

WIREF

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Modern Composition

Reviewed by Andy Hamilton

Charles Ives

The Light That Is Felt: Songs Of Charles Ives

New World CD

Wiley Hitchcock, the Ives scholar to whose work this selection is indebted, described his song canon as "a kind of scrapbook... or even a desk drawer [into which] Ives tossed... his reactions... to memories, personalities, places, events, discoveries, ideas". This selection of 27, from nearly 200, dates from 1897 to 1921, though half were written between 1919 and 1921; lyrics are by major poets Milton, Byron, Heine, Keats and Arnold, some lesser poets and Ives himself. The classical art song is a problematic genre, and Ives is a problematic composer. But as interpreted by soprano Susan Narucki and pianist Donald Berman, his songs gloriously and tenderly evoke New World nostalgia, yearning and religiosity, showing a characteristic reverence for folk and popular culture. The best known is "General William Booth Enters The Kingdom Of Heaven", with its strident atonal evangelism, set against gentle invocations of "Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?" There's probably no finer introduction to Ives's songs, or indeed to his output as a whole.