

**CHARLES IVES  
A SONGBOOK**

*Scenes from my childhood are floating before my eyes*

**I. Memories (Ives)**

*A. Very Pleasant*

We're sitting in the opera house,  
the opera house, the opera house;  
We're waiting for the curtain to arise  
with wonders for our eyes;  
We're feeling pretty gay, and well we may -  
"O Jimmy look!" I say,  
"The band is tuning up and soon will start to play,"  
We whistle and we hum, beat time with the drum...

We're sitting in the opera house,  
the opera house, the opera house,  
awaiting for the curtain to rise  
with wonders for our eyes,  
a feeling of expectancy,  
a certain kind of ecstasy,  
expectancy and ecstasy,  
expectancy and ecstasy—  
Sh'—s'—s'—s'—s!  
*Curtain!*

*B. Rather Sad*

From the street a strain on my ear doth fall,  
A tune as threadbare as that "old red shawl",  
It is tattered, it is torn,  
it shows signs of being worn,,  
It's the tune my Uncle hummed from early morn.  
'Twas a common little thing and kind 'a sweet,  
But 'twas sad and seemed to slow up both his feet;  
I can see him shuffling gown  
to the barn or to the town,  
a-humming.

## 2. The Circus Band (Ives)

All summer long, we boys  
dreamed 'bout big circus joys!  
Down Main Street comes the band,  
oh, "Ain't it a grand  
and glorious noise!"

Horses are prancing,  
knights advancing;  
helmets gleaming,  
pennants streaming;  
Cleopatra's on her throne!  
That golden hair is all her own!

Where is the lady all in pink?  
Last year she waved to me, I think.  
Can she have died? Can! that! rot!  
She is passing but she sees me not!

## 3. The Things Our Fathers Loved (and the greatest of these was Liberty) (Ives)

I think there must be a place in the soul  
all made of tunes, of tunes of long ago;  
I hear the organ on the Main Street corner,  
Aunt Sarah humming Gospels;  
Summer evenings, the village cornet band,  
playing in the square.  
The town's Red, White and Blue,  
all Red, White and Blue-  
Now! Hear the songs!  
I know not what are the words  
But they sing in my soul  
of the things our Fathers loved.

## 4. Old Home Day (Ives)

*Ducite ab urbe domum, mea carmina, ducite Daphnin (Virgil)*

Go my songs!  
Draw Daphnis from the city.

I. A minor tune from Todd's opera house  
comes to me as I cross the square, there,  
we boys used to shout the songs that rouse  
the hearts of the brave and fair,  
of the brave and fair.

### CHORUS

As we march along down Main street,  
behind the village band,  
the dear old trees,  
with their arch of leaves  
seem to grasp us by the hand.

While we step along  
to a tune of an Irish song,  
glad but wistful sounds the old church bell,  
for underneath's a note of sadness,  
"Old home town" fare-well.

2. A corner lot, a white picket fence,  
daisies almost everywhere, there,  
we boys used to play "One old cat",  
and base hits filled the air,  
filled the summer air.

### CHORUS

As we march along on Main street,  
of that "Down East" Yankee town,  
comes a sign of life, from the "3rd Corps" fife,  
strains of an old breakdown.

While we step along  
to the tune of its Irish song  
comes another sound we all no well,  
it takes us way back forty years,  
that little red schoolhouse bell.

## 5. Tom Sails Away (Ives)

Scenes from my childhood are with me,

I'm in the lot behind our house upon the hill,  
a spring day's sun is setting,  
Mother with Tom in her arms is coming towards the garden;  
the lettuce rows are showing green.

Thinner grows the smoke o'er the town,  
stronger comes the breeze from the ridge,  
'Tis after six, the whistles have blown,  
the milk train's gone down the valley.

Daddy is coming up the hill from the mill,  
We run down the lane to meet him.  
But today! In freedom's cause Tom sailed away  
for over there, over there, over there!

Scenes from my childhood are floating before my eyes.

## 6. Down East

Songs!  
Visions of my homeland,  
come with strains of childhood,  
come with tunes we sang in schooldays  
and with songs from Mother's heart:

Way down east in a village by the sea  
stands an old red farm house that watches o'er the lea;  
All that is best in me,  
lying deep in memory,  
draws my heart where I would be,  
nearer to thee.

Ev'ry Sunday morning, when the chores are almost done,  
from that little parlor sounds the old melodeon,  
"Nearer my God to Thee,  
nearer to Thee";  
With those strains a stronger hope  
comes nearer to me.

*He liked to watch the funny things a-going by*

## 7. Intermezzo: Scherzo: All The Way Around And Back (Ives)

is but a trying to take off, in sounds and rhythms, a very  
common thing in a back lot  
- a foul ball - and the base runner on 3rd has to go all the  
way back to 1st.

## 8. The See'r (Ives)

An old man with his straw in his mouth  
sat all day long before the village grocery store;  
he liked to watch the funny things  
a-going, going by!

## 9. Grantchester (Rupert Brooke)

...you may lie  
day long and watch the Cambridge sky,

and, flower lulled in sleepy grass,  
hear the cool lapse of hours pass,  
until the centuries blend and blur  
in Grantchester, in Grantchester.

...would I were in Grantchester, in Grantchester!

Some, it may be, can get in touch  
with Nature there or Earth or such.  
And clever modern men have seen  
a Faun a-peeping through the green,  
and felt the Classics were not dead,  
To glimpse a Naiad's reedy head  
or hear the Goat foot piping low...  
But these are things I do not know.

I only know that you may lie

day long and watch the Cambridge sky,  
and, flower lulled in sleepy grass,  
hear the cool lapse of hours pass,  
until the centuries blend and blur  
in Grantchester, in Grantchester.

### **10. The Housatonic at Stockbridge**

(Robert Underwood Johnson)

Contented river! in thy dreamy realm  
The cloudy willow and the plummy elm:  
Thou beautiful! From ev'ry dreamy hill  
What eye but wanders with thee at thy will...

Contented river! And yet overshy  
To mask thy beauty from the eager eye;  
Hast thou a thought to hide from field and town?  
In some deep current of the sunlit brown.

Ah! there's a restive ripple, and the swift  
Red leaves September's firstlings faster drift;

Wouldst thou away, dear stream? Come, whisper near!  
I also of much resting have a fear:  
Let me tomorrow thy companion be,  
By fall and shallow to the adventurous sea!

### **11. Intermezzo: No.96 (Romanzo di Central Park)**

(Ives/ Leigh Hunt)

Nos. 28, 53, 85, 86, 87, 89, 90, 96 have little or no musical value - (a statement which does not mean to imply that the others have any too much of it). These are inserted principally because in the writer's opinion they are good illustrations of types of songs, the fewer of which are composed, published, sold or sung, the better it is for the progress of music generally. It is asked - (probably a superfluous request) - that they not be sung, at least in public, or given to students except as examples of what not to sing.

NOTE: - Men with high liquid notes, and lady sopranos may sing an octave higher than written. The voice part of this "Aria", however, may be omitted with good effect. To make a deeper impression, a violin may play the right-hand tune, and may be omitted, - for the same reason.

Leigh Hunt, in his Essays, "Rhyme and Reason", says: "Yet how many poems are there of which we require no more than the rhymes, to be acquainted with the whole of them?" Then he quotes the beautiful text, found in the song below.

*Grove, Rove,  
Night, Delight,  
Heart, Impart,  
Prove, Love,  
Heart, Impart,  
Love, Prove,  
Kiss, Bliss,  
Blest, Rest,  
Heart, Impart,  
Love.*

It is called a 'Love Song', but this is not enough; when attached to music, it becomes a „Morceau du Cœur“, - a "Romanzo di Central Park", or an "Intermezzo Table d'hôte".

Some twenty years ago, an eminent and sure-minded critic of music in New York told a young man that \_\_\_\_\_ was one of our great composers; what he meant by "ours" is not recorded... The above collection of notes and heartbeats would show, but does so very inadequately, the influence, on the youthful mind, of the master in question.

(...also, to help clear up a long disputed point, namely: - which is worse? the music or the words?)

*And blind eyes opened to a new sweet world*

## **12. The New River** (Ives)

Down the river comes a noise!

It is not the voice of rolling waters;

it's only the sounds of man:

Dancing halls and tambourine,

phonographs and gasoline,

human beings gone machine.

Killed is the blare of the hunting horn;

the river Gods are gone.

## **13. Walking** (Ives)

A big October morning,

the village church-bells,

the road along the ridge,

the chestnut burr and sumach,

the hills above the bridge

with autumn colors glow.

Now we strike a steady gait,

walking towards the future,

letting past and present wait,

we push on in the sun,

Now hark!

Something bids us pause.

*(down the valley,- a church,- a funeral going on)*

*(up the valley, - a roadhouse, - a dance going on)*

But we keep on a-walking,

'tis yet not noonday,

the road still calls us onward,

today we do not choose

to die or to dance,

but to live and walk.

## **14. Watchman!** (John Bowring)

Watchman, tell us of the night,

What its signs of promise are.

Trav'ler, o'er yon mountain's height,

See that glory-beaming star!

Watchman, aught of joy or hope?

Trav'ler,

Yes!

Trav'ler,

Yes!

Trav'ler, yes; it brings the day,

Promised day of Israel.

Dost thou see its beauteous ray?

Trav'ler, see!

## **15. At the River** (Robert Lowry)

Shall we gather at the river,

Where bright angel feet have trod,

With its crystal tide for ever

Flowing by the throne of God?

Gather at the river!

Yes, we'll gather at the river,

The beautiful, the beautiful river,

Yes, we'll gather at the river,

That flows by the throne of God.

Shall we gather?

shall we gather at the river?

## 16. General William Booth Enters Into Heaven

(From a Poem by Vachel Lindsay)

Booth led boldly with his big bass drum.

(Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?)

*Hallelujah!*

Saints smiled gravely and they said, "He's come."

(Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?)

Walking lepers followed rank on rank,

Lurching bravoos from the ditches dank,

Drabs from the alleyways and drug fiends pale -

Minds still passion ridden, soul powers frail: -

Vermin-eaten saints with moldy breath,

Unwashed legions with the ways of Death

(Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?)

Ev'ry slum had sent its half-a-score

The round world over. (Booth had groaned for more.)

Ev'ry banner that the wide world flies,

Bloomed with glory and transcendent dyes.

Big-voiced lasses made their banjos bang;

Tranced, fanatical they shrieked and sang: -

"Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?"

*Hallelujah! Hallelujah, Lord, Hallelujah, Lord, Hallelujah!*

It was queer to see

Bull-necked convicts with that land make free.

Loons with trumpets blowed a blare.

On, on, upward thro' the golden air!

(Are you washed in the blood in the blood of the Lamb?)

Jesus came from the courthouse door,

Stretched his hands above the passing poor.

Booth saw not, but led his queer ones,

Round and round the mighty courthouse square.

Yet! in an instant all that blear review

Marched on, clad in raiment new.

The lame were straightened, (*Hallelujah!*) withered limbs

uncurled,

And blind eyes opened on a new sweet world.

Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

## 17. Serenity (John Greenleaf Whittier)

O Sabbath rest of Galilee!

O calm of hills above,

Where Jesus knelt to share with Thee

The silence of eternity

Interpreted by love.

Drop Thy still dews of quietness,

Till all our strivings cease;

Take from our souls the strain and stress,

And let our ordered lives confess

The beauty of Thy peace.

## 18. Intermezzo: „Gyp the Blood“ or Hearst!

**Which is Worst?! (Ives)**

Gyp, a prominent criminal, (legally) gets the gallows - Hearst, another prominent criminal, (not legally) gets the money.

Hearst's newspapers make Gyps. He sells sensational bunk to the soft-eared and softheaded, and headlines and pictures that excite interest in criminal life among the weak-brained and defectives. An old-fashioned western horse thief is a respectable man compared to Hearst. When the American people put Hearst with the thief, "on the rope", American history will have another landmark to go with Bunker Hill, and perhaps a new song to go with *The Battle Cry of Freedom*.

*Silence is pleased*

### **19. Weil' auf mir** (Nikolaus Lenau)

Weil' auf mir, du dunkles Auge,  
übe deine ganze Macht,  
Ernste, milde, träumerische,  
unergründlich süße Nacht.

Nimm mit deinem Zauber dunkel  
diese Welt von hinnen mir,  
daß du über meinem Leben  
einsam schwebest für und für

### **20. Like A Sick Eagle** (Keaton)

The spirit is too weak; mortality  
weighs heavily on me like unwilling sleep  
and each imagined pinnacle and steep  
of God-like hardship tells me I must die,  
like a sick eagle looking towards the sky.

### **21. A Farewell To Land** (Lord Byron)

Adieu, adieu! my native shore  
Fades o'er the waters blue;  
The night-winds sigh, the breakers roar,  
And shrieks the wild sea-mew.

Yon sun that sets upon the sea  
We follow in his flight;  
Farewell awhile to him and thee,  
My native Land - Good Night!

### **22. Intermezzo: In The Night** (Thomas P. Westendorf)

Oh! I hear de owl ahootin'  
in de darkness ob de night,  
and it brings de frops of sweat out on my brow.  
And I gets so awful lonesome  
dat I almost dies wid fright,  
Since de little cabins all am empty now.

### **23. The Incantation** (Lord Byron)

When the moon is on the wave,  
And the glowworm in the grass,  
And the meteor on the grave,  
And the wisp on the morass;

When the falling stars are shooting,  
And the answered owls are hooting,  
And the silent leaves are still,  
In the shadow of the hill,

Shall my soul be upon thine,  
With a power and with a sign.

### **24. Evening** (John Milton)

Now came still Evening on,  
and Twilight gray  
Had in her sober livery  
all things clad;  
Silence accompanied,  
for the beast and bird,  
They to their grassy couch,  
these to their nests  
Were slunk,  
but the wakeful nightingale;  
She all night long  
her amorous descant sung;  
Silence is pleased: