Charles Ives was born in Danbury, Connecticut just nine years after the end of the Civil War. All members of the Ives family were successful business people except for Charlie’s father George. George Ives was a band director and music teacher who loved to experiment with sound. He once tried to reproduce the sound of two different marching bands in a parade—one coming down the street towards the crowd, the other moving away in the opposite direction. Another time, he placed band members around the town square and asked them each to play a different song. Young Charlie was on hand to help with these experiments. They had a big influence on the music that he composed later in life.

Charles was a gifted musician. His father taught him how to play the organ, piano, drums and cornet, and at the age of 14 he was hired to be the church organist. He later attended Yale University, where he studied composition while earning a degree in business. However, he did not become a professional composer. Instead, he was a highly successful businessman in the early days of insurance. He spent his nights and weekends doing what he really loved, writing music. Since he didn’t care whether anyone heard his pieces or not, he never tried to please anyone else with his music and wrote as he liked. As a result, his works are very individualistic and different from what other composers were writing at the same time.

The Country Band March is about amateur musicians trying to play their best. Some of the players haven’t learned their parts very well and can’t always stay in tune, so they start playing a tune that they do know instead. The result is a crazy hodge-podge of sound that includes recognizable tunes such as “London Bridge” and “Yankee Doodle” along with passages in which the marchers get out of step and lose their places. Listen at the end for the saxophone player who forgets to cut off with everyone else!

We Love a Parade!
Charles Ives included twelve popular tunes in the Country Band March. Circle the ones that you hear.

- “London Bridge”
- “Arkansas Traveller”
- “Spy Kids”
- “Violets”
- “This Old Man”
- “Spice Girls”
- “Sing”
- “Semper Fideles”
- “Yankee Doodle”
- “Star Wars”
- “The Girl I Left Behind Me”
- “Marching through Georgia”
- “My Old Kentucky Home”
- “The Battle Cry of Freedom”
- “The British Grenadiers”
WGUC sincerely thanks The Charles H. Dater Foundation for its sustaining support since the inception of Classics for Kids®.

Crossword Craze
Name the instrument or the person in the marching band below. Fill your answers into the puzzle.

2 down
1 across
5 across
4 down
4 across
3 across

FIND THE TWINS
WHICH TWO ARE EXACTLY ALIKE?

The music that Charles Ives wrote was greatly influenced by his father, George. From the time he was a kid, Ives heard his father experiment with sound. George Ives always told Charlie to “stretch his ears,” and Charlie did that with every piece of music he wrote.