

Charles Ives (1874-1954)

- **Bio:** Received early exposure to music as son of Civil War band master **George Ives**, a very experimental, progressive-minded man. George had a special piano constructed that could play “in the cracks” (**quarter tones**), because he wanted to be able to reproduce sounds of chiming bells. George also introduced Charles to **polytonality**. In addition to family background, Charles had formal musical training: studied at Yale with famous composition pedagogue Horatio Parker. Ives had about 20 productive years as composer, but did not compose for a living. He had career as insurance broker, became head of largest insurance company in country at the time.
- Ives considered all of human existence as fair game for musical resources. Charles listened to all around him, including traditional resources like hymns (he played organ in church) and non-traditional. One example in microcosm is ***Yale Princeton Football Game*** (1898).
- Ives liked to create works that **juxtaposed contrasting ideas**, e.g. sometimes depicted outdoor events where different bands were playing at the same time (e.g. at a fair, opposite ends of fairgrounds); he would also include crowd noise, circus songs, etc. ***The Unanswered Question*** (1906) is good demonstration of this kind of technique: has 3 performing groups, gives them contradictory material.
 - string orchestra plays consonant chord progressions, dreamy atmosphere
 - solo trumpet states atonal idea asking perennial question of existence
 - quartet (usually flutes, but instrumentation is flexible) answers with increasingly agitated outbursts of dense tone clusters - very dissonant
 - groups can be separated, giving **spatial dimension**
- Other techniques of Ives, many of which would be “discovered” shortly in Europe:
 - polytonality
 - set two lines of harmony against each other as if they were melody (counterpoint)
 - **rhythmic complexes**, e.g. groups of five notes against thirteen
 - **mixed meters** were common in his music; one of first composers to write **without regular barlines or time signatures**