

Charles Ives' *Decoration Day* – A Conductor's Guide

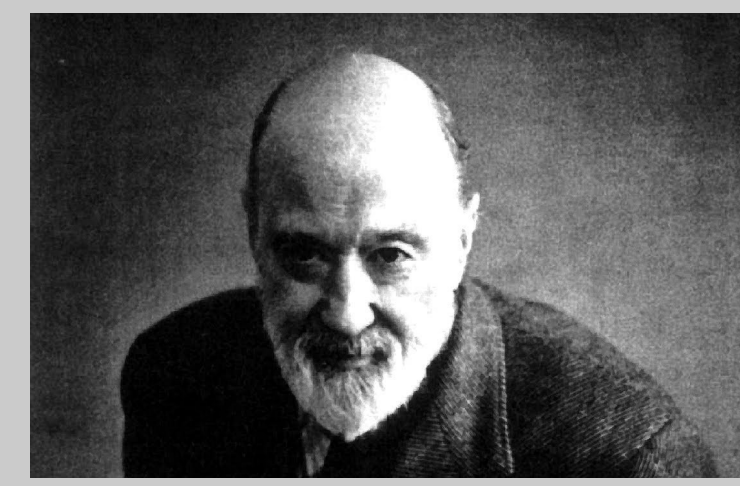
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Ives "New England Holidays" Symphony

1. Washington's Birthday (Winter)
 2. **Decoration Day (Spring)**
 3. The Fourth of July (Summer)
 4. Thanksgiving and Forefather's Day (Autumn)
- "Recollections of a boy's holidays in a Connecticut country town." – Ives

Decoration Day

- Composed 1912-1913, Revised c. 1930
- Includes composed material from Ives' youth, c. 1886, as well as many borrowed tunes.
- Transcribed for Band by Jonathan Elkus in 1962.



In the early morning the gardens and woods around the village are the meeting places of those who, with tender memories and devoted hands, **gather the flowers** for the Day's Memorial. During the forenoon as the people join each other on the Green there is felt, at times, a fervency and intensity – a shadow perhaps of the fanatical harshness – reflecting old Abolitionist days. It is a day as Thoreau suggests, when there is a pervading consciousness of "Nature's kinship with the lower order – man."

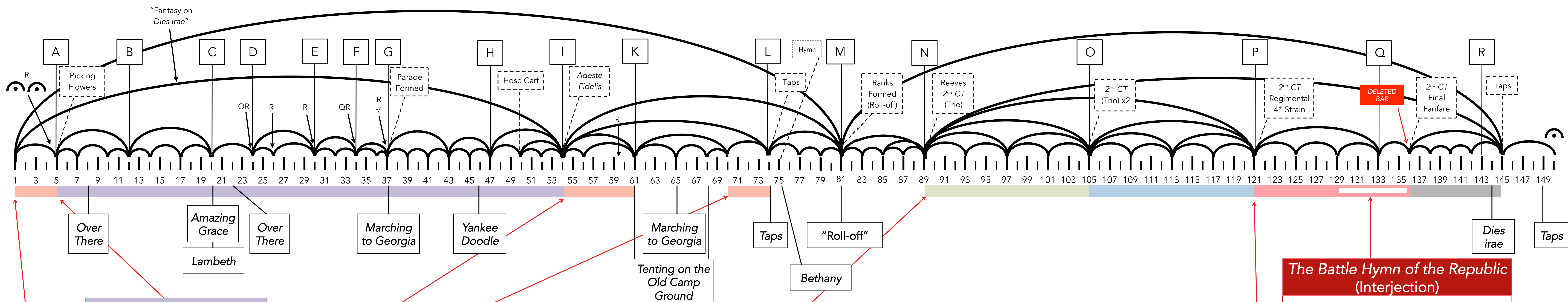
After the Town Hall is filled with the Spring's harvest of lilacs, daisies, and peonies, **the parade is slowly formed on Main Street.** First come the three Marshals on plough horses (going sideways), then the Warden and Burgesses in carriages, the Village Cornet Band, the G.A.R. [Grand Army of the Republic], two by two, the Militia (Company G), while **the volunteer Fire Brigade, drawing a decorated hose-cart**, with its jangling bells, brings up the rear – the inevitable swarm of small boys following. The march to Wooster Cemetery is a thing a boy never forgets. The roll of the muffled drums and **Adestes Fideles** answer for the dirge. A little girl on a fencepost waves to her father and wonders if he looked like that at Gettysburg.

After the last grave is decorated, **Taps sounds out** through the pines and hickories, while a **last hymn is sung. The ranks are formed again**, and "we all march to town" to a Yankee stimulant – **Reeves inspiring Second Regiment Quickstep** – though, to many a soldier, the somber thoughts of the day underlie the tunes of the band. The march stops – and in the silence, **the shadow of the early morning flower-song rises over the Town**, and the sunset behind the West Mountain breathes its benediction upon the Day.

- Charles Ives, Postface to *Decoration Day*

Potential Musical Quotations

Adeste Fideles
Dies irae
Over There
Lambeth ("People of the Living God")
Amazing Grace
Marching Through Georgia
Yankee Doodle
Tenting on the Old Camp Ground
Taps
Bethany ("Nearer my God, to Thee")
Second Regiment Connecticut National Guard March
For He's A Jolly Good Fellow
Battle Hymn of the Republic



"Fantasy on Dies irae"

Source:



Ives, m. 5, B-flat Flugelhorns

Adeste Fidelis

Source:



Ives, m. 1, B-flat Clarinets

David Wallace Reeves, Second Regiment Connecticut National Guard March

Trio, Bugles



FOUNDATION REMAINS, WITHOUT MELODY



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DELETED

The Battle Hymn of the Republic (Interjection)

Source:



Ives, m. 132, E-Flat Cornet

For He's A Jolly Good Fellow (Interjection)

Source:



Ives, m. 121, B-flat Soprano Saxophone