

CITY OF SAN JOSE'S Arts Express Program Presents:

Ives Quartet
Arguments and Discussions
Teacher Guide
Grades 4-8
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About the Arts Organization

The Ives Quartet is a fully independent performing, touring, and recording string quartet operating as a 501(c)(3) public-benefit corporation. Formed in 1998, the Quartet combines the talent and experience of the international, solo, orchestra, chamber, recording, and teaching careers of its artist members—Bettina Mussumeli, violin; Susan Freier, violin; Jodi Levitz, viola; and Stephen Harrison, cello. Freier and Harrison, former members of the predecessor Stanford Quartet, are founding members; Mussumeli and Levitz, faculty members of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, joined the Quartet in 2005 and 2006, respectively. The organization will celebrate its tenth anniversary during its 2008–2009 season with a series of specially programmed concerts featuring guest artists and contemporary composers.

The mission of the Ives Quartet (IQ) is to create powerful live-music experiences through the presentation of fresh and informed interpretations of a carefully curated repertory to American and international audiences. Inspired by the passionate, artistic commitment and temperament of American composer Charles Ives (1874–1954), the Quartet's repertoire combines established masterworks with underappreciated gems, neglected scores of early twentieth-century America, and specially commissioned new pieces. The Quartet seeks enthusiastic critical acclaim and popular embrace for the quality of its performances, its exploration of a distinctive repertory, and the impact of its live-concert experience on a diverse number of audience segments.

About the Program

Charles Ives subtitled one of the movements of his 2nd Quartet “Discussions”, another “Arguments”. In this piece, each of the players has a special role. It's a lot like theatre. Charles Ives was our first truly American composer. Before him, American composers tried to imitate Europeans. What makes his music American? What was his life like in the New England of the late 1800s? With stories, Ives' own words and music from his Second Quartet the Ives Quartet will show how their namesake personifies a unique American spirit.

Learning Objectives

Students will--

- Learn what a quartet is
- Learn about Charles Ives and his contributions to American music
- Examine how theater is used in the pieces performed
- Understand how different types of music influence each other

Historical and Cultural Context

In Western art music, which is often referred to as "Classical music," **string quartets** are considered to be an important type of chamber music. String quartets consist of two violins, a viola, and a cello playing a multi-movement musical composition written in sonata form. The particular choice and number of instruments derives from the registers of the human voice: soprano, alto, tenor and bass. In the string quartet, two violins play the soprano and alto vocal registers, the viola plays the tenor register and the cello plays the bass register.

There is no conductor in a string quartet, and members rely on body language to communicate.

Charles Edward Ives (October 20, 1874 – May 19, 1954) was an American composer of modernist classical music. He is widely regarded as one of the first American classical composers of international significance. Ives' music was largely ignored during his life, and he made his living as a prosperous insurance salesman. Many of his works went unperformed for many years. Over time, Ives would come to be regarded as an "American Original"; Ives combined the American popular and church-music traditions of his youth with European art music, and was among the first composers to engage in a systematic program of experimental music, foreshadowing virtually every major musical innovation of the 20th century. Sources of Charles Ives' tonal imagery are hymn tunes and traditional songs, the town band at holiday parade, the fiddlers at Saturday night dances, patriotic songs, sentimental parlor ballads, and the melodies of Stephen Foster.

"Discussions" and "Arguments" are the first and second movements of String Quartet No. 2. The opening movement, "Discussions" is slow, gnarled and dissonant as the four voices converse in a frequently agitated manner. Near the end of the movement a strain of "Dixie" arises, among many other songs in what leads to an increasingly passionate discussion. The movement ends with dissonant broad chords and a quiet, pleading answer.

In the short second movement, "Arguments", the four voices continue to quarrel gruffly as the violin attempts to sing a solo line which is drowned out by its companions. As the movement progresses, strains of "Britannia, Gem of the Ocean" are juxtaposed against Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" and snatches of Tchaikovsky and Brahms.

The works share Ives's goals of combining European and American themes in his music and, more important, Ives' attempt to convey in his music a feeling of religious awe and transcendence.

Vocabulary—

Major key: Tonally, a key based on a major scale containing the step pattern whole, whole, half, whole, whole, whole, half, or using the solfege tones of do, re, mi, fa, so, la, ti, do.

Minor key: Tonally, a key based on a minor scale containing the step pattern whole, half, whole, whole, half, whole, whole, or using the solfege tones of la, ti, do, re, me, fa, so la.

Solfege: A system of designing verbal syllables for the degrees of the scale.

Transcendentalism: a philosophy that emphasizes the primacy of the spiritual over the material

Preparation for the Program and Reflecting on the Program

1. Review what a quartet is and how group members communicate. During the performance, have students pay attention to this communication and discuss what they saw after the performance.
2. Review who Charles Ives was and his importance as an American composer
3. Prepare students to pay attention to which instruments are playing minor and major keys. Which is happier? Which sadder? What is the conversation that is taking place during the playing of these two pieces? How do the instruments converse?
4. Students can choose a song in one type of music (hip-hop, country, gospel, rock and roll, etc.) and research what influences that type of music had throughout the world and how those different influences are heard in the song.

Curriculum Connections--CA Visual and Performing Arts Standards

Note: The California Visual and Performing Arts Standards were created based on the premise that each student is receiving comprehensive and sequential arts instruction in all four major arts disciplines. Since this is rarely the case, the following standards may not correspond to the grade levels served by the Arts Express program.

Standards in Music:

Artistic Perception

1.4 (grade 5) Analyze the use of music elements in aural examples from various genres

Historical and Cultural Context

3.4 (grade 4) Compare musical styles from two or more cultures

3.5 (grade 5) Describe the influence of various cultures on the music of the United States

3.3 (grade 7) Identify and describe distinguishing characteristics of musical genres and styles from a variety of cultures

3.4 (grade 8) Compare and contrast the distinguishing characteristics of musical genres and styles from a variety of cultures

Aesthetic Valuing

4.2 (grade 6) Explain how various aesthetic qualities convey images, feeling or emotion

Connections, Relationships, Applications

5.1 (grade 4) Identify and interpret expressive characteristics in music

Resources

- Charles Ives: <http://www.8notes.com/biographies/ives.asp>
<http://www.musicweb.uk.net/Ives/>
<http://www.answers.com/topic/charles-ives>
<http://www.charlesives.org/>
- Transcendentalism: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transcendentalism>