

Charles Ives, Sunrise

Charles Ives (1874-1954), perhaps the most quintessentially American of composers, grew up in Danbury, Connecticut, and harbored a deep and lifelong immersion in the cultural traditions of his native New England. Ives entered Yale University in 1894, already a virtuoso organist and an experienced composer of popular and church music. At Yale he studied composition with Horatio Parker, and deepened his knowledge of classical music, a notable gap for him at that time. After completing his studies, despite his passion for music and composing, Ives' 30 years of professional life were spent working in the insurance industry, first for Washington Life, and then for Mutual, and his successes and innovations in that industry remain influential today. He composed during evenings, weekends, and other time off work, producing a startlingly large body of music in an extraordinary range of musical styles running the gamut from hymnody to the most daring kinds of experimentalism, to the extent that today he is universally recognized as an innovative pioneer of now widely used composing techniques. His vocal music conveys something of his enormous stylistic range, through the prism of some 175 songs, many of which are on Ives' own texts. Ives stopped composing around 1927, the result of health issues, including a previous stroke, which appeared to have affected his ability to organize his hearing. The song *Sunrise* is Ives' last composition, written in August of 1926, and left incomplete. It is scored for piano, soprano, and one other unspecified instrument, which is normally chosen as the violin when the song is performed.

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