting during its development, and its strong compelling character recalls the transcendentalist notion of the infallibility of the majority, the very notion of democracy. After another cursory forecasting of a theme to come, two new and very significant ideas come forward simultaneously, delineated in LIGHT BLUE and in PINK. These two themes will be developed simultaneously, in accordance with their manner of presentation, and yet the theme found in the bass without its upper counterpart will have a further exposition as the closing theme cluster, marked by Ives "the common people". The upper theme (LIGHT BLUE) we may propose as a manifestation of the idea of law dictated by nature. We note also the variations in tempo marked by Ives, as well as his footnote restraining us from too rigid a tempo, and recall the the opening of the sonata was inscribed by Ives as "Prose" in the first edition. This notion is consistent with the sections marked "Verse", which are always more regular in tempo and phrase lengths and texture.

In the second measure of brace three, the four notes which form the top of the treble clef chords will be found to be an inversion of the human faith melody (BROWN), and in fact the last three notes of this sequence will occur many times throughout the movement near cadence points; perhaps the idea of its being a reversal of the faith idea indicates a notion of apathy. This is consistent with the idea that it is used at the end of phrases, often following directly on the heels of the democracy motive (GREEN) and giving it a rather passive turn.*

* We will refer to this three-note segment as the "cadence motto".

This leads us directly to the most famous motto theme of this sonata, that of the Allegro of the Symphony No. 5 of Beethoven, which now occurs fullblown in the bass: brace 3, measure 3. We know that Ives associated this motto with the idea of music as an expression of spiritual truths and ideas. This is further reinforced by Ives when he reveals that it is also a principal motive of the hymn by Charles Zeuner Missionary Chant:

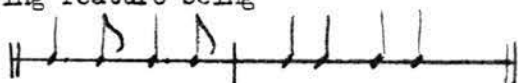


The religious text of the hymn, beginning :

Ye Christian heralds, go, proclaim
 Salvation in Emmanuel's name:
 To distant climes the tidings bear,
 And plant the rose of Sharon there.
 etc.

indicates to us that Ives's invested this motto theme with a very high level of awareness of the Supreme Being. Of course, it is this theme (RED) that, along with the human faith melody (BROWN), is found throughout the entire Concord Sonata. The succeeding phrase (ORANGE) is almost ineluctably tied to the Beethoven-Zeuner motto and serves to bring us to a type of cadence, marked on the score at letter A. There is a virtuosic extension over this pedal point, climaxing at point B with four notes of the human faith melody in another inversion. At this point we feel that a complete statement of the musical materials has been made.

Now, in measure three of brace five we begin an unwinding and fragmentation characteristic of the sonata after climactic moments. (Note: throughout the score, places where appear emendations and the indication "K:" are meant to be noticed as changes made by Mr. Kirkpatrick). An accelerando at the beginning of brace 2 (Page 2) leads to the second exposition. Originally conceived, the upper chords were found in the orchestra, much expanded, and the solo piano took the twin statements of the faith theme and the Beethoven-Zeuner theme. Fragmentation and interplay leads to a broad statement of the democracy theme (brace 4) and at the end of this brace occurs the first statement of the theme (PURPLE) labelled by Ives "tolerance". In a marginal note, Ives wrote out the melody's top three notes (clusters) noting "the three keys need to learn to get along." This theme is as an admonishment to the others of the sonata! An episode loosely based on democracy (GREEN) leads us (on the top of page three) to a free improvisatory section using the last four intervals of the nature (DARK BLUE) motive, heard at the opening, and fragments of democracy, interspersed with this tolerance melody; this moves directly to a broad section marked SOLO (brace 3, page 3) and it is a full statement of the democracy motive beneath the tolerance melody. (The word SOLO refers to its having been a horn solo in the concerto). Mentions of the Beethoven-Zeuner motto conclude this whole first section and yet without introduction we find ourselves in the section labelled Second Thematic Cluster. As will be found indicated, this is apparently new material, but is truly subtle transformations of Page 1, brace 3, measure 1 (Themes of common people (PINK) and laws of nature (LT. BLUE)). Page four occupies itself with the fragmentation of most of the thematic material of the movement, with the unifying feature being the regular recurrence of the rhythmic design:



Page five presents us with a lyric, homophonic, songlike episode based on the theme labelled "the common people"; in addition, the first edition noted that this was "verse". This moves subtly into a lyric statement of the "democracy" theme and then with a succession of brisk, abrupt arpeggiated major chords, we are at the end of the expositions. It is to be noted that Ives most often effects point of cadence and/or strong division with tonal allusion. In this case he chooses bitonality, which subtly emerges by the last brace of page 5.

The Development begins with a peroration ("transcendental journey") paralleling the opening of the sonata, and as it rises in contour after the initial surge and fall it cadences powerfully and abruptly on a massive white key cluster. A brilliant section follows, based on the Beethoven and Zeuner fragments, then a somewhat musing fantasia on other fragments (braces 4 & 5, Page 6) which concludes on the top of page 7 with that which we now know as the cadence motto. At point C on page 7, begins what Ives called "a kind of cadenza", perhaps intended for piano alone in the original conception, based on the theme of the common people and concluding in a rush of bitonality in the A major-D \sharp major juxtaposed arpeggios.

Page 8* (labelled verse in both editions) presents us with the beginning of a very extended section based on the principal five notes of the bass line at the opening (DARK BLUE). In one of the emended copies is inscribed: "This was scherzo movement of concerto". This explains its presence as a sort of Trio section, its character apparently so different, and with an impressionistic cast, opposed to the more granitic preceding structure. By the foot of page 9, the melody is majestic and expanded in the key of C major to suggest

* Pages 8 and 9 are inserted from the original edition; in the second edition the notes values are doubled (i.e. ♪ over ♩) until the bottom brace of page 9.

the grandeur of the Concord Hills (Ives: "let her roll!") and the interesting Ivesian notation of this section makes its first appearance. The reason why the whole notes are noted in the time bracket of quarters is best explained by a marginal note in one of the emendated copies:

"...for instance [no preceding text] -- here are all the notes in diatonic scale + two others in 5ths All sound together before measure ends-- Thus the written notes show what the ear hears-- but not what the eye sees... In other words if this chordal tune was put in ♩ notes as Prof. Rollo Girl says is correct + proper-- it wouldn't be the sounds the ear hears therefore it would be wrong--Art!"

An improvisatory scherzando functioning as a B-section for the previous material leads to another exultant statement (on page 11, brace one, measure 2) and after two very fresh allusions to a IV chord (brace 3, measure 2 and brace 4, measure 1) we have, as per usual, a tonal cadence in the key of C major.

It may be noticed that the texture of the movement has been growing less complex, more homophonic, and lighter in character. And at this point, at the top of page 12, we have the most lyric and quiet moment of the movement, labelled "quite slowly and as a song-- but not too evenly" and "prose". This section is a very subtle and beautiful variant on the theme of "democracy" and how this variation is effected is illustrated on the score at the top of the page. The melody is treated in a lyric and rhapsodic fashion, rolling back and forth within itself as shown. The Beethoven-Zeuner motto and the "cadence motto" close this section in an atmosphere of twilight and calm.

Page 12, Brace 4, Measure 3 (preceded by a somewhat extended "luftpause" as suggested by Mr. Kirkpatrick) begins easily to restore vigor and animation to the sonata, with a variant of the opening bass motive (nature). This continues with repetition after repetition of these

four notes until brace three on page 13. It is important to note the relationship $\leftarrow \text{♪} \text{ to } \text{♪} \rightarrow$ as noted by Ives, and as well, Mr. Kirkpatrick recommends playing from the original edition. The original exposition of the Fugato I section is more lucid and more easily delineated in the original edition than in the edition of 1948. This fugato is based on the twin themes of the common people (PINK) and natural law (LT. BLUE) and naturally the ideas implied by the workings of these two concepts pointedly imply a fugal structure, specifically a double fugato. This continues with great ingenuity, including inversions and a countersubject, until a relaxation and cadence point at brace 2, measure 1 on page 14. This measure is executed with *molto ritardando*, and the prominence of the "cadence motto". The next section, marked "somewhat slower" is a further and yet more complex extension of the fugato; its components are best revealed by the **stave arrangement** of the following excerpt (Page 14, brace 3, second half of measure 1):

The image shows a musical score excerpt for a double fugato. It consists of five staves. The top staff is in treble clef and contains the first theme, marked 'INVERSION' above it. The second staff is in treble clef and contains the second theme. The third staff is in bass clef and contains the first theme inverted. The fourth staff is in bass clef and contains the second theme inverted. The fifth staff is in bass clef and contains the first theme inverted. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and accidentals, and ends with 'etc.' on each staff.

The RECAPITULATION, beginning at the foot of page 14, begins rather subtly at first glance, yet it is, as noted, a call for a "transcendental journey" and the fugato takes an unusual turn and finds as its motive a diminished chord outline of four notes: Ab, F, Cb, Ab. This is a type of expansion on the tritone leap of the first two tones of the "natural law" motive (LT. BLUE) employed in the fugato thusfar. Page 15, as will be readily seen, I have recomposed to more clearly delineate the counterpoint and the lines traced by Ives, according to his emendations and, more particularly, my personal convictions about this segment and its function (Mr. Kirkpatrick has also recomposed this section, as is evident on his recording; both he and Mr. Ives were dissatisfied with both editions). This section climaxes rather spectacularly on page 16 with three major statements of, respectively, the human faith theme, the democracy theme, and the Beethoven-Zeuner motto. This is followed by a literal transposition of the closing theme cluster, as was heard on page 5, interrupted by three occurrences of the "cadence motto" and then abruptly truncated by the reappearance of the fugato. This time in new positions, the voices combine in a more aggressive framework, reflecting "a sudden call for a transcendental journey"--this call, as noted by Ives, a more vigorous presentation. There is a steady crescendo and accelerando until the climax of the movement on page 17, brace 5 which employs, predictably the theme of democracy above the human faith melody. I have at this point, like Mr. Kirkpatrick chosen to reinsert the denouement found in the first edition immediately after this climax. Dramatically, it serves as a greater release of tension and musically more in keeping with Ives policy of fragmentation after moments of great tension, so as to heighten the previous peak.

On page 18, the unwinding is interrupted by the beginning of the coda-- a sudden outburst of the Beethoven-Zeuner theme much the same as the statement on page 6. It is as if Ives felt that this theme-motto had to have its own peroration, and so brought it back for its final appearance to climax again ~~as~~ on the previous page, with the theme of democracy. (Page 18, brace 3, measure 1). However, the great and compelling beauty of the coda is the manner in which all the previous themes are simply and colorfully, quietly, interwoven with one another above the slow and relentless chromatic bass line. (The small staff, page 19, above indicates an orchestral viola part, which is: 1) Missing in the first edition, 2) written into the piano part in small notes in the second edition, superscribed "viola"*, 3) in this case rewritten as it must have appeared in to orchestral arrangement, with the implication that in performance an offstage viola would be used**). There is great serenity in the half-cadence in the key of A major on page 19, brace 3, conclusion of measure one. The cadence appears to be effected fully except for the intrusion of non-harmonic tones one by one, then the shifting of the bassline to a diminished triad, to conflict with the persistent C \sharp -E of the soprano voice. An allusion to the bitonal arpeggios of page 7 (end of brace 3) and the piece concludes with an almost Stravinskian ostinato until the final, non-cadential statement of the Beethoven-Zeuner. The indication in the first edition is forte for the final note, in the second it is pianissimo; in view of the succeeding movements and the philosophical nature of Emerson the writer, Ives perhaps felt that this movement should leave all questions unanswered and leave the hearer with a resolution of mystery not yet unravelled.

* Played on the piano in the recording by Mr. Kirkpatrick.

** Played on the viola in the recording by Aloys Kontarsky.