Charles Ives’s Decoration Day: A Conductor’s Guide

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Abstract
Charles Ives’ Decoration Day, a dreamy haze of almost-forgotten memories and half-remembered tunes, depicts recollections American Civil War through the eyes of a Connecticut youth at the end of the nineteenth century. The work, originally published as the second movement of Ives’ New England Holidays Symphony for orchestra, is a musical representation of the composer’s childhood memories of that eponymous holiday.

This paper links Ives’ own descriptions of the composition, his childhood, and his memories of the somber annual memorial to the musical gestures in the score, synthesizing extant scholarship with practical analysis and performance experience. Through better understanding Charles’ connections to the Civil War, specifically by way of his father, the bandmaster George Ives, Decoration Day comes to life as a stirring epitaph for a boy’s long-lost hero.

Keywords
Ives, band, wind ensemble

Introduction
Charles Ives’s Decoration Day, a dreamy haze of almost-forgotten memories and half-remembered tunes, depicts communal recollections of the American Civil War through the eyes of a Connecticut youth at the end of the nineteenth century. Originally published as the second movement of Ives’ New England Holidays Symphony for orchestra, Decoration Day is a musical representation of the composer’s childhood memories of that eponymous holiday.

This article links Ives’ own descriptions of the composition, his childhood, and his memories of the somber annual memorial to the musical gestures in the score, synthesizing extant scholarship with practical analysis and performance experience. Beginning with historical contextualization of the work within Ives’s output and the broader perspective of Charles Ives’s own connections to the Civil War by way of his father, the bandmaster George Ives, Decoration Day comes to life as a stirring epitaph for a boy’s long-lost hero. The article then gives a descriptive performance analysis, highlighting the work’s many musical quotations and incorporating them into Ives’s own published postface to Decoration Day, giving a better understanding of the piece’s greater form.

Historical Context
It is important to consider Decoration Day within Ives’s compositional output, as well as his larger life and career, to better understand the enigmatic composer’s musical ideas and compositional intentions. So many of Ives’s works contain notes, whimsical asides, and obscure allusions to his childhood; many others are described or referenced in his extended diaries, collected writings, and numerous interviews. Conductors should consider the greater milieu of Ives’s total output when studying or programming any single work.

The larger work containing Decoration Day, Ives’s New England Holidays Symphony, is also known alternatively as A Symphony: New England Holidays, A New England Holiday Symphony, and the Holiday Symphony, all somewhat despite the creator’s own etymological preferences. The highly individualistic composer took particular umbrage with regard to certain musical traditions as well as music criticism, with his frustrations even focused on specific critics themselves. Ives would often refer to conventional, conservative musicians and writers as “lily boys” and various other invented insults; in his posthumously published Memos, edited by John Kirkpatrick, he stated specifically of Holidays,

These four pieces together were called a symphony, and later just a set of pieces, because I was getting somewhat tired of hearing the lily boys say, “This is a symphony!—Mercy!—Where is the first theme of 12 measures in C major?—Where are the next 48 measures of nice (right kind of) development leading nicely into the second theme in G?” (second donkey contrasting with Ass #1)—“the nice German recipe, etc.—give it a ride,
Arthur!-to hell with it!”—Symphony = “with sounds” = my Symphony!” (Ives, 1972, p. 94).

This symphony surrounding Decoration Day was the fifth of six such monumental orchestral compositions for the groundbreaking American modernist composer, a number that includes his ambitious and unfinished Universe Symphony. While his first two symphonies seemingly fit the late-19th century mold, Ives began tinkering with symphonic form upon beginning his third such monumental work, the Camp Meeting, including greater use of programmatic and borrowed elements. Ives compositional technique continued moving away from his musical contemporaries and toward his own unique conceptual style with the gradual completion of New England Holidays.

The four movements of New England Holidays depict seasonally associated memories from the composer’s youth in Gilded Age, late 19th-century America, weaving familiar melodies of his childhood through tone-painted vignettes; perhaps this is Ives’s take on the familiar musical concept of the “Four Seasons.” Beginning with Washington’s Birthday, which represents Winter, New England Holidays then moves through the Spring of Decoration Day, the Summer of The Fourth of July, and, finally, the Autumn of Thanksgiving and Forefather’s Day. These musical memories of Ives’s youth are all associated with his hometown of Danbury, Connecticut, a booming 19th-century factory town in southwestern Connecticut, famous worldwide for its hat industry. The small city was only a short train ride from New York, Hartford, and Boston, and it was rapidly expanding as part of the post–Civil War industrial northeast.

Scholars disagree on the dates that should be assigned to many of Ives’s works, and New England Holidays is no different. The composer constantly tinkered with his compositions throughout his life, adding and subtracting, exaggerating dissonances, and tossing new snippets of melodies into his manuscripts, making it challenging for musicologists to definitively date any such work. Ives’s own recorded interpretations of his art songs can provide insight into these embellishing techniques; by comparing a “professional” recording of They Are There! to the wild, rambling, and seemingly unhinged performance of the composer himself on the album Ives Plays Ives, one can see a candid glimpse into the mind of the unique musician.

Much like Stravinsky, Ives undertook many larger revisions of his early works late in his life; in the case of New England Holidays, various dates have been assigned to each movement. The critical edition of Decoration Day by James B. Sinclair, approved by the Charles Ives Society, lists the definitive composition dates of each movement stretching across a decade at the start of the 20th century. Sinclair has also asserted that the four movements, which were composed out of order, may not have coalesced in Ives’s mind into a larger symphonic form until after the completion of Decoration Day itself (Sinclair, 1989, p. iii).

Ives began composing Decoration Day in the fall of 1912, mere weeks after finishing The Fourth of July, but years after the completion of the other movements (3 years after Washington’s Birthday, and 8 years after Thanksgiving and Forefather’s Day). Multiple revisions occurred to each movement over the succeeding years (as mentioned previously, Ives was wont to add increasing dissonance to his work as he grew older), and eventually the entire set was pieced together with the heading, “arranged from Orchestra Set ‘Decoration Day’ Holiday Symphony,” scrawled on the first page in Ives’s own hand, circa 1930 (Sinclair, 1989, p. iii). Kirkpatrick suggests considering Decoration Day’s gestation stretching over a period of 27 years, extending from Ives’s youth in 1886 through his mature period in 1913, given the earlier material from Ives’s catalog that forms such a prominent portion of the work (Ives, 1972, p. 102). Potential evidence for later revisions can be seen in quotations of the George M. Cohen tune, Over There (discussed later), a popular song written in 1917 during the First World War, which is a seemingly impossible quotation for an Ives work composed in 1913. However, Over There was a favorite musical quotation of the composer later in his life (see Henderson, 2008, p. 107).

Some decades after Ives completed, and then later revised the Decoration Day portion of the symphony, Jonathan Elkus transcribed the movement in 1962 for the Yale University band. In fact, the composer’s own writings potentially support future musicians, such as Elkus, transcribing and programming a sole movement of the larger work. Ives (1972) stated in his Memos,

These four pieces, movements of a Holiday Symphony, take about an hour, and although they were first called together a symphony, at the same time they are separate pieces and can be thought of and played as such—and also, and as naturally, be thought of and played as a whole (Ives, 1972, p. 94).

He later continued, interestingly,

There is no special musical connection among these four movements . . . which leads me to observe that quite a number of larger forms (symphonies, sonatas, suites, etc.) may not always necessarily form, or were originally intended to form, such a complete organic whole that the breath of unity is smothered all out if one or two movements are played separately sometimes. (Ives, 1972, p. 94)

In fact, while the symphony was premiered as an intact unit in 1954, the Decoration Day movement was presented alone, 13 years prior, as a result of conductor Nicolas Slonimsky’s discovery and performance of Ives’s Three Places in New England with the Orquesta Filarmónica de la Habana (Havana, Cuba, Philharmonic Orchestra) in early 1931. The orchestra later premiered Decoration Day on December 27 of that same year under the baton of Amadeo Roldán (Sinclair, 1989, p. iv).

In Ives’s Memos, he described the larger Holidays set as encompassing the four seasons of the year in his youth, “. . . pictures of a boy’s holidays in a country town,” (Ives, 1972, p. 94). It is within those memories, and specifically within Decoration Day, that Ives musically depicted other
individuals’ remembrances and feelings associated with the (at the time) recent American Civil War. According to scholar David W. Blight, the Decoration Day holiday, the precursor to our modern Memorial Day, was first commemorated in Charleston, South Carolina, on May 1, 1865. This ceremony, led by freed African-Americans, marked the completion of a cemetery built by those same former slaves consecrating the mass grave of Union Army soldiers on the site of what was once a Confederate prison camp. White Charlestonians later suppressed the collective memory of the event through the postwar United Daughters of the Confederacy organization, and a codified national remembrance in the shape of a “decoration day” did not take place until 1868, at the suggestion of General John A. Logan, the commander-in-chief of the Grand Army of the Republic (Blight, 2001, pp. 64-97). It was not until the close of the First World War, and its own terrible bloodshed, that other wars were included in these ceremonies; up until that time, Decoration Day remained solely a remembrance of the Civil War. It took until 1971, and an act of Congress, to officially declare the last Monday in May as “Memorial Day” (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs, n.d.).

To fully grasp the poignancy and weight of the musical material in Decoration Day, it is important to consider Ives’s own proximity to the Civil War. Charles Ives was born 8 years after the truce at Appomattox Courthouse, and his entire youth would have been spent in a country struggling to overcome a conflict that tore the country in two. Even living in Connecticut, hundreds of miles from the nearest battlefields, the still-hanging shadow of the war would have been pervasive in those early years after the bloody contest. Many of Danbury’s citizens fought in the Civil War, including Ives’s father George, and still many more could count themselves as survivors of the conflict, whether as supporters on the home front or as families left to cope with the wounding, disfiguration, or loss of a loved one. This may have been what Ives referred to in his postface, stating that, “During the forenoon as the people join each other on the Green there is felt, at times, a fervency and intensity—a shadow perhaps of the fanatical harshness—reflecting old Abolitionist days” (Ives, 1978). It is also important to note that Danbury’s survivors of the Civil War, firmly ensconced in the North, would nearly all have been supporters of the Union’s cause, leading Ives to reference the “fanatical Abolitionist harshness” that still pervaded his memories. For context, we in 2018 currently share the same proximity to the events of September 11, 2001, that a 9-year-old Charlie Ives would have had to the end of the Civil War in 1882. Though he did not see the conflict for himself, he would have encountered many citizens who would have still carried the physical and emotional scars of the battlefield with them or felt the toll that the bitter struggle left on the young nation, first and foremost among them being his own father, George. Our own individual worlds have been shaped by events that happened before we drew our first breath, and young Charlie’s was no different.

**George Ives’s Influence**

Stuart Feder suggests in his psychoanalytical biography of Charles Ives that, like many of the composer’s works, Decoration Day can also be interpreted as latter-day hero-worship of his father, George; the elder Ives, a failed army bandsman turned local bandmaster, left incredibly strong musical and psychological influences on his son. There is considerable evidence to conclude that Charlie Ives saw his father through rose-colored glasses, especially when concerning the elder Ives’s somewhat lackluster record of military service during the Civil War.

George Ives served as a bandmaster in the Union Army, beginning at the age of 17. Not long after his own father died, George enlisted in the Army, on November 4, 1863, spending the next few months recruiting his own band for the Union cause made up primarily of Danbury-area musicians (Feder, 1999, p. 37). His musical unit was said to be of such remarkable caliber that Charles would later recount a possibly apocryphal story from the siege of Richmond, when President Abraham Lincoln himself praised the George Ives’s own First Connecticut Heavy Artillery Band while reviewing the Union troops. “That is a good band,” remarked President Lincoln to General Ulysses S. Grant, eliciting the reply, “It’s the best band in the army, they tell me. But you couldn’t prove it by me. I know only two tunes. One is Yankee Doodle and the other isn’t” (Feder, 1999, p. 22).

It was during the preparations of this siege, a mere 6 months into his enlistment, that George wrote a letter to his commanding officer requesting to be relieved of his duties, and he destroyed his army-issued cornet (Feder, 1999, p. 40). Due to his insubordination, George was court-martialed and sent home to Danbury, where he fell ill. Not long thereafter, George was injured slipping on ice and stayed home recuperating for the rest of the war, only returning to his regiment in June 1865, months after the end of hostilities. George’s unit was discharged a mere 3 months later, whereupon he returned to Danbury to remain for the rest of his adult life (Feder, 1999, p. 42). Despite this checkered service history, Charlie seemingly saw George as a hero, not a deserter, a sentiment he carried into adulthood.

George Ives would become both a leader and a pariah simultaneously in his hometown of Danbury, conducting the Town Band in somewhat outlandish experiments and pushing the boundaries of acceptable performance in the 19th century. At one particularly infamous concert at the reopening of Danbury’s Elmwood Park, George led his three bands from the surrounding towns in a massive joint concert. While the massed band was playing on the bandstand, a fourth band from another nearby town began marching up Main Street, clashing with the music already in the air. While the “bewildered” audience attempted to piece together what was happening, the new band joined in the concert on the stage, uniting with the other three to play the remainder of the event (Feder, 1999, p. 72). Later, as an adult, Charles would cata-
log additional examples of his father’s musical experimentation, including the following:

1. The slide cornet, an instrument capable of playing any interval.
2. Musical glasses (filled with varying amounts of water and struck with a stick), for very small intervals.
3. A piano tuned by George, by ear, in actual partials (individual frequencies which usually comprise complex tones acoustically).
4. Water-filled glasses tuned in a scale without octaves.
5. Twenty-four violin strings stretched out over a clothes press and attached to weights. “He would pick out quarter-tone tunes and try to get the family to sing them” (Ives, 1972, pp. 45-46).

George Ives lived an obscure life in Danbury, and its people treated him badly, both socially and musically. When his son acquired a reputation as a composer, he felt justified in using that reputation to secure for his father some small posthumous recognition (Rossiter, 1975, p. 23).

Decoration Day can potentially be interpreted as Charles’s epitaph for his late father George, a musical ceremony of remembrance.

Transcription Performance: Frequency and Instrumentation

Wind bands frequently perform transcriptions of Charles Ives’s music, along with some original chamber works featuring unorthodox instrumentations. By analyzing the last 10 available years of submitted programs in the CBDNA Report, from 2008 through 2017, one can see that Ives’s work remains popular, with 179 performances over the 10-year span. Four specific transcriptions are performed far more than any others: Variations on America (orchestrated by William Schuman and transcribed by William E. Rhoades), Country Band March (transcribed by Sinclair), The Alcotts (the third movement of Ives’s Piano Sonata No. 2, “Concord,” transcribed in two versions, by Elkus and Richard Thurston), and Old Home Days (arranged by Elkus).

Since 2008, these have received 58, 30, and in a tie, 24 listed performances, respectively. Slightly further down the list, Decoration Day appeared the sixth-most times out of the 21 listed works, with four performances over those 10 years, remaining in the top third of the sample (College Band Directors National Association, 2008-2017).²

Decoration Day is currently available in two performance editions, both published by Peer International: the original symphony orchestra critical edition, edited by Sinclair, and the 1962 transcription for symphonic band by Elkus. This transcription preserves much of the original scoring when possible, and it often presents the string material in the clarinet choir. When the original two B-flat clarinets had extant musical material, the string lines are spread across the remainder of the section, extending into the additional third B-flat clarinet, the low clarinets, and the saxophone section (e.g., Rehearsal D.) Other individual lines have also been re-scored, as will be discussed later.

While utilizing the full assigned instrumentation to perform the wind transcription is preferred, the score’s requirement of many color instruments may prove to be a strain for some smaller ensembles. However, some of the instruments outside the typical standard wind band roster are otherwise doubled elsewhere. With careful attention to balance, a conductor can omit certain members of the clarinet choir without sacrificing important lines or chord members, considering that the color clarinets rank in usage and independence from highest to lowest. E-flat soprano clarinet cannot be removed from the ensemble, and the E-flat alto clarinet part is independent enough to also require its inclusion. However, the contra-alto and contrabass clarinets can be removed without

Charlie’s formal musical instruction began under his father’s tutelage as a child, but likely with no official, definitive starting point; the composer himself gave differing information about his instruction to various sources throughout his life (Feder, 1999, p. 88). Charlie showed an interest in music at an early age, imitating snare drum rhythms on the keyboard of the family’s piano as a young boy. His lessons eventually grew from the piano to encompass the study of violin, cornet, sight-reading, harmony, counterpoint, and orchestration, all with George, and, later, organ study with additional teachers in the area (Feder, 1999, p. 90). As Charlie’s musical instruction advanced, he joined his father’s Danbury-area bands as a snare drummer by the age of 12, also composing music for the bands; he similarly became a local church organist not long thereafter.

George’s tutelage of young Charlie provided a distinct musical framework that the precocious young composer could build upon, as George encouraged creativity, improvisation, and experimentation. Charles later revisited his “piano drumming” technique when he became bored with the usual lessons, banging his fist or palm “for the explosive notes or heavy accents,” (Feder, 1999, p. 90) in what music theorists would later classify as a tone-cluster. Charles also acquired a deep knowledge of popular 19th-century folk tunes from George, many linked to the Civil War, and was instructed as to the emotional sentiment behind each of them in what would prove to be an invaluable resource for his mature compositional style. George strove to teach young Charlie about the authentic feelings that music carried forth when performed by amateurs; many of the younger Ives’s compositions carry hallmarks, or at least imitations, of “amateur” musicians, whether in boisterous dynamics, unstable rhythm, or the washing of familiar melodies with layers of dissonance.

George Ives passed away suddenly in 1893, during Charles’s first year away at Yale University, but not before the elder Ives’s musical pedagogy, experimentation, and energy had a profound effect on the younger Ives’s musical world; the modern musician can see the result of these influences in Charles’s later music. According to Ives’s biographer Frank Rossiter (1975),
forfeiting any important lines or harmonies, as long as alto clarinet, bass clarinet, and a string bass are present; the same can also be said for the contrabassoon.

**Descriptive Performance Analysis**

*Decoration Day* can be broken into formal sections based on Ives’s interwoven musical and programmatic design; a conductor’s understanding of the programmatic form and their identification of the many musical quotations will greatly help inform musical interpretation. There are two large main sections, each consisting of their own primary thematic material: a meandering two-part opening based on the hymn *Adeste Fidelis* that slowly gains musical motion, and a raucous final march with a literal quotation of David Wallace Reeves’s *Second Regiment Connecticut National Guard March*. The work then ends with a very short coda that briefly recalls the opening musical material. Each of these major formal sections can be accordingly broken down into their own smaller portions—For visual representation, see the accompanying form chart.

The composer’s postface provides a programmatic overview of the work’s musical journey:

In the early morning the gardens and woods around the village are the meeting places of those who, with tender memories and devoted hands, gather the flowers for the Day’s Memorial. During the forenoon as the people join each other on the Green there is felt, at times, a fervency and intensity—a shadow perhaps of the fanatical harshness—reflecting old Abolitionist days. It is a day as Thoreau suggests, when there is a pervading consciousness of “Nature’s kinship with the lower order-man.”

After the Town Hall is filled with the Spring’s harvest of lilacs, daisies, and peonies, the parade is slowly formed on Main Street. First come the three Marshals on plough horses (going sideways), then the Warden and Burgesses in carriages, the Village Cornet Band, the G.A.R. [Grand Army of the Republic], two by two, the Militia (Company G), while the volunteer Fire Brigade, drawing a decorated hose-cart, with its jangling bells, brings up the rear—the inevitable swarm of small boys following. The march to Wooster Cemetery is a thing a boy never forgets. The roll of the muffled drums and Adestes Fideles answer for the dirge. A
As Ives described, Decoration Day begins with an ethereal representation of many individuals gathering flowers for a village memorial celebration, “with tender memories and devoted hands” (Ives, 1978), implied by the use of many short, often overlapping musical motives. The village in question is Danbury, Connecticut, young Charlie’s home from his birth in 1874 until he moved to New Haven in 1893 for college preparatory school and eventually Yale University. One can surmise from Ives’s previous quote that this is a representation of the Danbury of his youth, in which the memories, tragedies, and sacrifices of the recent Civil War, only a few years prior, still held much lingering poignancy. These short, “remembered” tunes, familiar yet somewhat altered, flow “very slowly” (the initial tempo marking, with a quarter note at 40 beats per minute) through unorthodox meters and various tempi, stopping and starting in distinct statements. These points of repose are a means of delineation from the other subsequent musical ideas; many feature multiple time signatures and tempi, creating an uneasy haze of musical memory that pervades this initial section. The three animando sections, beginning in measures 24, 28, and 32, all gain considerable intensity through tempo, orchestration, and dynamics, only to quickly fall away again a few bars, or sometimes, beats, later; conductors should take care to create and dissipate tension through these musical gestures. Ives often uses bars in odd time signatures to end these short phrases, at times elongating the final beat of the motive’s ultimate bar, such as in measure 29 (the bar before Rehearsal E), written in 3½/4. This measure also features another hallmark of Decoration Day, a tutti eighth-note rest at the end of the bar, possibly to clear the air before the next musical idea enters. Ives’s use of tempo alterations in the middle of a bar (e.g., beat 3, measure 33), and his placement of 5/8 or 7/8 bars in the middle of phrases both serve to destabilize any feeling of constancy in these tumultuous musical remembrances, all noted on the Supplemental Figure S2 form chart as “points of repose” (R) or “quasi-repose” (QR).
The music gains, in Ives’s own words, “a fervency and intensity—a shadow, perhaps, of the fanatical harshness—reflecting old Abolitionist days” (Ives, 1978) as the low woodwinds and brasses, led by the B-flat Cornets and bassoons, interject a boisterous, altered quotation of Yankee Doodle that explodes out of the texture in measure 46 (see Figure 7). Conductors can consider using quasi-rubato here in the bar prior to rehearsal H before relaxing into the Poco meno mosso. Shortly thereafter, measure 50 brings a Meno mosso, and a series of three elongated smears from the flutes, clarinets, and horns, possibly depicting the arrival of “the volunteer Fire Brigade[s]... decorated hose-cart,” (Ives, 1978) ending the imagined preparation for the ceremony itself.

At Rehearsal I (measure 52), directly after the last, most deliberate smear, a slow lament on Adeste Fidelis is heard from the brasses and bassoons, the commencement of the somber parade and the second half of the initial material. As Ives states in his postface, “The march to Wooster Cemetery is a thing a boy never forgets. The roll of the muffled drums is a thing a boy never forgets. The roll of the muffled drums and Adestes Fideles answer for the dirge” (Ives, 1978). The use of this particular melody in this particular context sounds quite strange to the ears of a 21-century listener, with our near-automatic association of the tune to a vastly different holiday, posing the question, “Why did Ives weave a Christmas hymn into a Decoration Day commemoration?”

According to J. Peter Burkholder (1995), The Portuguese Hymn, as it was referred to at the time, had many potential sets of text, “including some appropriate to this occasion” (Burkholder, 1995, p. 345). Some additional clues are offered by Ives’s notes on the genesis of Decoration Day, given in the “Scrapbook” section of his Memos. According to the composer himself, “The middle section (from G to about K before the march starts) was taken from an organ piece written some years before.” (Ives, 1972, p. 102) Kirkpatrick, the editor of Ives’s Memos, has reported that this lost work “may have been an organ version of the lost Slow March for band on Adeste Fidelis,” dated “‘86 or ‘87” in Ives’s own catalog (Ives, 1972, p. 102). Feder confirmed that this would place the musical memory presented in Decoration Day directly in the 12-year-old “boy’s holidays” of the larger Holidays Symphony, as this slow march was, in fact, “played by the Danbury Band, Decoration Day, and Carmel, N.Y., Band about ’87-’88” (Feder, 1980, p. 236).

Interestingly, there is no Rehearsal J in either Sinclair’s edited edition or Elkus’s band version, perhaps a publisher’s choice. For reference, this is where the editions begin to
differ slightly—Rehearsal I is the last marker that matches in both editions. After another ritenundo and uneven-metered 7/8 bar, serving to give another slight moment of repose, Rehearsal K (measure 61) brings a statement of Tenting on the Old Camp Ground (see Figure 8), a prominent Civil War tune from the final, weary days of the war, in the clarinets, bassoons, and euphoniums. Measures 68 and 69 repeat this figure, almost clearing the air before an additional, now disfigured, statement of Adeste Fidelis is presented by the brass. Rehearsal L (measure 74) ushers in the most poignant portion of Decoration Day, even to modern ears; Ives stated, “After the last grave is decorated, Taps (see Figure 9) sounds out through the pines and hickories, while a last hymn is sung.” This is represented musically by a duet between an offstage, muted trumpet, playing the familiar military funeral tune, with the flutes, remaining onstage, very softly intoning Bethany (Nearer, My God to Thee) (see Figure 10). Taps strikes the listener immediately, with no explanation necessary, and the hymn tune fades to the background. It is worth considering that Ives may have placed even more import on Taps than may be first realized, which is surprising considering modern associations with the simple melody; when Charles was a boy, his father George had the honor and responsibility of playing Taps for the Decoration Day commemorations. Young Charlie’s memories of this holiday would presumably have been ripe with pride, even considering the somber commemoration, due to his father’s prominent role on this important day (Swafford, 2016). According to Ives, 

Second Regiment Quickstep—though, to many a soldier, the somber thoughts of the day underlie the tunes of the band” (Ives, 1978).

The march Ives is referring to is none other than David Wallis Reeves’s Second Regiment Connecticut National Guard March (see Figure 11), which Ives described as “majestic . . . inspiring . . . as good a march as Sousa or Schubert ever wrote, if not better,” (Ives, 1972, p. 102). Sousa himself also loved this march, and Reeves, stating, “He made me everything I am . . . I would gladly give up everything I have won if only I might have written the Second Regiment march . . . I well may call him the Father of Band Music in America” (Elkus, 1974, p. 27).

The Reeves quotation begins in what would normally be the trio section of Second Connecticut, and in true Ivesian fashion all musical hell begins to break loose shortly thereafter. According to Ives, 

In the cornet band days of the 70s, 80s, and 90s, (at least in Connecticut), these quicksteps, so-called, were usually played twice, and often during the last strain of the repeat a little extemporaneous fun would be allowed—partly to let the boys know that the parade was going to stop or, at least, that this quickstep was. (Elkus, 1974, p. 20)

This is manifested by a series of wild interjections, beginning with the saxophones in measure 95, and playful syncopations, most notably in the horns and trombones on the “repeat” of the trio, at measure 108, and again in measure 112.

The energetic texture thins at Rehearsal P (measure 121), clearing way for a delicate statement by the flutes of the Reeves trio’s second theme, the regimental march’s fourth strain, scored against the soprano saxophone’s boisterous, short quotation of For He’s a Jolly Good Fellow (see Figure 12), an additional quotation not identified by Henderson. The ensemble joins in again with increasing intensity over what one might call the previous harmonic structure of the march, abandoning the original Reeves melody altogether, led by a roaring, building bass line in the low brass. This cacophony is then punctuated by the E-flat Cornet, E-flat Clarinet, and B-flat Clarinet, all interjecting a short quotation from The Battle Hymn of the Republic (see Figure 13) from measure 132 through 136. The wild festivity ends abruptly at measure 136, with a cornet and euphonium fanfare that arrives a bar earlier than the previous martial, four-measure phrase structure would suggest. In
fact, Ives has cut out a measure from the extant Reeves march, creating a three-bar phrase, making the entrance of the coming fanfare sound jarring and premature. He then slightly alters the rhythm of the tutti response from Reeves’s original version, again making it sound harsher than the first, and plays the march out to its end, landing

Figure 9. Taps.
Source. Henderson (2008).

Figure 10. Bethany (Nearer my God, to Thee).
Source. Henderson (2008).

Figure 11. Second Regiment Connecticut National Guard March Trio, Bugles.
Source. Henderson (2008).

Figure 12. For He’s a Jolly Good Fellow.
Note. Not identified as a potential quotation by Henderson.
on a riotous ffff chord, a four-beat, would-be march “stinger.”

Hidden beneath the strident march, Taps returns as a “shadow” in the bells and marimba, a favorite compositional technique of Ives, beginning concurrently with the Reeves quotation at measure 89, and continuing through the end of the march section at measure 145. Scored for bells and “Extra Viola” in the original version, Elkus chose to replace the viola with a marimba, playing in the same octave, creating the same ghostly, distant effect that is barely audible, if at all, behind the cacophony of the march. This quiet, meandering, chromatic rendition of Taps may be the musical manifestation of Ives’s narration, “. . . though to many a soldier, the somber thoughts of the day underlie the tunes of the band.”

Finally, the band releases its enormous chord, ending the march section and entering the brief coda (see Supplemental Figure S2), leaving a solo alto saxophone intoning the earlier Dies irae melody with the instruction, “offstage, or as if from a distance.” Ives writes, “The march stops—and in the silence of the shadow of the early morning flower-song rises over the Town.” The individual townspeople, again represented by their own fragments of familiar melodies, vanish into the ether, as the bells and string bass echo the last two notes of Taps, “and the sunset behind the West Mountain breathes its benediction upon the Day,” (Ives, 1978).

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Supplemental material for this article is available online.

Notes
1. Charles was primarily referred to as “Charlie” by his immediate family, although, interestingly, the familiar form of his middle name also crept in from time to time. Ives would also refer to himself in the third person as “Eddy” in some of his more interesting discourses, especially the Memos. “If he has a nice wife and some nice children, how can he let the children starve on his dissonances—answer that, Eddy!” (Feder, 1992, p. 65).
2. It is important to note that the CBDNA Reports are incomplete surveys of current repertoire within the collegiate band world, without the express guarantee of entirely complete concert programs, but the compiled information can still be used to interpret broader trends within the profession.
3. Admittedly, “harmony” is an odd term to use in a work by Charles Ives, though it was, quite ironically, his wife’s first name.

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