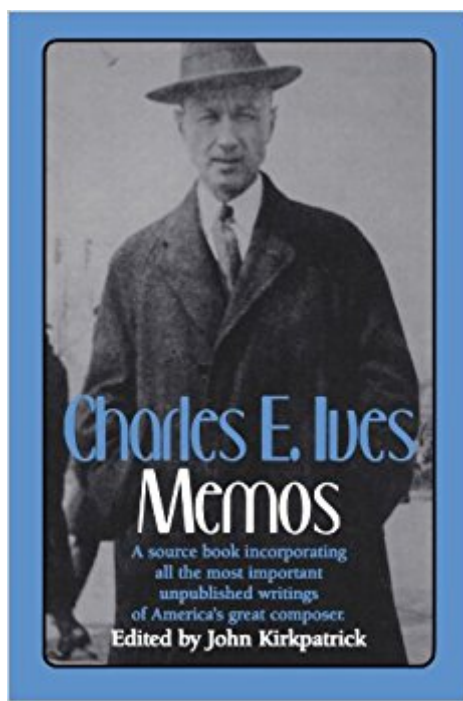


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Charles E. Ives: Memos



Synopsis

A source book incorporating all the most important unpublished writings of America's great composer. Here are most of the previously unpublished writings of Charles E. Ives: a primary source book on this unique American composer. These "Memos," as Ives called them, were on separate leaves and dealt with his music, composition, criticism, autobiography, biography, and many other topics. During his lifetime Ives rearranged them, lent them out, mislaid and tucked them away in books so that, in the late 1940s, only about three-fifths of them were available to his biographer. After his death in 1954, Ives's papers were gradually put in order, and in time most of the remaining leaves came to light. These two batches are here dovetailed into a three-part form by John Kirkpatrick, who has devotedly arranged, edited, and annotated them. Part One, "Pretext," sets forth Ives's aims, his views on music, critics and criticism. In part Two, "Scrapbook," Ives discusses his music. Part Three, "Memories," is devoted to biographical and autobiographical remembrances.

Book Information

Paperback: 372 pages

Publisher: W. W. Norton & Company (May 17, 1991)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0393307565

ISBN-13: 978-0393307566

Product Dimensions: 6.1 x 1 x 9.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.4 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars See all reviews (4 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #850,296 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #293 in Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Biographies > Classical #1468 in Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Reference #16337 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Arts & Literature

Customer Reviews

Like Miles Davis, Duke Ellington and Charles Mingus' respective autobiographies, Ives' "Memos" is a fascinating look at the inner workings of one of America's greatest gifts to international music. Like Mingus especially, Ives was a very opinionated and . . . well, masculine presence. In fact, my favorite quote, which could have easily been Mingus as well is "Stand up and face the full force of a dissonance like a man." Yikes! This collection of essays - he decided against calling the project an autobiography because, in his mind, anyone who found himself important enough to deserve one

probably didn't - deals with family, friends, but focusses primarily on music aesthetics. There are several stories of awful performances, justifications for experimentalism, and run-ins with his hilarious nemesis "Rollo". Highly recommended reading for anyone interested in experimental music, masculinity, Americana, as well as Ives' history. Hey, it's all straight from the horses mouth. A primary source like this is invaluable! We're lucky this stuff wasn't lost for good.

If all other books are about Ives, this one IS Ives--talking to us with all his humor and crusty attitude clearly on display. He emerges a rare delight, someone we would want to know, if only we had the chance. How different Ives is compared to all the revisionist accounts that have created a person FEW would want to know. Even more noticeable is how revisionism seeks to ignore what Ives had to say. Instead, Maynard Solomon accused him of writing puff-pieces to shore up his advancing musical reputation, rather than to establish something of record; Stuart Feder dismissed practically every word Ives wrote by claiming that it replaced his creativity, as well as showing merely pseudo literary skills. None of these positions are born out, even by the timeline--'Essays' was written at the height of Ives's creative powers, and the unbelievably complex Scherzo of the Fourth Symphony rewritten when Feder considered Ives's musical abilities had lapsed. Ives had become increasingly passionate about the state of the world as he aged, and his prose reflected it, along with his frustrations as his ideals and "heroes" collapsed around the globe. Ives had attached his identity to a number of values and people; their failure to materialize in actuality or deed was devastating. Feder shrugged it off as "anger" born of mental disorder. The only anger one sees is in oneself when reading such shallow, self-serving commentary. Ives in his own words is refreshing, even if this volume is a compilation rather than a planned book. It is, of course, required reading for any Ives enthusiast, and will provide hours of pleasurable insight and chuckles, helping his music to speak to us even more directly. Coupled with the CD of his playing (and singing!), the book blows away all the reinterpretations of his life, and replaces them with the real Ives, straight from the heart.

I am finding the book a poignant look at the life and times of one of America's most original creative forces. These notes from Ives' sketchbook illuminate his mind and thought process towards his composition, as well as his personal outlook towards life. This book shows just how intelligent the man was, especially in his comments about other music and critics of his time. To any true music lover, MEMOS can't help but be an eye opener to how Charles Ives worked, thought and assimilated musical ideas during his creative periods. Original, thought provoking book. D. R. Safley, Fresno, CA

Fascinating man, with a rich background. Great resource is you are looking to understand this great American composer. (Especially from his own words)

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