Performance Presentation
“The Things Our Fathers Loved:” Charles Ives and Nostalgia for a Changing America
Hannah Porter
Faculty Mentors: Terry Chasteen and Brian Locke
Music

Bombastic and sentimental at the same time, Charles Ives stands as one of America’s most unique composers of the 20th century. Ives (1874 – 1954) had a long and productive career as a successful insurance salesman, but he devoted much of his free time to composition. As a musician educated at Yale, it stands to reason that he would continue to pursue his musical interests after concluding his studies. Despite this, many critics have incorrectly regarded him as an amateur composer. His affinity for quotation and reference to sacred and secular music of the vernacular has been proven in a multitude of work. The perceived irony in many of Ives’ choices of quotation has begged the question of his intention. Some would contend that Ives is making light of the hymns and popular music he quotes, while others argue that he has great respect for the tunes he borrows. Ives was devastated by World War I, and an oft-discussed feature of his biography is his abandonment of composition after the war. After 1919, Charles Ives did not compose anything more, but devoted his musical activities to revising and working to publish his music. As Ives watched the world change, the listener today still hears the unfinished, changing nature of his music. Whether this music demonstrates nostalgia for the changing world or a mockery of it remains murky. This presentation will explore three of Ives’ songs through performance and analysis, and will look at their relationship with the America Ives represents today.