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Charles Ives at 'Christo's Gates'

DENISE VON GLAHN

Abstract

Throughout its 150-year history New York City's Central Park has inspired writers, painters, poets, and musicians. In 1906 Charles Ives was moved by its rich soundscape to compose his orchestral piece *Central Park in the Dark*; nearly one hundred years later, in 2005, the artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude unfurled 7500 saffron-coloured cloth panels for a sixteen-day installation at the park. Although separated by a century, these artworks appear similarly preoccupied with the construction, manipulation, and perception of nature and place, honouring and celebrating the park as a naturalistic setting, while also acknowledging it as a fabricated entity, shaped by human interactions, and as an ongoing cultural project. The present article suggests parallels between Ives's construction of the park in sound, and 'Christo's Gates', as the installation became known – parallels that suggest the continuing resonance of Ives's musical contemplation, as well as the issues that occupied its composer as the Gilded Age gave way to the progressive era.

The year 2006 was the occasion of two anniversaries: one hundred years earlier, in 1906, Charles Ives wrote his piece *Central Park in the Dark*, projected as the second of *Two Contemplations* for orchestra; one year earlier, in February 2005, the artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude unfurled 7500 saffron-coloured cloth panels for a sixteen-day installation that drew tens of thousands of people to that same park.[1] Both works live on: Ives's music in numerous recordings and Christo's art in hundreds of online sites that include everything from carefully composed professional photographs to bouncing amateur videos.[2] As artistic documents they bring moments from the past into our present and preserve them for the

I am grateful to Ulrich Tadday for permission to reproduce excerpts of a previously published article. See Denise Von Glahn, 'Musikalische Stadtlandschaft: "Central Park in the Dark"', in *Charles Ives*, ed. Ulrich Tadday, Musik-Konzepte 123 (Munich: edition text + kritik, 2004), 89–108. Additionally my thanks go to Michael Broyles, Michael Buchler, Jane Clendinning, Shersten Johnson, Ines Pohl, and Joshua Rifkin, each of whom clarified my thinking. This study has grown in wholly new directions because of them. I appreciate the care taken by anonymous readers for this journal, whose suggestions strengthened the article.

1 Husband and wife Christo Javacheff and Jeanne-Claude de Guillebon go by their first names only, which they have combined as 'the artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude'. Because seeing the Central Park installation of 12–28 February 2005 is essential to understanding the interactions of visitors with the artwork and the place, readers are encouraged to consult any one of the many photograph collections that are available online. Since no single photograph of 'Christo's Gates' can capture the breadth or impact of the installation, readers are encouraged to consult multiple online sites: entering 'Christo's Gates' into a search engine will result in over 11,000 hits. Among them is <http://community.webshots.com/album/277036184AgNoIw> (accessed 10 September 2008).

2 In addition, multiple interviews available online with the artists provide insights into the genesis of their projects. While focused on their 'Reichstag wrapping' project of 1991, an undated interview conducted by Gianfranco Mantegna for the *Journal of Contemporary Art Online* addresses their decades-old collaborative process. Although it was then still fourteen years away from completion, the artists refer to the 'Gates' project as one of three in progress at the time. See <http://www.jca-online.com/christo.html> (accessed 10 September 2008).

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future. Although the works were separated by a century, composer and artists appear to have been similarly preoccupied with the construction, manipulation, and perception of nature and place, and with the impact that people have had upon this unique New York site. While Ives on the one hand and Christo and Jeanne-Claude on the other honoured and celebrated the park as a naturalistic setting, both also acknowledged the place as a fabricated entity, and an ongoing cultural project. A direct comparison of the two works, were it possible, is not the intention of this study, nor will both works be treated equally in what follows; this article focuses on Ives's piece. Nonetheless, it argues that parallels may exist between Ives's construction of the park in sound and 'Christo's Gates', as the installation became known – parallels that suggest the continuing resonance of Ives's musical 'contemplation'.[3] 'Christo's Gates' calls attention to many of the same issues that occupied Charles Ives as the Gilded Age gave way to the progressive era.[4]

Numerous scholars have written on Ives's work, among them H. Wiley Hitchcock, Robert P. Morgan, J. Peter Burkholder, Larry Starr, and David Nicholls. As the earliest to address the unique features of *Central Park in the Dark* in his 1977 survey of Ives's music, Hitchcock cited the multiple musical layers that characterized the piece, and Ives's 'achievement of a new relationship between time and music'. He explained this as the result of 'the elimination of a sense of beat or pulse – the even "measuring" of time – that had been common to all Western music for centuries'.[5] The same year, Robert P. Morgan called attention to Ives's well-known 'interest in the role of actual physical space in the musical experience' and, more importantly, the composer's 'fundamental spatial orientation within the music itself'. *Central Park* provided a prime example of this new orientation.[6]

3 According to a typed note to performers for *Central Park in the Dark* Ives projected the piece as the second of a pair of works collectively named *Two Contemplations*. The first was entitled 'A Contemplation of a Serious Matter *or* The Unanswered Perennial Question' and the second 'A Contemplation of Nothing Serious *or* Central Park in "The Good Old Summer Time"'. See Sinclair, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Music of Charles Ives*, 589.

4 Ives's relationship to progressivism is the subject of Robert M. Crunden's essay 'Charles Ives's Place in American Culture', a paper delivered at the Charles Ives Centennial Festival-Conference in New York and New Haven in October 1974 and published in *An Ives Celebration*, ed. Hitchcock and Perlis, 4–15. Crunden sees Ives as the composer equivalent to Jane Addams, with her grounding in American Protestantism and devotion to social uplift. Frank Rossiter, in his book *Charles Ives and His America*, nuances the idea of Ives as a progressive by drawing a distinction between urban-elitist progressives, whom Ives eschewed, and more rural, midwestern progressives, with whom Rossiter believes Ives had much in common. For instance, Rossiter points out that Ives was 'repelled by the aggressive personality and rhetoric of Theodore Roosevelt, who personified national progressivism for most Americans' (Rossiter, *Charles Ives*, 127–8). Christo and Jean-Claude may be progressive in their desire to create art that uplifts humanity, but their motivations, at least as expressed in online interviews, are purely artistic. They resist discussing the meaning of their works beyond their goal of creating aesthetic experiences. Using Crunden's and Rossiter's criteria for what defines progressivism, Ives fits the profile. Ives, however, presents a serious challenge when it comes to labels, and this holds true whether one is considering his music or his politics. His beliefs, as far as he articulated them, were personal, eclectic, and resistant to ideology. Michael Broyles specifically rejects the label 'progressive' for Ives in his essay 'Charles Ives and the American Democratic Tradition', 118–60. Two other Ives scholars, Judith Tick and Carol Baron, have embraced the term 'progressive' in separate writings of their own. Such disagreements appear to be more indicative of different readings of the word 'progressive' than disagreements about Ives's particular ideas or actions.

5 Hitchcock, *Ives: a Survey of the Music*, 78–9.

6 Morgan, 'Spatial Form in Ives', 147.

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In the first of his books, *Charles Ives: the Ideas Behind the Music* (1985), J. Peter Burkholder noted Ives's 'attitude of intent listening' and his efforts 'to capture the sounds and feelings of what he heard'. He saw *Central Park in the Dark* as a piece thoroughly informed by such practices.[7] He also characterized the string ostinato of the work as a 'virtual catalogue of Ives's favorite [. . .] chordal structures', an idea that would be more thoroughly explored in the 1990 book *American Experimental Music 1890–1940* by David Nicholls. Nicholls illuminated Ives's employment of specific interval structures as both distinguishing and unifying features of *Central Park*, and called attention also to rhythmic and dynamic groupings of instruments that separate sounds into foreground and background materials. Maintaining the focus upon Ives's unique polyphonic textures, Larry Starr identified discrete stylistic types associated with the individual timbral layers of *Central Park* in his 1992 study *A Union of Diversities: Style in the Music of Charles Ives*.[8]

In a second book devoted to Ives, *All Made of Tunes: Charles Ives and the Uses of Musical Borrowing* (1995), Burkholder named a half dozen tune fragments integral to *Central Park* and argued for their historical appropriateness, essential motivation by the programme, and importance as conveyors of style and character. But he went beyond details of compositional technique to speculate on a listener's 'imagined position' in relation to Ives's particular setting.[9] His conclusion that 'we are always observers, akin to an audience in the theater' invites a number of questions: Where is the theatre? What play is being performed? What are we meant to observe? And in the context of this article, how might 'Christo's Gates' relate to this imagined spectacle? Understanding the original inspiration and intentions for Central Park, the place, contextualizes not only Ives's and Christo's works but also, perhaps, our own responses.

In 1850 Frederick Law Olmsted, accompanied by his brother and a friend, undertook a walking tour of England, where he revelled in the 'green, dripping, glistening' countryside:

> We stood dumb-stricken [*sic*] by its loveliness, as, from the bleak April and bare boughs we had left at home, broke upon us that English May – sunny, leafy, blooming May – in an English lane; with hedges, English hedges, hawthorn hedges, all in blossom; [. . .] the mild sun beaming through the watery atmosphere and all so quiet.[10]

Olmsted also visited Joseph Paxton's newly completed Birkenhead Park, near Liverpool. Opened to the public for the first time in April 1847, Birkenhead became 'the first public park created by a municipality anywhere in the world'.[11] Just a few years later, challenged by less even and attractive land than Paxton had confronted in 1843, Olmsted would take inspiration from the English designer's achievement and incorporate many of the features of

7 Burkholder, *Charles Ives: the Ideas Behind the Music*, 53, 89.

8 Starr, *A Union of Diversities*, 116.

9 Burkholder, *All Made of Tunes*, 344–6, 356.

10 Olmsted, *Walks and Talks of an American Farmer in England* (London: David Bogue, 1852), 87; quoted in Barlow, *Frederick Law Olmsted's New York*, 12.

11 Metropolitan Borough of Wirral, Home Page: Birkenhead Park.

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Birkenhead Park within his own 'Greensward' plan for Central Park.[12] Paxton's cricket-club fields ultimately became Olmsted's baseball fields, but similar curvilinear roads, gardens, bowling greens, meadows, lakes, and boathouses found their way to Manhattan a decade later.[13] From the beginning Olmsted (1822–1903) and his partner Calvert Vaux (1824–95), a London-born architect and watercolourist, envisaged their design as a unified work of art on a grand scale. Central Park would become the first landscaped public park in the United States and establish Olmsted's reputation as America's foremost landscape designer.

Eight years after the park's opening in autumn 1858, a report issued by the Central Park Commissioners expressed their hopes that this new public space would predispose citizens to the idea of nature:

> The Park, as a whole, is undoubtedly expected to afford to the citizens of the metropolis, day after day and year after year, a succession of views of a rural character so real and genuine as to convey very positive ideas in regard to natural scenery, even to a person who might never see anything more country-like than will ultimately be contained within its limits; and this, in connection with the opportunity it offers for a social enjoyment of fresh air and exercise, is perhaps the most important service that it is calculated to perform in a direct way.[14]

So confident were early champions of the park in its ability to soothe and refresh that, at the height of the Civil War, publishers E. & H. T. Anthony sent a series of their stereo cards to President Lincoln. They believed that views of the Ramble would offer him 'relaxation from the turmoil and cares of office'.[15] Stephen Germic observes that Central Park was originally 'advertised, announced, and rhetorically expounded as a place conducive to the refinement and elevation of the "masses"'. It was designed with mediation and uplift in mind. According to Germic, Olmsted saw the park 'as a species of cultural institution that would universalize and incorporate threatening differences in urban space'.[16] Both Ives and, in their different way, Christo and Jeanne-Claude understood the park to have that potential as well.

If Ives's piece called attention to the artificial qualities of the sylvan retreat, using sometimes subtle musical techniques, as we shall see, 'Christo's Gates' reminded the public of the

12 'Greensward' is an English term dating from around 1600, meaning turf that is green with growing grass. See *Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language, Unabridged*, ed. Philip Babcock Gove (Springfield, MA: G. & C. Merriam, 1971).

13 Readers are encouraged to consult detailed online maps on the official homepages of both of these parks. The author recommends those on the Central Park Official Website and the homepage of the Metropolitan Borough of Wirral: <www.centralparknyc.org/site/PageNavigator/virtualpark_main>, <http://www.wirral.gov.uk/images/open/migration/re/rangers/birkenhead_park_map_high_resolution.gif> (both accessed 10 September 2008). Similarities will immediately become apparent.

14 Central Park Commissioners, 1866, p. 175; quoted in Johnston, *Central Park Country*, 54–5.

15 For a nuanced discussion of 'the psychological landscape' as understood at the time see Miller, *Central Park*, especially 85–95.

16 Germic, *American Green*, 12. Scholarship on Central Park, its history, and its various meanings is voluminous. Germic's book is among the more recent additions to the literature. *American Green*, which interprets the park from its conception as a complex cultural site, is especially relevant to this present study, which argues that the artworks of Christo and Ives both recognize the complexity of the place and participate in its explication.

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stage-like setting of the park in no uncertain terms. Brightly coloured nylon archways – sixteen feet high with widths varying from five and a half to eighteen feet and hanging approximately seven feet above the ground – wafted, sparkled, cast shadows and filtered light, contrasting sharply with the muted ground cover and bare trees of Manhattan's February palette. The blazing gates reframed once-familiar scenes; they decorated and embellished the park. The lake was ringed with what appeared to be poppies – or was it Chinese lanterns? Was it a lake, or a mirror? Spaced at twelve-foot intervals, far enough apart that their flapping fabric would not become entangled, long lines of banners followed the curves of the park's lyrical pathways; others stood sentinel-like, guarding a lone lamppost. Moved by almost constant breezes, the gates animated the park even along people-less walkways. The artists imagined the gates as 'a visual golden river' along the park's footpaths.[17] Ruffling of banners gave the wind additional voice. The banners provided their own visual and audio commentary on the park.

While the number of gates visible to a visitor might have heightened the dramatic effect of the installation in a particular location, with careful spacing the artists avoided any suggestion of clutter, confusion, or chaos. Dozens of online videos and photographs capture intrigued, smiling visitors. This is not to suggest that everyone reacted positively to the installation; some were ambivalent, and others resented its presence.[18] One online blogger, identified only as 'B', complained: 'The Gates block your view of the sky. In Central Park you have one of your few opportunities to stand in Manhattan, amongst the trees, look up, and see a view of the sky. The Gates took that away from me.'[19] But such reactions were unusual. The overwhelming reception accorded 'The Gates' appears to have been positive, or at least tolerant. They created something of a festival atmosphere in the park. They became a sixteen-day set upon the Central Park stage, and hundreds of thousands of visitors became members of the cast. The original artifice of the park was further exaggerated and complicated with the installation of the fiery flags: exaggerated because of the extreme theatricality of the saffron display, complicated because visitors might have understood the park as truly 'natural' in comparison with the obviously decorative banners. In considering the effect of the installation, film documentarian Albert Maysles spoke of the 'incredible combination of art, nature, [and] people'. Referring to Christo and Jean-Claude, Maysles enthused: 'what an opportunity to raise our hearts and souls to art and nature, and all because of these two people'. For Maysles, Central Park was synonymous with nature.[20]

17 See Curran and Takata, 'Christo's Gates at Central Park'. For a gallery of photos with maps showing the relative placement of the gates in the park, as well as a technical discussion of the specifications of the gates, poles, fabric, and their assembly, readers should consult Fletcher, 'New York Architecture Images: Christo's Gates'.

18 While Ives reconciled the many musics of the park's 1906 soundscape, it is possible that other auditors felt resentful of the intrusion of popular tunes into their pastoral retreat. To date no commentary has been found that mentions this issue.

19 See 'B after the Fact' blogspot, 'Christo's Gates', 25 February 2005. Of course, the thick, leafy coverage of trees in the summer months might have done the same.

20 There are many interviews online that feature the artists and others associated with 'Christo's Gates'. See 'The Artists behind The Gates'.

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The park offered a retreat from industry, even though it was the product of human design and construction. But boundaries between what is natural and what is synthetic are blurred at Central Park without billowing gates. The park is neither wholly synthetic nor wholly natural. While cities are testaments to human achievement, parks enshrine nature. Rocks, shrubs, trees, and flowers are natural even when they are imported, or moved, or artfully arranged. Controlling their placement does not alter their essence. And birds do not distinguish between indigenous and imported trees when they build their nests; they confer a genuineness to the place that cannot be dismissed. A similar ambiguity is inherent in the fluid symbolism of both the music and the artwork.

Throughout history public spaces have accommodated different people and served diverse purposes. And both Ives's piece and Christo's artwork foreground variety. Curiosity about Christo's Gates cut across age, gender, ethnic, and class boundaries, resulting in a diverse promenade of visitors, and raising anew questions of Central Park as a contested space. Ives's piece mixed tunes from the turn of the century, creating a soundscape analogously eclectic. While providing an informal gathering place, early town commons also supplied pastureland for the few animals kept by local residents. Parks occasionally became parade grounds and encampments for practising militia. Public squares offered central locations for stumping politicians to address crowds and for concerned citizens to congregate, or simply to relax and enjoy a bit of shade. If a town boasted its own band, it often held its concert on the green. Today parks, squares, greens, and commons host arts and ethnic fairs, thus promoting cultural exchange. But park visitors are not always pleased by the presence of other users.

Christo's Gates clarified that Central Park, despite having been commandeered early in its existence by the wealthiest classes, was no longer elitist acreage. Anyone able to get to the park could experience the installation; there was no charge, people could linger as long as they liked, and samples of the banner fabric were given away free. Olmsted's and Vaux's original vision of the park as a people's garden, a public space, a free social institution, a place to be enjoyed by both 'the vicious and the virtuous', a cultural project that 'translate[d] Democratic ideas into Trees & Dirt', was once again on display.[21] The synthetic polymer banners of 'The Gates' revived the original goals of Olmsted and Vaux. They therefore also implicitly conversed with the inclusive aural environment that Ives had rendered in his piece written one hundred years earlier.

In *Central Park in the Dark* Ives composed what he called a 'picture in sounds', freezing an artificial nature scene within a single, recurring ostinato pattern. Portraying Central Park as a particular, seemingly confined place must have been important to the composer, as he generally avoided rigid systems and patterns in his 'public' concert works, exploring them more often in his 'private' experimental works. As will become clear, however, in this instance Ives's tight foundational structure suited his programmatic needs. By contrast, Christo's undulating banners seemed to announce a different understanding of the park, the park as a kind of living organism, with people as the life force pulsing through the 'visual

21 See Blackmar and Rosenzweig, *The Park and the People*, 136 (for the phrase 'translate Democratic ideas into Trees & Dirt') and 241 (for Olmsted's phrase 'the vicious to the virtuous'). The authors quote liberally from Olmsted's and Vaux's letters throughout their book.

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golden river' of orange archways. Where individual palindromic ostinatos ostensibly emphasized stasis, the always-moving gates of Christo's installation boldly foregrounded that which was protean and dynamic.[22]

On the surface, then, it might appear that the artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude and the composer Ives had their eyes and ears trained on different meanings of the park. Paramount to the environmentally aware visual artists was the ephemeral nature of their installation; it imbued the creation with a much-desired urgency; it caused viewers to think about the changing nature of the space.[23] For Ives, on the other hand, using an inflexible ostinato anchored his piece in place; he appeared to foreground constancy. In that he eventually cast *Central Park in the Dark* as one of his *Two Contemplations*, Ives seems to have intended that we take our time to think about the enduring meanings of this established location.[24] But were their goals really all that different? This study argues that both artists worked from similar understandings and towards similar ends. The latter-day bejewelling of Central Park at the hands of Christo and Jeanne-Claude confirms Charles Ives's ability to identify powerful places, to recognize resonant images, and to apprehend issues that would remain important over time.

The first urban landscaped park in the nation was a public works project precipitated by the confluence of several factors: a financial crisis in New York City that required a quick solution to a growing and increasingly militant body of unemployed workers, a desire on the part of the wealthiest New Yorkers for a public space on a par with the gardens they enjoyed during their European sojourns, and Frederick Law Olmsted's vision of what could be wrought from hundreds of acres of alternately swampy and rocky land.[25] In their book *The Park and the People: a History of Central Park*, Elizabeth Blackmar and Roy Rosenzweig detail the many-faceted story of the creation of the nation's most famous city retreat, and point to

22 As will be shown, however, in Figure 3, the cumulative effect of the repeating ostinatos is one of gradual intensification and large-scale motion.

23 It could be argued that the presence of so many online sites containing photographs of the installation has compromised the urgency of the project to some degree and made its existence as much dependent upon reproduction, in this case photographic and video reproduction, as Ives's piece is upon audio reproduction. As long as the sites remain operational people can experience 'The Gates'. One anonymous online writer has observed of 'The Gates': 'The experience and the memories become more important than the actual structures.' See Craven, 'The Gates in Central Park by Christo and Jeanne-Claude'. This is not to suggest that the structure of Ives's piece is more important than the aural experience or its memory. In both cases experiencing the artwork, even if through some form of reproduction, is paramount.

24 As James B. Sinclair explains in *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Music of Charles Ives*, 'the title [*Two Contemplations*] is editorially supplied'. As pointed out in note 3 above, *The Unanswered Question* and *Central Park in the Dark* were projected as a pair of pieces under this title. Sinclair comments: 'The pieces appear together in sequence (as nos. 229 and 230) in vol. 5 of Ives's photostated and bound "Chamber Music". The mvts were premiered together in New York City, 11 May 1946, but without the collective title' (Sinclair, *A Descriptive Catalogue*, 589).

25 Given the events of the 1840s in Europe and the numerous destabilizing revolts that erupted on the continent, both state and municipal governments in New York were aware of the potential for violence among newly arrived immigrants. Many had come to the country hopeful of work and fair treatment, only to find themselves starving for lack of steady employment. Hiring thousands of workers to build Central Park averted an almost certain violent confrontation. See Germic, *American Green*, 21ff., for a discussion of Central Park as an antidote to class conflict.

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William Cullen Bryant – poet, writer, and social activist – as the first to have imagined a large, centrally located park in the heart of Manhattan.[26] It would fall to Olmsted, a pupil of Bryant's architect friend Andrew Jackson Downing, to realize Bryant's dream.[27] According to Blackmar and Rosenzweig, the naturally irregular terrain made the parcel of land 'undesirable for private development'. Transforming the site, however, would ultimately cost more than the ten-million-dollar price tag tallied by the mid-1860s.[28] Approximately 1,600 Irish and German immigrants and African-Americans who lived within the borders of the projected park needed to be removed.[29] This was carried out in 1853, when the City of New York declared eminent domain and acquired over 700 acres; in 1863 additional land was seized, bringing the total to the current 843 acres.[30] The choice in 1857 of Olmsted's and Vaux's 'Greensward Plan' from among the thirty-three proposals submitted guaranteed a wholly pastoral remaking of the landscape.

According to Blackmar and Rosenzweig, '[s]ome 20,000 workers – Yankee engineers, Irish laborers, German gardeners, and native-born stonecutters – reshaped the site's topography [. . .] [They] moved nearly 3 million cubic yards of soil and planted more than 270,000 trees and shrubs. The city also built the curvilinear reservoir immediately north of an existing rectangular receiving reservoir.'[31] Of the scenery only the rocks were part of the original site, and even they underwent change: 'blasting out rocky ridges [required] more gunpowder than was later fired at the Battle of Gettysburg', a Civil War battle infamous for the extent of its carnage, both human and topographical.[32] In 2005 the diversity of the park's original

26 I discuss Charles Ives's possible awareness of the many works of William Cullen Bryant in *The Sounds of Place*. See chapter 2, 'From Country to City in the Music of Charles Ives', which considers two Ives works: 'The Housatonic at Stockbridge' from *Three Places in New England* and 'From Hanover Square North, at the End of a Tragic Day, the Voice of the People Again Arose' from *Orchestral Set no. 2*. See especially 72–5. Bryant's relationship to the park had an unfortunate end. In 1878, while participating in ceremonies celebrating the unveiling of a bust of the Italian nationalist writer Giuseppe Mazzini, which had been donated by Italian-Americans and installed overlooking the Sheep Meadow at Central Park, Bryant fell, with fatal consequences. He therefore died as a result of injuries sustained at the park that he had first imagined in 1844. Statues donated by various ethnic groups to honour individuals from their communities made America's diverse heritage a part of the park. See Miller, *Central Park*, 22–3, for a listing of heroic statuary.

27 Blackmar and Rosenzweig, *The Park and the People*, 24.

28 The land purchase alone cost $5 million.

29 As Elizabeth Blackmar and Roy Rosenzweig explain: 'At Eighth Avenue and 82nd Street, Seneca Village had been one of the city's most stable African-American settlements, with three churches and a school.' See Blackmar and Rosenzweig, 'Central Park', in *The Encyclopedia of New York*. For a full discussion of Seneca Village see Blackmar and Rosenzweig, *The Park and the People*, 65–73. Germic (*American Green*, 34–5) puts the number of displaced persons at closer to 5000.

30 One hundred years after the Central Park project displaced citizens in the name of urban regeneration, a similar removal of tenants occurred. When Robert Moses chaired New York City's Slum Clearance Committee in the 1950s, the land for what would become Lincoln Center was claimed for urban renewal; the action resulted in the dislocation of close to 2000 people. No claims are being made that William Cullen Bryant, Frederick Law Olmsted, and Robert Moses shared similar philosophical or aesthetic beliefs or motivations for their projects.

31 Blackmar and Rosenzweig, 'Central Park', <http://www.centralpark.org/history> (accessed 10 September 2008).

32 Blackmar and Rosenzweig, 'Central Park'. The comparison is colourful, if impossible to document, as no certain records exist of how much gunpowder was used during the many skirmishes and battles that collectively became known as the Battle of Gettysburg. I am grateful to Evan Cooney for his insights on this subject.

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Figure 1 *Central Park, the Drive* (hand-coloured lithograph), Currier & Ives, New York, 1862. Gift of Lenore B. and Sidney A. Alpert, supplemented with Museum Acquisition Funds. Michele and Donald D'Amour Museum of Fine Arts, Springfield, MA. Photography by David Stansbury.

workers was echoed in the variety of the park's visitors. But the park was not always as congenial.

In 1859 the newborn park opened, but the very people who blasted through the granite and hauled the soil were not welcome to enjoy the results of their toils. Blackmar and Rosenzweig clarify: 'By 1865, the park received more than seven million visitors a year. The city's wealthiest citizens turned out daily for elaborate late-afternoon carriage parades. Indeed, in the park's first decade more than half of its visitors arrived in carriages, costly vehicles that fewer than five percent of the city's residents could afford to own.' As Germic puts it, 'the wealthy [could] announce their identification with idealized Nature [. . .] In Nature they [could] see themselves.'[33] Currier and Ives's 1862 lithograph *Central Park, the Drive* (see Figure 1) captures the upper classes promenading in their finery, or riding on horseback or in carriages amidst newly planted trees and shrubs.[34] There is no sign of any but the wealthiest New Yorkers. This was not coincidental. There were rules banning group picnics, and not

33 Germic, *American Green*, 12.

34 See Blackmar and Rosenzweig, *The Park and the People*, chapter 3, 'The Elite Park', 211–62, for a discussion of the important social function Central Park provided New York's highest class.

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even 'small tradesmen were [. . .] allowed to use their commercial wagons for family drives in the park'.[35] Thus, with the imported trees and shrubs just taking root, the nation's first public urban park became a site of cultural contestation, an 800-acre symbol of the nation's ostensibly classless, but oh-so-class-conscious society. Olmsted's hopes for a people's garden were subverted, at least temporarily.[36]

By 1898, however, when Ives had graduated from Yale and moved to the city, policies governing park use had loosened, and the zoo, lawn tennis, carousel and goat rides, and a Sunday concert series attracted a more diverse population of visitors. In addition the park was just achieving the look Olmsted and Vaux had imagined in 1857, when they had projected that it would take at least forty years for the plantings to grow tall and thick enough to provide optimal scenic effects. The trend towards more democratic use continued through the twentieth century with the building of skating rinks, boathouses, and ball fields, though never without significant controversy between those who wanted to hold tight to more restrictive uses and those who fought against what they considered to be an elitist, divisive vision of a public space.[37]

Ives composed *Central Park in the Dark* while living at 65 Central Park West, in one of the numerous successive bachelor pads he dubbed 'Poverty Flat' – apartments that he shared with a changing cast of Yale graduates who, like himself, had come to the city to either continue their education or find employment. The street lines the western edge of the park, and is today an address available only to moneyed city dwellers. A *New York Times* article from 1906 refers to apartments along Central Park West, especially the brand new structures that were going up, as 'high class'. The addresses named are five blocks north of Ives's flat. Sharing the apartment with a group of young professionals no doubt made living there possible for Ives. That said, the name 'Poverty Flat' should be understood as a relative and

35 Blackmar and Rosenzweig, 'Central Park'. For a discussion of the types of activities that were banned, see also *The Park and the People*, 251–4.

36 The issue of who 'owns' the park continues to resonate. In 2005 the *New York Times* ran a story by Timothy Williams entitled 'Keeping Great Crowds Off Central Park's Great Lawn'. At stake was a new policy that limited the number and type of large events that would be allowed in any single season, and the number of people who could congregate at any one time on the park's lawn. Class issues immediately rose to the surface, as it was revealed that of the six large events allowed each year 'four of those [were] reserved for the annual performances of the Metropolitan Opera and the New York Philharmonic'. As Williams reported, the rationale for allowing them was that 'those musical programs draw "passive" audiences who go easy on the lawn's Kentucky bluegrass'. Rock concerts, political rallies, and religious gatherings were restricted to two possible dates and forced to compete with each other for the slots. I am grateful to Joshua S. Duchan for calling my attention to this article. See *New York Times*, 27 April 2005, Section B, p. 1; <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/04/27/nyregion/27park.html> (accessed 28 April 2005).

37 In the twentieth century the controversy over who owned the park was at no time more heated than during the 1960s and 70s when Central Park became a regular site for 'happenings' and rock concerts of all kinds. Such activities were an essential first step towards reinvigorating a park that had become increasingly less 'central' in the city's life. The same activities, however, associated the once elite park more and more with a youthful counterculture movement. In some people's eyes the park had gone from being a haven to being a camp ground. See Rosenzweig and Blackmar, *The Park and the People*, especially chapters 17 and 18, 'Scenes from a Park, 1941–1980' and 'Whose Park is it Anyway?', for a detailed discussion of the pressures exerted upon park use and the ultimate 'challenge of preserving democratic public space within an inegalitarian society' (530).

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perhaps ironic term.[38] At the time, the address would have given Ives an ideal location from which to collect sounds wafting through the park and up from Columbus Circle – all the potential ingredients for an aural picture of turn-of-the-century Manhattan as it might have been heard by visitors to Central Park. Whether anyone but Ives would have remembered the sounds specifically or understood their significance is another issue; part of Ives's genius was in recognizing the universal resonance of personal experiences. While Ives later became famous for remarks disparaging the city, in *Central Park in the Dark* he reveals one way of interacting with and living in the richly diverse urban environment.[39] His piece emphasizes the continuous, the simultaneous, and the integrated aspects of that place. This is the work not of someone looking in from outside, or speaking vicariously for others, but rather of someone who is comfortably embedded in city life.[40] Although, over the years, he preferred the quieter surroundings of the house he built with his wife Harmony in West Redding, Connecticut, in 1906, *Central Park in the Dark* suggests that Ives was comfortable in this urban place; he had reconciled himself with the diversified environment, and he invites us to do the same.

According to Ives's *Memos*, the piece was inspired by an experience in New York in the summer of 1906. In the bottom right-hand corner of a sketch for the piece he noted, '*Runaway [horse] smashes into fence* [. . .] heard at 65 C[entral] P[ark] W[est], July – finit Dec [. . .] 1906, with J.S. M[yrick]'.[41] As newspaper stories from 1906 attest, such occurrences were commonplace in and around the park. Horses drawing their fashionable carriages were regularly frightened by increasing numbers of automobiles. One such story that appeared in the *New York Times* in 1906 details the misadventures of Mr and Mrs Isaac Meinhard, who were injured 'in a lively runaway which occurred in Central Park' late in the afternoon. According to the article, 'the animal took fright at a passing automobile opposite Sixty-fifth Street and bolted'. The incident occurred near the address Ives identified in the sketches, where an entrance to the park's 65th Street Transverse intersects with Central Park West.

The account is richly detailed and worth including: 'After going a block the victoria struck another vehicle with such force that one of the shafts was broken off. The driver, Cunningham, was thrown to the drive, where he lay in a semi-conscious condition.' The

38 For information regarding room sizes, amenities, and rents see 'Increasing Demand for High-Class Apartments', *New York Times*, 2 September 1906, p. 17.

39 I am grateful to Ives's grandniece Sally Ives Wilkes for sharing the following story with me. In the 1940s seventeen-year-old Sally left Danbury, Connecticut, for her first visit to New York City. While there, she visited her Aunt Harmony and Uncle Charlie in their New York home. Over dinner one evening, Uncle Charlie asked his niece what she thought of the city. According to Sally's recollection she went on at great length about the wonders of New York, and how much more exciting it was to her than her hometown. After a meaningful silence her uncle leaned toward her and said, 'It's a H. O. A. H'. Aunt Harmony looked disapprovingly at her husband while the young niece waited for enlightenment. 'It's a "hell of a hole"', Charles Ives explained. Ives's insistence upon living in New York City long after he retired from business in 1930 suggests that he had a more complex relationship to the place than his off-the-cuff disparaging remarks might imply.

40 Many of my ideas regarding Ives's position in relation to the city and Central Park are informed by Lawrence Buell's book *Writing for an Endangered World*, especially chapter 3, 'Flaneur's Progress: Reinhabiting the City'. I am grateful to Judith Tick for calling my attention, years ago, to the writings of Lawrence Buell in a wholly different context.

41 Sketch 2533 (*Central Park in the Dark*), The Charles Ives Papers, Irving S. Gilmore Music Library, Yale University.

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story relates the efforts of 'Mounted Policeman Faney of the Park Squad', who 'rode across the path of the runaway and attempted to stop it'. But 'the remaining shaft of the victoria struck his horse on the flank. Next moment both Faney and his mount were rolling in the dust.' They recovered enough to continue pursuit and 'make another attempt to stop the runaway'. But before Faney reached the carriage 'the horse in the victoria slipped and the carriage was overturned. Mr and Mrs Meinhard were thrown out.' The anonymous journalist concludes his account: 'The victoria was wrecked beyond repair.'[42] The frequency of such mishaps is underscored by another story that appeared directly below this first one; it tells of a similar incident at Prospect Park in Brooklyn, in which a Mr Cobine and his son 'were thrown from [their] runabout' by a horse that 'took fright at something and bolted'. Once again chaos ensued as 'motorists and drivers scattered before the runaway'.[43] Equine accidents were ubiquitous and frequently replayed in newspapers. Ives may have witnessed the Meinhard story recounted above: a horse jumping his traces becomes the climactic moment of *Central Park in the Dark*.[44]

The context into which the composer interpolated that event was a musical narrative replete with tunes befitting the turn of the century. An explanatory note that Ives wrote years later clarifies his intentions, and fleshes out the scene with details of the season, the location, the time of day, the temperature, and the myriad sounds wafting through the park air. Ives is clear about his desire to capture the place in sound:

> This piece purports to be a picture-in-sounds of nature and of happenings that men would hear some thirty or so years ago (before the combustion engine and radio monopolized the earth and air), when sitting on a bench in Central Park on a hot summer night. The strings represent the night sounds and silent darkness – interrupted by sounds [the rest of the orchestra] from the Casino over the pond – of street singers coming up from the Circle singing, in spots, the tunes of those days – of some 'night owls' from Healy's whistling the latest or the Freshman March – the 'occasional elevated', a street parade, or a 'break-down' in the distance – of newsboys crying 'uxtries' – of pianolas having a ragtime war in the apartment house 'over the garden wall', a street car and a street band join in the chorus – a fire engine, a cab horse runs away, lands 'over the fence and out', the wayfarers shout – again the darkness is heard – an echo over the pond – and we walk home.[45]

The scene Ives evokes is time- and place-specific. The Casino, which originally stood just inside the east side of the park at 72nd Street and Fifth Avenue, was demolished in 1934, but in 1906 it would have provided light refreshments and live music. Healy's was a restaurant at

42 '4 Hurt in Park Runaway: Horse Bolts, Throwing Out the Aged Meinhards and Driver', *New York Times*, 29 April 1906, p. 1.

43 'Prospect Park Runaway: the Cobines, Father and Son, Thrown Out and Severely Injured', *New York Times*, 29 April 1906, p. 1.

44 Ives often drew upon news stories and his memory for inspiration and material. It is likely that the same occurred with this piece. In contrast, Christo and Jean-Claude are more interested in creating memorable events.

45 Composer's 'Note', in Ives, *Central Park in the Dark*, full score, final unnumbered page.

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66th and Columbus Avenue that was one block west of Ives's flat. And 'the Circle' refers to Columbus Circle, which joins Central Park West and South at the southwest corner of the park. It is just seven blocks down from Ives's address. While a person sitting on a bench on a summer night would probably not have heard all that Ives enumerates – for instance it is doubtful that one would have heard street parades and street bands in the evening hours – all the sounds he mentions would have been audible at some time from that location. For Ives the public park became the metaphorical meeting place for the young businessman and the wider culture. More generally, the park was a mixing board for the noises and musics that made up New York's unique soundscape. Although cities throughout Europe and the rest of the world boasted equally famous urban retreats, the musical sounds that Ives associated with this particular park – rags, marches, the tunes of the day: vernacular musics all of them – expose the location unambiguously as turn-of-the-century America. Ives's democratic 'picture-in-sounds' is one that is peculiarly American, peculiarly New York. It is Central Park.[46]

Written remarks found in sketches for the piece point to Ives's intentions regarding the musical depiction of this place. Pages from two of four extant sources contain explicit references to Central Park and its manifestations in sounds. In the centre of the first page of a two-page fragmentary pencil sketch, among many scribbled comments, Ives identified the string ostinato as 'night sounds of nature, bugs, leaves on trees, sounds of silent darkness, sounds natural and unnatural'.[47] On a second pencil sketch, Ives specified the location of that nature scene by writing at the top of the page '"C.P. in the Dark" – over the "ten" [the ten string bars]' (Figure 2). Whereas the first comment might suggest that the piece is generally about 'night sounds [. . .] sounds natural and unnatural' heard in Central Park, Ives's notation on the second sketch pinpoints his reference: the ostinato *is* Ives's musical manifestation of Central Park. As becomes clear, Ives built the entire musical work upon precise characteristics of this ten-bar ostinato – from metrical details of individual bars and larger rhythmic phrases to harmonic ambiguity and large-scale palindromic behaviour. The ostinato (Example 1) is a microcosm of the larger work. It provides the essential static element that Ives requires to locate his sound picture. It, and by extension the place it represents, imposes a logic upon the piece at all levels of activity.

Ten repetitions of a ten-bar ostinato lock the piece in tonal, rhythmic, and harmonic spheres, much as the action of Ives's picture-in-sounds is locked in a well-defined location, Central Park. Dynamics remain fixed in the *piano* range. Strings alone play the ostinato. Dynamic and timbral continuity reflect the steadfast 'natural' oasis buried deep within the noisy, bustling environment. Ives recognizes that the urban retreat can offer city dwellers a

46 Christo's Gates' are similarly time- and place-specific. Central Park is the canvas upon which the installation was mounted: its impact depended, in part, upon the surrounding cityscape for framing. And the winter landscape was the only one of the seasonal environments that could have provided the necessary transparency and contrast to focus all visual attention on the saffron banners: in autumn they would have been lost in the blazing multi-chromatic palette of changing leaves; in spring they would have competed with flowering plants and shrubs; and in summer they would have been shrouded by a thick canopy of leaves.

47 Sketch 2527 (*Central Park in the Dark*), The Charles Ives Papers, Irving S. Gilmore Music Library, Yale University.

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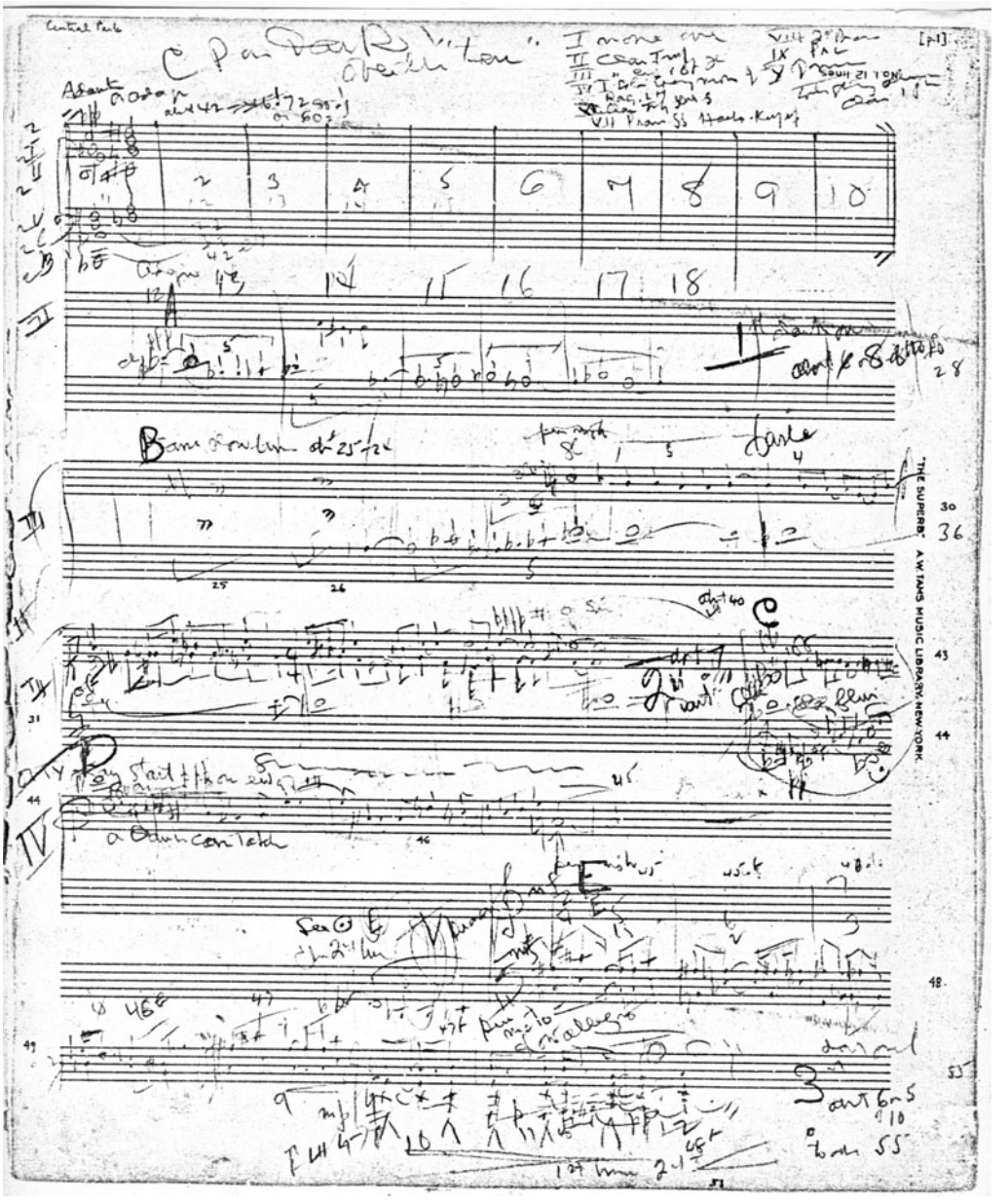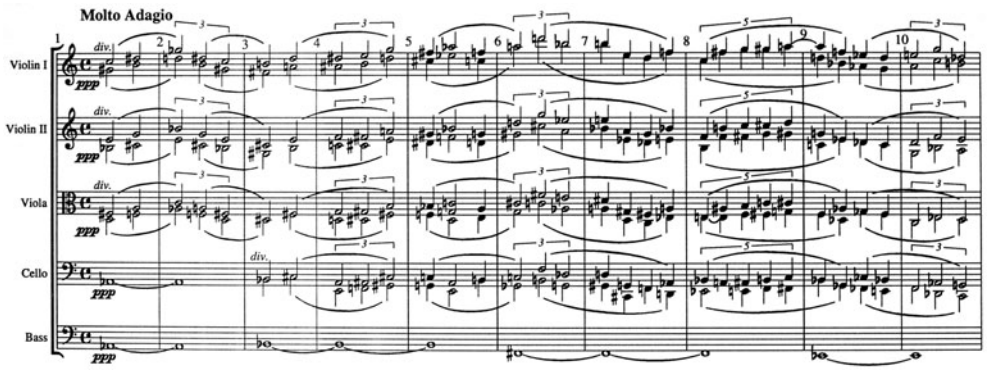


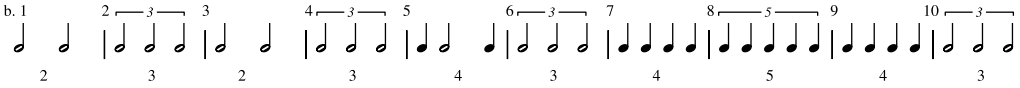
Figure 2 *Central Park in the Dark*, sketch 2529. The Charles Ives Papers, Irving S. Gilmore Music Library, Yale University. Used by permission.

place for quiet reflection, precisely what Olmsted had envisaged for the park in 1857. While a survey of each of the musical elements would disclose myriad characteristics and relationships, an acquaintance with basic rhythmic qualities of the ten-bar pattern (see Example 2) suffices to make the larger point regarding the seminal importance of the ostinato to the piece and to the programme.

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Example 1 Charles E. Ives, *Central Park in the Dark*, bars 1–10. © 1973 by Boelke-Bomart, Inc. Copyright assigned 1978 to Mobart Music Publications, Hillsdale, NY 12529. International Copyright Secured. Used by permission.



Example 2 *Central Park in the Dark*, ostinato: basic rhythmic pattern.

Tensions between duple and triple thinking exist on all levels of the music. The bass line of the ostinato articulates this conflict in a harmonic rhythm of 2 bars (two tied semibreves) – 3 bars (three tied semibreves) – 3 bars (three tied semibreves) – 2 bars (two tied semibreves). The ostinato is organized into alternating duple and triple divisions of the common-time metre in all bars but bar 8; here Ives introduces a group of quintuplet crotchets that obscure notions of duple or triple divisions. Ives works up to and away from the quintuplet bar by surrounding it with a pair of crotchet bars that divide duply. Those bars are themselves framed by a pair of minim bars that divide triply. The quintuplet at bar 8 is unique in the ostinato and, as such, serves several purposes: first, it creates a necessary tension in an otherwise predictable duple–triple pattern; second, it introduces the rhythmic framework that is associated with the B♭ clarinet tune ('Ben Bolt') first heard beginning at bar 12 – the clarinet timbre and the tune fragment will become large-scale unifying devices on their own; and third, and most importantly, it focuses a listener's attention on that half of the ostinato where there is maximum surface rhythmic activity. The intensification at bar 8 augurs similarly intensified larger-scale musical behaviour at the eighth ostinato, which can be seen in Figure 3. Musical behaviour at the lower levels reflects activity at the structural level, and throughout, as this 'aerial view' of the piece makes clear, the structure serves the programme.

The syncopated crotchet–minim–crotchet rhythm first present at bar 5 of the ostinato enlarges to the syncopated tune that first appears in ostinato five, the statement beginning at bar 41. The piece becomes denser and more complex as it approaches the seventh and eighth iterations of the ostinato, the structural analogues of the seventh and eighth bars of the ostinato. Here rhythmic activity becomes so frantic that the non-string instruments break

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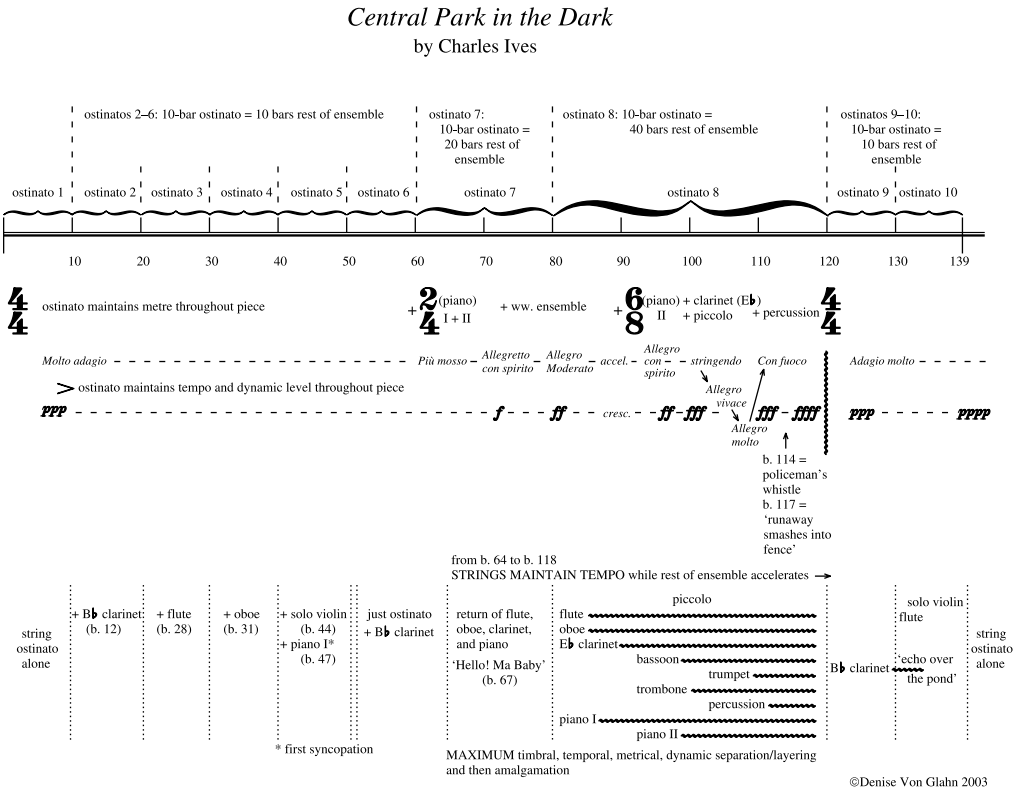


Figure 3 'Aerial view' of *Central Park in the Dark*.

away from the string choir's 4/4 metre and begin a gradual accelerando that resists confinement within a single metrical scheme.

At bar 64 Ives indicates that 'the string orchestra throughout does not change tempo', though 'it plays louder when the rest of the orchestra does [change tempo and accelerate]'. Starting at bar 91 Ives writes the Piano II part in 6/8, thus allowing for both duple and triple interpretations of the metre, in effect echoing at this structural level what occurred in the ostinato with adjacent duple/triple divisions of 4/4. The gathering momentum of the accelerando causes seven tempo changes in the seventh and eighth repetitions of the ostinato alone. The music enters a passage of maximal activity and, by comparison with the beginning of the work, maximal contrast, much as the programme approaches its moment of climactic confusion.

Olmsted and Vaux created a park whose softly curving paths and canopied walkways acted as a counterpoint to the surrounding rectilinear cityscape. Writing in 1859 Olmsted explained that Central Park 'should present an aspect of spaciousness and tranquility [. . .] thereby affording the most agreeable contrast to the confinement, bustle, and monotonous street-division of the city'.[48] They designed a retreat where nature – carefully graded, shaped,

48 Quoted in Blackmar and Rosenzweig, *The Park and the People*, 240. Originally part of Olmsted's 'Description of Central Park', written in January 1859 for the Board of Commissioners of the Central Park.

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and planted to provide optimal calming effects – could restore the work-weary urbanite: they designed the park as an 'antidote to the strains the city imposed on the "nerves and minds" of its residents'.[49]

With their showy saffron banners the artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude created maximal contrast with the muted palette of the winter park. But the banners were not wholly oppositional to their surroundings, and in other seasons might actually have been mistaken for blooming flowers and changing trees. The soft, flowing fabric doubled the park's undulating walkways, and the frames that supported the banners echoed the vertical profile of the city's buildings. The square-cornered frames brought the geometry of the surrounding skyscrapers into the park. Like the eclectic musics that came together in the park, Christo's Gates challenged notions of what belonged and what didn't. Or perhaps they, like Ives, made clear that all belonged in a wholly fabricated environment. Nature and human creation could not be easily disengaged.

The brief existence of the art installation created a sense of excitement and necessary haste.[50] With his timbrally and dynamically contrasting performing forces, tension-producing rhythmic juxtapositions, and melodic mélange, Ives also created excitement. But merely capturing attention or creating a stir was not the final purpose of either the art or the music. As with the gates, the ultimate goal of *Central Park in the Dark* was not to suggest the separateness of the source materials or what they represented: the goal was to suggest their reconciliation; the goal was to demonstrate that the contrast was inherent within them. Before Ives could achieve that end, however, the dissimilarity of the forces had to be fully exposed and acknowledged. He had to demonstrate their separateness before he could argue for their wholeness.[51]

If the string choir suggested the steadfastness of Central Park's naturalized nature – the sounds of 'silent darkness' – woodwinds, piano, and then brass suggest the presence and evanescence of humanity.[52] This division of labour is not unlike that found in the companion

49 Blackmar and Rosenzweig, *The Park and the People*, 241.

50 Christo and Jeanne-Claude believe that the temporary quality of their projects also causes viewers to experience 'tenderness brought [about] by the fact that it will not last'. See Christo and Jeanne-Claude, Official Website: Common Errors, <http://christojeanneclaude.net/errors.html>.

51 Ives makes a similar musical argument in 'From Hanover Square North at the End of a Tragic Day, the Voice of the People Again Arose'. In that piece Ives presents fragments of the unifying hymn tune 'In the Sweet Bye and Bye' separately and in many guises before bringing them together in a thoroughly unconventional 'unison'. See Von Glahn, *The Sounds of Place*, 90–109, for a detailed discussion of this piece. Burkholder reads Ives's multi-layered compositions based upon his life experiences as manifestations of his 'attempt to render the multi-layered feel of life'. He keenly observes: 'For pieces about recent experiences, the background noises are usually rendered as soft, dissonant ostinatos in complex rhythms [. . .] In these works, Ives finds atonal and rhythmically suspended ostinatos to be the truest representation of his auditory and psychological experience.' Burkholder, *All Made of Tunes*, 380.

52 It is tempting to look for parallels between the foregrounded vernacular musics of Charles Ives's piece and the visitors to Christo's installation, or even between the musics and the installation itself, which functioned as a momentary decoration of the park. Strict analogies, however, are not desirable, as they oversimplify the multiple and morphing meanings of the artworks and the place. Rather than confine human participants or musics to single roles in their dramas, both Ives and Christo and Jean-Claude appear to value above all the variety and complexity of the relationships that exist between people and places.

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contemplation, *The Unanswered Question*. Ives anthropomorphizes *Central Park in the Dark* by assigning roles to specific timbres and families of instruments, and then associating them with distinct material. Starting at bar 12 with the hesitant B♭ clarinet, individual instruments quietly appear and disappear; the clarinet seems reluctant at first to impose itself upon the ostensibly serene string ostinato or to introduce a new timbre to the soundscape. When, however, at bar 67 (in ostinato 7) the piano explodes with a *forte* rendition of the rag 'Hello! Ma Baby' and joins the flute and oboe, rhythmic, timbral, and spatial distinctiveness is unequivocal. Here is a new sphere of activity, one whose presence cannot be ignored. Here is something that sounds quite different from the park itself.

Over the next forty-five bars Ives creates a vertiginous swirl of activity. The duple–triple tension first detected in consecutive bars of the ostinato now characterizes the vertical mass of sound. By bar 109 the new timbres and rhythms of the Allegro, which had sounded distinctive and autonomous when first introduced, blend together in a single, sonic amalgam. They become a sound mass of their own, overpowering the opening and hitherto predominant string timbre. Instruments that had appeared individually just bars earlier now join forces in an indistinguishable collective bleat. The airwaves shudder as the 'happenings' of men overwhelm the sounds of 'nature'. At bar 114 the upper woodwinds simulate a policeman's whistle, a sound long associated with the idea of 'arrest', and ideally suited to the programme that Ives has described. Without any sense of 'finishing', the huge vibrating ensemble screeches to a stop: musical motion is arrested.

Symbolic of 'the runaway [that] smashes into a fence' and destroys a physical barrier, triple *forte* percussion, brass, and woodwinds overwhelm rhythmic and tonal space, ostensibly destroying the neat edifice of the ostinato. Only when the final echoes of 'man-made' sounds dissipate, however, does the string choir make its continuing presence known; it finishes its eighth repetition of the ostinato. Although it had not been distinctly audible, the ostinato, it turns out, had never left the soundscape. After the ruckus, its immutability is soothing.

The piece concludes with the ninth and tenth repetitions of the ostinato, finishing much as it began, with Ives's depiction of the night sounds of Central Park. But human activity leaves its imprint on the place and the piece with a *piano* reprise of the fragmentary clarinet tune first heard at bar 12, and two solo violins wafting *pianissimo* in parallel harmonics, hinting at a melody that never materializes. Rather than ending the piece with the final chord of the last ostinato, Ives suggests the continuity of the place by having the music fade out with the opening sounds of yet another ostinato repetition. The piece returns to the initial sonority and dissipates quadruple *piano* into the atmosphere: the place, even this naturalized place, continues in music that seems just beyond our hearing.

The success of Ives's piece depends upon the construction of multiple, autonomous strata of activity that emphasize linearly unfolding materials, which are layered upon a recurring ostinato that emphasizes circularity and return. Although the smallest surface activity within the ostinato suggests a degree of forward momentum, ten repetitions of the same ostinato pattern, with its palindromic bass rhythm, challenge a larger sense of unilinear directionality. With the audible return to the beginning of yet another ostinato to round out the piece, circularity ostensibly overtakes linearity. More important than where the music is going is

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where the music is, and Ives tells us that it *is* Central Park. A memory becomes a 'picture-in-sounds'.

The piece bears out Robert P. Morgan's observation that 'Ives wrote pictorial music – music based largely on relationships that are simultaneous, reciprocal, and reflective in nature rather than successive, sequential, and unidirectional'.[53] For all the activity in the second half of the ostinato and the second half of the piece, the work is about continuity. But it is also about diversity and integration, and in that respect it is also about an ongoing national cultural project.

Although this study has focused upon the rhythmic qualities of the ostinato, harmonic and melodic elements of the ostinato suggest a similar programmatic purpose. Individual pitch movements offer listeners little sense of inevitable directionality. The absence of a clear tonal centre prevents the interpretation of any harmonic motion as locally functional or structurally hierarchical. The whole-tone cluster of the first chord of the piece (A♭, B♭, C, D, E, F♯, G♯) exemplifies the kind of democratic harmonic world Ives creates in the work, an analogy for his ideal society. While avoiding the suggestion of a tonal centre might have been achieved through a dense chromatic cluster or some non-invertible series, the whole-tone sonority is one way Ives distances his music from the chromatic German Romantic tradition and its associations. Symmetrical chords in parallel motion that occur throughout the ostinato – the majority of which are based on quartal and quintal harmonies, with a healthy dose of tritones thrown in – eliminate the motion and drama of functional harmonic progressions. The ostinato, then, boasts a melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic profile that, while suggestive of repose and stability, is in fact conspicuous for its tonal and temporal ambiguity. Or perhaps a better word would be 'richness'.

While the circular ostinato symbolizes relative repose – especially, as has been demonstrated, in contrast to the louder, more insistent linear usurping forces – the ostinato is itself the site of much uncertainty; repose is an illusion. How one hears threes and twos, how one interprets harmonic behaviour, and how one understands the multiple layers of sound that mix in the piece – all suggest the myriad possibilities for interpretation that also exist in Central Park. The place is protean, inherently contested, and that is what is most natural about this wholly constructed place. There are no restricted airspaces in Ives's Central Park. Different musics and different sounds, like the different people of the city, commingle naturally.

Central Park in the Dark, like its paired contemplation *The Unanswered Question*, operates on multiple levels. Musically, *Central Park* is a study in the ways that circular and linear materials can cohabit the same soundscape and alternately create extended moments of repose and activity. Like its companion piece, it is also a study of the dramatic possibilities of timbral contrasts and the effects obtained by layering discrete musical materials one upon the other. In *The Unanswered Question* Ives forthrightly anthropomorphizes his musical forces with a programme note that indicates how the strings are intended to represent 'The Silence of the Druids – Who Know, See, and Hear Nothing' and the woodwinds 'The Fighting

53 Morgan, 'Spatial Form in Ives', 148–58.

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Answerers'.[54] Ives's programme note for *Central Park* clearly associates specific musics with specific people – 'street singers', 'night owls', 'newsboys', and 'wayfarers'. Both pieces suggest moments of improvisation and chaos: in *Central Park in the Dark*, what sounds like a musical free-for-all in the eighth statement of the ostinato; in *The Unanswered Question*, the final flute choir response to the trumpet's question. In both pieces, listeners find themselves situated in a musical scene that appears to be unfolding already, perhaps before they are fully conscious of it. Finally, both contemplations soar over the widest possible dynamic range, from quadruple *piano* to quadruple *forte*, providing a similarly expansive expressive compass.

There is, however, more to *Central Park in the Dark* than the manipulation of musical materials. It is the ideas behind Ives's sounds that argue for the continuing relevance of the piece in the age of 'Christo's Gates'. Few would contend that Central Park is as inviting a night-time destination for solitary, genteel visitors of the twenty-first century as it was when Charles Ives sat on a bench there one summer evening a century ago: crime reports tell the tale. But even such changed circumstances do not alter the most profound messages of the piece. On one level the music suggests the permanence of the natural place, even a wholly constructed, symbolic, naturalized place, in contrast to the transitory nature of urban industry. For all the boisterous and distracting commotion created by human activity and human musics in this 'picture-in-sounds', it is the sylvan place that prevails and has the final, albeit softly spoken, word. Such is not a unique theme for Ives. *Central Park in the Dark* shares this idea with 'The Housatonic at Stockbridge' from *Three Places in New England*, in which Ives also explores the interactions of nature and humanity (though in 'The Housatonic' nature is not artificially constructed).[55]

On another level, however, with the rigid ostinato Ives invites us to accept the artificiality of the park as a 'natural' part of the already artificial urban scene: the park is at least as natural as its larger, wholly constructed, and similarly contested environment. But Ives does not seek to indict; he recognizes the city as a site for potentially profound human interaction. He makes a similar point in his piece 'From Hanover Square North, at the End of a Tragic Day, the Voice of the People Again Arose' – the third piece of *Orchestral Set no. 2* – where an elevated train station in lower Manhattan becomes the site of a deeply spiritual human drama that was possible only in the 'unnatural' city setting.[56]

Both 'Christo's Gates' and Ives's piece use the park to educate us about an ongoing national project and the contemporary human condition. The spectacle of 7,500 saffron banners drew thousands of curious visitors from across all demographic groups to see the park, to see the

54 Composer's 'Foreword', in Ives, *The Unanswered Question*, for chamber orchestra or chamber ensemble, full score, unnumbered page.

55 It is noteworthy that there are numerous repeating pitch and rhythmic patterns in 'The Housatonic' as well, but none works for more than a few bars and none dominates the piece. Perhaps the presence of the inflexible pattern in *Central Park* is a musical manifestation of Ives's belief that such is unnatural, as is the park itself.

56 Ives depicted New Yorkers' reactions to the news of the sinking of the Lusitania in 1915 as they came together at the train station at the end of the 'tragic day'. See Von Glahn, *The Sounds of Place*, 90–105, for a discussion of 'From Hanover Square North', including Ives's lengthy programme note for the piece.

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artwork, to see each other, and to be seen: to be part of a place and an event. In his musical mélange of chamber-like string sounds, piano ragtime wars, marches, and the tunes of the day, Ives creates an aural analogue, a similar intermingling of a variety of people through the agency of the musics with which they are identified. Just as there was a place for everyone in Christo's parade, so there is a place for everyone in Ives's musical amalgam. While recognizing the tensions inherent in the place, both artworks embrace Olmsted's vision of a park that ultimately unites rather than divides.

In the rationale of the 'Greensward Plan' Olmsted explained:

> The primary purpose of the Park is to provide the best practicable means of healthful recreation for the inhabitants of the city, of all classes. It should present an aspect of spaciousness and tranquility with variety and intricacy of arrangement, thereby affording the most agreeable contrast to the confinement, bustle, and monotonous street-division of the city [. . .] The Park is intended to furnish healthful recreation for the poor and the rich, the young and the old, the vicious and the virtuous, so far as each can partake therein without infringing upon the rights of others, and no further.[57]

Germic sees Olmsted's 'list of binaries' as 'revealing that the geographic segregation of the Park and the city is to be reflected in the separation of human "classes" within the Park'.[58] I do not see such a conclusion expressed anywhere in Olmsted's aesthetic, philosophy, or physical plan. Olmsted's close identification with Transcendentalism, and his belief in the infinite power of nature to uplift all humankind, was consistent with both his support for the activities of John Audubon and John Muir and his affinity for the thinking of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. Ives had similar affinities for Transcendentalism, as is well known. He too believed in the infinite power of nature to uplift. With their artwork and their music Christo and Jeanne-Claude and Charles Ives invite 'all classes [. . .] to partake therein'. Their works 'contain multitudes'; they are hopeful; reconciliation is possible.[59] While speaking of and for their time, both 'Christo's Gates' and *Central Park in the Dark* acknowledge that the national project continues.

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57 Quoted from Olmsted's papers (III:119) in Germic, *American Green*, 29.

58 Germic, *American Green*, 29–30.

59 See Walt Whitman's 'Song of Myself': 'Do I contradict myself? Very well, then I contradict myself, I am large, I contain multitudes.'

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