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# The Piano Works of Charles Tomlinson Griffes

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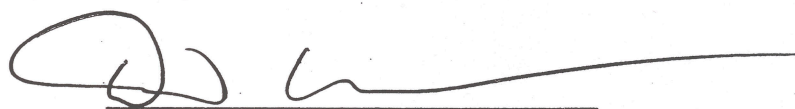
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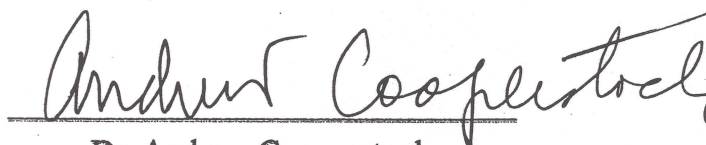
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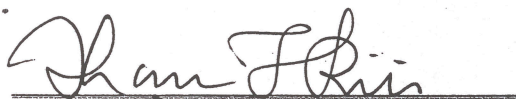
This research document for the Doctoral of Musical Arts in Piano Performance degree  
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## Introduction

There was much variety in American piano music of the first half of the twentieth century. With the exception of the Jazz idiom, largely practiced by George Gershwin (1898-1937) and the avant-garde style, introduced by Henry Cowell (1897-1965), music from 1900-50 gains its influences from four main categories: the old Romantic tradition, the newer French manner (derived from Impressionism), the Neoclassical, and Serialism, which was pioneered by Arnold Schoenberg and his disciples, Anton Webern and Alban Berg. The music of Charles Tomlinson Griffes (1884-1920), particularly his piano music, represents a synthesis and integration of these disparate styles. In this paper, the author will demonstrate, through comparison and stylistic analysis, how Griffes' piano music achieves this end.

Griffes' music appears in three stylistic periods: German period (1898-11), Impressionist/Oriental period (1911-16), and Neoclassical/Modern period (1917-19). Griffes' early piano works show influences of Johannes Brahms, Engelbert Humperdinck (one of Griffes' teachers), Richard Wagner, and Richard Strauss, as evidenced in his use of standard forms, traditional thematic repetitions, key relationships, and conservative harmonic progressions.<sup>1</sup> He commonly uses thirds, sixths, secondary dominants, diminished and half diminished sevenths, and

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<sup>1</sup> Hwon Mo Kim Pratt, *The Complete Piano Works of Charles T. Griffes* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1977), 187.

augmented chords. Also, Griffes composed Chopinesque pieces including the four *Preludes* Op. 40, and the *Mazurka* in A minor.

In Griffes' second period, his compositions display Impressionistic techniques, which include using whole tone and pentatonic scales, non-functional triads, sixths, parallelism (especially parallel major thirds), and ostinato figures. *Three Tone Pictures*, Op. 5 (1910-12), *The Pleasure Dome of Kubla Khan* (1912), and *Four Roman Sketches*, Op. 7 (1915-16) all display these characteristics.

From the last period, his most important and powerful work, the Sonata (revised in 1919), shows the combination of diversified elements: Scriabinesque chromaticism, experimental styles with new harmonies and an artificial scale of his own creation. Despite containing many Modern elements, the Sonata is also bound to previous styles of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in terms of form.

### Life

Griffes was born to Clara Louise Tomlinson Griffes and Wilber Gideon Griffes in Elmira, New York, on September 17, 1884.<sup>2</sup> He was the third of five children in his family.<sup>3</sup> His first informal musical training was taking piano lessons with his older sister, Katharine, in 1894. His first formal piano teacher, Jack Raynes, taught him all of the contemporary

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<sup>2</sup> Donna K. Anderson, *The Works of Charles T. Griffes: A Descriptive Catalogue* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1983), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Donna K. Anderson, *Charles T. Griffes: A Life in Music* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), 1.



ballads of the day.<sup>4</sup> In 1899, he began to take lessons with Mary Selena Broughton, a professor at Elmira College who recognized his talents. In 1903, he graduated from the Elmira Free Academy (high school).<sup>5</sup> He then traveled to Berlin for three years to become a professional musician while being supported financially by Mrs. Broughton.

Griffes' first career goal was to be a concert pianist; after his studies in Berlin he realized that his pianistic skills limited because of his small hands were not exceptional enough to provide a steady income.<sup>6</sup> He attended the Stern Conservatory of Music beginning in 1903. Griffes began to take piano lessons with Dr. Ernst Jedliczka, who had been a pupil of Nicholas Rubinstein and Peter Tchaikovsky. After Jediczka died in 1904, Griffes studied with Gottfried Galston. Also, he studied composition and counterpoint with Philippe Rüfer, Max Löewengard, and Wilhelm Klatte.<sup>7</sup> He left the conservatory in order to focus on composing more and to study with other professors. He began studying with Humperdinck (1905-1906) while continuing his piano and harmony lessons with Galston until 1907. He returned to New York in 1907 and became director of music at the

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<sup>4</sup> Edward Maisel, *Charles T. Griffes: The Life of an American Composer* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1984), 14.

<sup>5</sup> Donna K. Anderson, *Charles T. Griffes: An Annotated Bibliography-Discography* (Detroit: Information Coordinators Inc., 1977), 15.

<sup>6</sup> Edward Maisel, *Charles T. Griffes*, 95.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

Hackley School in Tarrytown, New York until his death. He died on April 8, 1920 due to abscessed lungs and a hemorrhage.

In the course of his short life, Griffes composed three ballets, many solo piano pieces, piano duos, choral and chamber music, various orchestral works, and many songs. Some of Griffes' important compositions include *Sho-Jo, Five Poems of Ancient China and Japan* (1917), the Piano Sonata (1918), the *Pleasure Dome of Kubla Khan* (in the orchestral version), and the *Notturmo* for Orchestra (1919).<sup>8</sup> However, many of Griffes' works have not been published even to this day. These include his four sonatas for piano, his ballet *Sho-Jo*, and one of his piano arrangements of a stage work, *Karin of Koridwen*.

According to Donna K. Anderson's article in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Griffes was extremely sensitive, ambitious, honest, and modest with a lack of pretence and a sense of humor. His interests included all aspects of art. His hobbies in photography, painting with watercolors, etching, drawing, reading poetry, and collecting Asian art lasted throughout his life. He especially loved oriental folklore and the mystic, imaginative nature of Fiona MacLeod's poems. Griffes often used these as direct inspiration for his compositions.

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<sup>8</sup> Donna K. Anderson. *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. s.v. "Charles T. Griffes" (New York: London, Macmillan Publishers Limited, 2001).



His favorite colors were yellow and orange, and he was fascinated by anything using these colors including flowers, fruits, draperies, porcelain, and sunsets.<sup>9</sup> When Griffes became older he associated certain keys with certain colors, and he wrote about these relationships. He argued that E-flat was yellow or gold and that C major was an incandescent white light and the most brilliant of all tonalities.<sup>10</sup>

## II. German period (1898-1911)

Most of Griffes' early piano works have not been published, including *Six Variations in B-flat Major*, Op. 2 (1898), *Four Preludes*, Op. 40 (1899-1900), *Mazurka* (1899-1900), and *Sonata in D-flat Major* (1909-1911).<sup>11</sup> The New York Public Library has many of his unpublished compositions including the *Sonata in F minor* for piano and *Passionlied fünfstimmig*, a five-part choral work. Griffes said of his early works:

When I went to Germany, I was of course ready to be swept under by the later Wagner and Strauss; it is only logical I suppose that when I began to write I wrote in the vein of Debussy and Stravinsky; those particular wide intervallic dissonances are the natural medium of the composer who writes to-day's music.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Bauer, "Griffes," 356.

<sup>10</sup> Virginia S. Wynn, *Charles Griffes: his Life, Songs, and Piano Works* (M.A. Central Missouri State College, 1965), 3-4.

<sup>11</sup> Melva Terrell Walker, "Charles T. Griffes' Roman Sketches for piano solo: History, Analysis and Performance" (M.M. doc., Northwestern State University of Louisiana, 1987), 16.

<sup>12</sup> New York *Evening Sun*, quoted in Anderson. *Charles T. Griffes: a Life in Music*, 186.

In his German period, Griffes was influenced by Brahms, Wagner, and Strauss, Humperdinck, and other German romantic composers. For example, Brahms' frequent doubling of the melodic line in octaves, thirds, and sixths is used many times by Griffes, frequently combined with chords of open fourths and fifths (ex. 1).

<Ex. 1> Sonata in D-flat Major, A. 65, mm. 1-11



## II. Impressionist and Oriental period (1911-1916)

In his second period, Griffes was influenced by Claude Debussy and Maurice Ravel. His compositions show the influence of impressionistic techniques based on the whole-tone scales, pentatonic scales, long pedals, parallelism, ostinato figures, diverse complex rhythms, and so on. This is



exemplified in the *Three Tone Pictures* and *Roman Sketches*. His *Fantasy Pieces*, Op. 6 titled “Barcarolle, Notturmo, and Scherzo,” have little in common with similar pieces of Chopin. The *Three Tone Pictures*, Op. 5, *Fantasy Pieces*, Op. 6, and *Roman Sketches*, Op. 7 are all prefaced by texts by the poets Edgar Allan Poe, Paul Verlaine, William Butler Yeats, and William Sharp. His accompaniments often use arpeggios instead of block chords, which creates more complicated rhythm and a lighter sound. Also, Griffes was interested in oriental folklore which became an important element in his compositions.<sup>13</sup> This directly reflects in the titles in his *Five Poems of Ancient China and Japan*, Op. 10, *Sho-Jo*, and *The Pleasure-Dome of Kubla Khan*.<sup>14</sup> Griffes was commissioned to write the Japanese dance drama *Sho-Jo*, for the Japanese dancer Michio Ito by Adolph Bolm in 1917.<sup>15</sup>

a. *Three Tone Pictures*, Op. 5 (1910-12)

This is a set of character pieces that Griffes started composing in 1910 and revised later. They were published by Schirmer in 1915 on the recommendation of Ferruccio Busoni. Griffes later arranged these pieces for a chamber orchestra of flute, oboe, clarinet in A, horn in F, bassoons I and II, violins, viola, cello, bass, and piano. Throughout, the pieces are

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<sup>13</sup> James Andrew Hornibook. “Graphic Analysis of Charles Griffes’ Piano Sonata.” (M. A. doc., San Francisco State University, 1995), 12.

<sup>14</sup> Donna K. Anderson. *Charles T. Griffes: a Life in Music*, 189-190.

<sup>15</sup> Hoon Mo Kim Pratt. “The Complete Piano Works of Charles T. Griffes,” 10.



written in ternary form, using one principal theme.<sup>16</sup> Griffes uses chromaticism, long pedal effects, tonal ambiguity, and simple ostinato figures in all these pieces.

*The Lake at Evening*, the first piece, is in the key of A major, and is marked "Tranquillo e dolce." It represents Griffes' use of three techniques: a single thematic idea, rhythmic ostinato figure, pedal point, and chromatic countermelodies.<sup>17</sup> This piece is reminiscent of Ravel's *Le gibet* (from *Gaspard de la nuit* (1908)). The resemblance of the musical aspects of both pieces is surprising. Ravel uses a B-flat octave pedal point and Griffes uses a C-sharp octave pedal point with a repeating rhythmic pattern throughout the piece. Both pieces ring like bells. Griffes includes a text by Edgar Allan Poe at the beginning of the piece, reading, "I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore."

The second piece is called *the Vale of Dreams*, and is in E-flat major. This piece features long pedal tones, chromatically descending bass notes, and whole-tone scales (mm. 3, 7, and 11). Griffes also uses irregular subdivisions of the beat and a syncopated ostinato in the first thirteen measures of the accompaniment. *The Vale of Dreams* opens with an unresolved, third-inversion dominant seventh chord in E-flat major (ex. 2)

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<sup>16</sup> Edward M. Maisel, *Charles T. Griffes* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1972), 59.

<sup>17</sup> Robert James Stoll, "The Piano Music of Charles T. Griffes" (M.M. doc., University of Wisconsin, 1967), 23

<Ex. 2> *The Vale of Dreams*, Op. 5 No. 2, mm. 1-6

Sognando

Poe's *the Vale of Dreams* precedes the score:

At midnight, in the month of June,  
I stand beneath the mystic moon.  
An opiate Vapor, dewy, dim,  
Exhales from out her golden rim,  
And, softly dripping, drop by drop,  
Upon the quiet mountain-top,  
Steals drowsily and musically  
Into the universal valley.

The next piece, *Night Winds* is in the key of E-flat minor. It is based on whole tone arpeggios.

The text, again by Poe, is

But when the night had thrown her pall  
Upon that spot, as upon all,  
And the mystic wind went by  
Murmuring in melody,  
Then-ah, then-I would awake  
To the terror of the lone lake



b. *The Pleasure Dome of Kubla Khan* (1912)

This piece was originally written for the piano, and based on Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem; *Kubla Khan*.

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan  
A stately pleasure-dome decree:  
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran  
Through caverns measureless to man  
Down to a sunless sea.  
So twice five miles of fertile ground  
With walls and towers were girdles round:  
And there were gardens bright  
With sinuous rills...  
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

The shadow of the dome of pleasure  
Floated midway on the waves;  
Where was heard and the mingled measure  
From the fountain and the caves.  
It was a miracle of rare device,  
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!<sup>18</sup>

In this piece, Griffes uses long pedal tones, widely registers notes and a 6/4 time signature throughout. He also uses a lot of thick-chord melodies at the beginning and end of the piece. Griffes orchestrated *the Pleasure Dome of Kubla Khan* at the suggestion of Ferruccio Busoni. The symphonic version, which is not a literal arrangement of the piano score, effectively utilizes the colors of the orchestra. In 1919, Griffes was quoted in the program notes for the Boston Symphony performance of *The Pleasure Dome of Kubla Khan*:<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (London: MacMillan CO. Ltd., 1914), 94.

<sup>19</sup> Bauer Marion, "Charles Tomlinson Griffes as I remember him," *Musical Quarterly*, 39 (1943), 378.

As the argument, I have given my imagination free reign in the description of this strange palace as well as of purely imaginary revelry that might take place there. The vague, foggy beginning suggests the sacred river, running "though caverns measureless to man down to a sunless sea." Then gradually rise the outlines of the palace, "with walls and towers girdled round." The gardens with fountains and "sunny spots of greenery" are next suggested. From inside come sounds of dancing and revelry, which increase to a wild climax and then suddenly break off. There is a return to the original mood suggesting the sacred river and "thee caves of ice."

c. *Four Roman Sketches*, op. 7 (1915-19)

The four pieces of opus 7 are similar in many ways and are all based on evocative poetry from William Sharp's *Sospiri di Roma*. William Sharp (1855-1905) was a Scottish poet. The four pieces are similar in overall form because they are ternary and end with a recapitulation and coda.<sup>20</sup> At the end of the central section climaxes emerge from chromatic, developmental material into clear diatonic harmonies.<sup>21</sup> Griffes later orchestrated these pieces. Throughout the pieces, he uses irregular rhythms, exotic scales, whole tone scales, and parallelism. The four pieces begin with *pianissimo* (*pp*) dynamic marking and end with *ppp* and *ritardando* or fermata markings.

The first piece, *The White Peacock*, is written in ternary form, consisting of the A section (mm. 1-18), the B section (mm. 19-51), and A section (mm. 51-the end). In the opening two bars, Griffes uses a dominant

<sup>20</sup> Peggy Marie Walton. "The Music of Charles Tomlinson Griffes: harbinger of American art music's transition into the modern age." (M.M. doc., Rice University, 1988), 74.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.



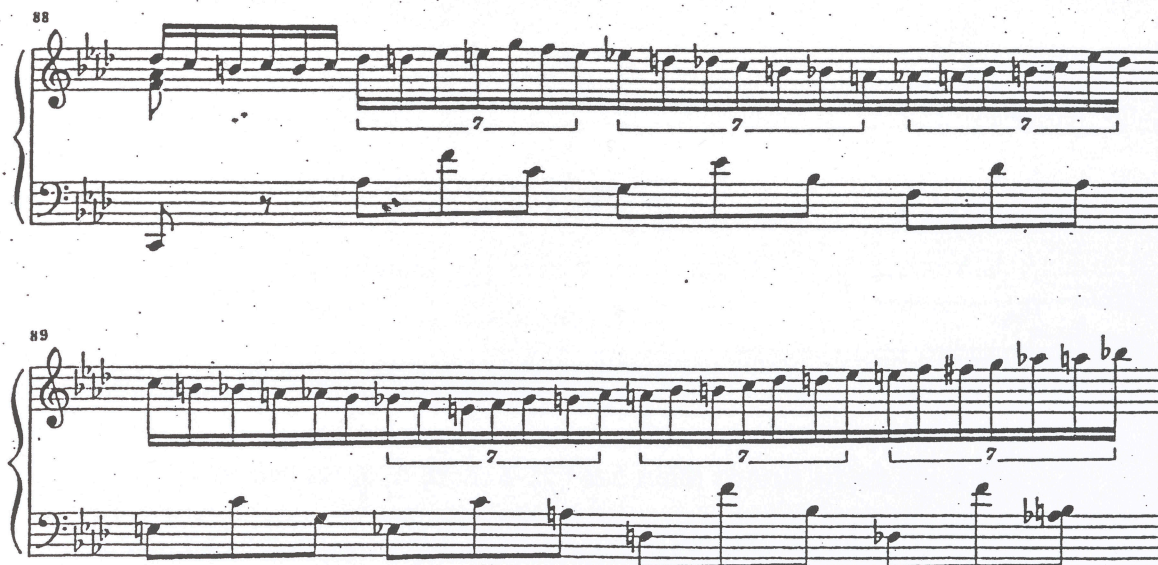
ninth chord of B, but it includes both a C-natural and a C-double sharp, both a raised and a lowered fifth and thirds. The G-natural appoggiatura indicates that accented appoggiatura tones and chords play an important role in creating dissonance.<sup>22</sup>

The first theme (mm. 1-2) is based on similar rhythmic patterns, presenting the influence of Liszt's *Études de Concert, La leggerezza* (1848) in both hands (ex. 3). *The White Peacock* is based on a whole tone scale: A#, C, Cx (D), E, F#, but Liszt's uses a chromatic scale.

<Ex. 3> *The White Peacock*, mm. 1-2



Liszt's *Études de Concert* "La leggerezza"



<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 77.



The second theme (mm. 3-4) is a descending chromatic scale. The second theme is reminiscent of Debussy's *La Danse de Puck* (*Capricieux et léger*, composed in 1909-10) of the first set of preludes (ex. 4). Debussy's uses E-flat scale without B-flat. A comparison between these pieces reveal similar pitches: Griffes' C#-D#-E-F#-G#-A, Debussy's C-D-E-flat-F-G-A-flat. Also, they share a similar rhythmic character.

<Ex. 4> *The White Peacock*, mm. 3-4



Debussy's *La Danse de puck* (*Capricieux et léger*)

Capricieux et léger ♩=130



He uses seventh (mm. 8-10) and ninth chords which show the influence of Debussy's harmonic language. Griffes captures the proud opening of plumage, the unusual march, and the bird's fantastic sense of

majesty and pride. He uses added-note chords, as well as pentatonic, whole tone, and artificial scales with complicated rhythms.

The text by William Sharp is

Here where the sunlight  
Floodeth the garden  
Where the pomegranate  
Research its glory  
Of gorgeous blossom;  
Where the oleanders  
Dream through the noontides;  
Where the heat lies  
Pale blue in the hollows,  
Here where the dream-flowers,  
The cream-white poppies,  
Silently waver,  
Here as the breath, as the soul of his beauty  
Moveth in silence, and dreamlike, and slowly,  
White as a snowdrift in mountain valleys  
When softly upon it the gold light lingers;

Moves the white peacock, as tho' through the noontide  
A dream of the moonlight were real for a moment.  
Dim on the beautiful fan that he spreadeth,  
Dim on the cream-white are blue adumbrations,  
Pale, pale as the breath of blue smoke in far woodlands,  
Here, as the breath, as the soul of this beauty,  
Moves the White Peacock.

The second piece, *Nightfall*, is in the key of G-sharp minor. It is in an incomplete arch form: ABCDB'A'. The A and B sections are in the key of G-sharp minor while the C and D sections are in the key of A-flat major. The B section is built on a pentatonic scale: B C# D# F# G#. Griffes emphasizes pentatonic scales, reflecting the influence of Japanese and



Javanese melodies.<sup>23</sup> This piece includes an example of Griffes' use of parallelism in mm. 43-47 (ex. 5).

<Ex. 5> *Nightfall* in mm. 43-47

The musical score for "Nightfall" in measures 43-47 is presented in three systems. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 8/8. The tempo is marked as  $\text{♩} = 138$ . The score is written for piano, with the right hand playing a continuous eighth-note accompaniment and the left hand playing a melody. The first system shows the beginning of the piece with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The second system includes a *molto cresc.* marking and a triplet of eighth notes. The third system features a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic and a glissando (*gliss.*) in the left hand. The score is characterized by parallelism in the piano accompaniment, which is a key feature of Griffes' style.

<sup>23</sup> Peggy Marie Walton. "The Music of Charles Tomlinson Griffes: harbinger of American art music's transition into the modern age." (M.M. doc., Rice University, 1988), 84.

The mood of *Nightfall* is evoked by his employment of mysterious syncopations, long ostinatos, two big climaxes, and difficult voicings.

There are some difficult pedaling decisions to be made, often involving the use of all three pedals and very modern harmonic overlappings. The last eight measures use a non-functional chord progression (I-N-III-I) in mm. 102-109. He uses parallel motion and the pre-established G-sharp (A-flat) pedal point to close.

The poem reads

**Al far della notte**

The long day is over.  
Dusk, and silence now:  
And night, that is as dew  
On the flower of the World.

*The Fountain of the Acqua Paola* is also in arch form: A (mm. 1-12) transition (mm. 13-20), B (21-22), B (mm. 23-28), B (mm. 29-41), B' (mm. 42-43), B' (mm. 44-47), B' (mm. 48-52), A' (53-64), and coda (mm. 65-70). This piece has a brilliant character harmonically and technically. The texture of Griffes' opening theme is similar to the first theme of Liszt's *Les jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este* from *Années de Pèlerinage, 3ème Année* (ex. 6).<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Walton. "The Music of Charles Tomlinson Griffes." (M.M. doc., Rice University, 1988), 96.



<Ex. 6> Liszt's *Les jeux d'eaux à la villa d'Este*

un poco espressivo  
p  
leggero  
staccato  
dim.

Liszt's piece is longer and more diatonic than Griffes, but it is more similar in texture to Griffes' piece than Ravel's *Jeux d'eau* with its rhythm and arpeggiated melody (ex. 7).

<Ex. 7> *The Fountain of the Acqua Paola*

Allegro moderato (♩: 104-108)

Op. 7, No. 3

pp  
p espressivo



# Ravel's *Jeux d'eau*

Allegretto (♩ = 100)



Griffes uses a beautiful left-hand melody decorated by right-hand arpeggios and double notes. Throughout *the Fountain of the Acqua Paola* he uses complex rhythmic patterns (ex. 8).

<Ex. 8> *The Fountain of the Acqua Paola*, Op. 7 No. 3, mm. 29-30



*The Fountain of the Acqua Paola's* text reads

Shimmering lights,  
As though the Aurora's  
Wild polar fires  
Flashed in thy happy bubbles,  
Died in thy foam.

The fourth piece, *Clouds*, is in ternary form ABA: A (mm. 1-9) transition (mm. 10-14), A' (mm. 15-20), B (mm. 24-30), A (mm. 31-34), and coda (mm. 35-42). It is in the key of D-flat major. Griffes repeats the ostinato in the left hand seven times in the first seven measures. In measure 11 a cross rhythm of two against three builds tension at the beginning of the middle section. The second theme (mm. 15-16) in the B section is a homophonic syncopated "march" in 7/4 and uses chromaticism. Some of it is notated on four staves, the first example of this in Griffes' writing.

The text is

Mountainous glories,  
They move superbly;  
Crumbing so slowly,  
That none perceive when  
The golden domes  
Are sunk in the valleys  
Of fathomless snow.

#### IV. Neoclassical and Modern period (1917-1919)

Griffes' Sonata (1917-1918) was one of the most challenging and important works in that genre to appear in America during the first quarter of the twentieth century. It was first performed by the composer in 1918. It was written between December 1917 and January 1918 and revised in May 1919. This revised version was published by G. Schirmer in 1920. Unlike the earlier works for piano, which were generally cast in one-movement free forms, the Sonata is in three distinct movements, fast-slow-fast, the outer



two in recognizable sonata structure. Daniel Boda writes about the role of the sonata in the *The Music of Charles T. Griffes*:

Griffes' concept of tonality is displayed by various features. The dominant chord, which he employs more often than any other chord in his romantic and impressionistic works, is omitted completely. Chords are formed at times from an entire artificial scale. Conventional chords such as the augmented sixth are given unconventional resolutions. Cadences are often formed by deceleration of movement and decrease in volume rather than through conventional harmonic progressions. Progressions are formed through the polyphonic interplay of voices. Through the harmonic procedures in his compositions, Griffes reveals a definite trend toward an independent style not bound by the conventional procedures of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The sonata is evidence that he achieved this goal in his lifetime.<sup>25</sup>

Griffes' Sonata represents Scriabin's influences in such elements as chromatic scale usage, altered dominant chords, cross rhythms, bitonality, and neoclassical form. Griffes' own scale, based on D, E-flat, F, G-sharp, A, B-flat, C-sharp, D, at times functions almost like a tone row. This scale is derived from the D minor scale, but is altered to have a lowered second and a raised fourth degree. This scale contains four minor seconds, two augmented seconds (F-G-sharp and B-flat-C-sharp), two diminished thirds, one augmented third, two tritones (D-G sharp and E-flat-A), and four perfect fifths.<sup>26</sup> His artificial scale is shown as a chromatic neighbor motion (ex. 9). It is one in which the pitch series serves as the basis for subsequent melodic or harmonic material.

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<sup>25</sup> Daniel Boda. *The Music of Charles T. Griffes*. (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1962), 87-88.

<sup>26</sup> Hoon Mo Kim Pratt. "The Complete Piano Works of Charles T. Griffes." (D.M.A. doc., Boston University, 1975), 201.

## &lt;Ex. 9&gt; Griffes' artificial scales



Varying definitions of Griffes' artificial scales have been proposed by musicologists. Jonathan Lee Chenette explains an artificial scale as an eight-note scale with two augmented seconds, between B-flat and C sharp, and F and G sharp. The fourth degree (E-flat) is often altered and the sixth degree (F-sharp) is often omitted in example 10a. He also defines an eight-note artificial scale as shown in example 10b. This scale consists of two tetrachords related by retrograde inversion, with F-natural and F-sharp serving as connecting notes.

Dean Luther Arlton suggests a seven-note scale similar to Chenette's with augmented seconds between F and G-sharp and B-flat and C-sharp as in example 10d. Gilbert Chase defines artificial scale as a thirteen-note



scale with an augmented second between B-flat and C-sharp in example

10e.<sup>27</sup>

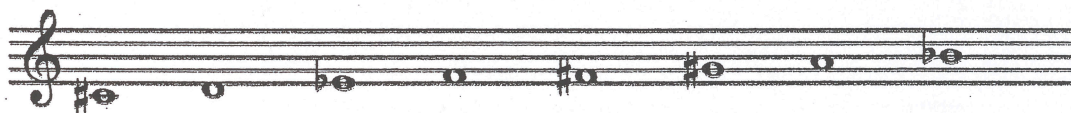
<Ex. 10> a. Alternative eight-note artificial scale for the Piano Sonata



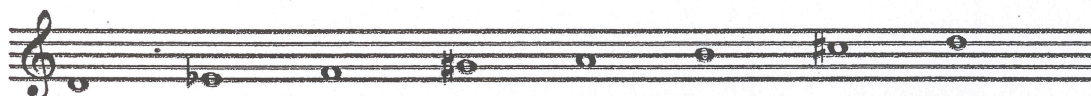
b. Eight-note artificial scale for the Piano Sonata (after Chenette)



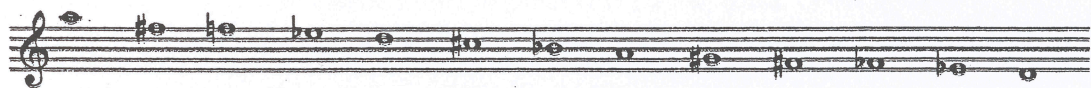
c. Eight-note artificial scale for the Piano Sonata (after Berger)



d. Seven-note artificial scale for the Piano Sonata (after Arlton)



e. Thirteen-note artificial scale for the Piano Sonata (after Chasse)



<sup>27</sup> Donna K. Anderson. *Charles T. Griffes: A life in Music* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), 211-213.

The first movement, *Feroce-Allegretto con moto*, is in sonata form: introduction (mm. 1-8), exposition (mm. 9-56), development (mm. 57-88), recapitulation (mm. 89-114), and coda (mm. 115-118). The introduction is repeated after a short pause an octave higher, and after the same pause, again an octave higher, four times consistently. The first theme is based on a single synthetic scale and repeated twice and is accompanied by a D minor (ex. 11). The theme repeats with a change of rhythm and harmony in mm. 15-16. The development can be divided into two sections: (mm. 57-75), (mm. 76-88).

<Ex. 11> First theme of the first movement, mm. 8-10



The second movement, *Molto tranquillo*, is free in form: A (mm. 1-21), B (mm. 22-49), A' (mm. 50-55), and coda (mm. 56-71). However, it is not unrelated to the two-part song form with coda. It consists of a repeated theme (a (mm. 1-6) a' (mm. 7-10), b (mm. 11-16), b' (mm. 17-21), three variations (six-measure period (mm. 22-27)), nine-measure period (mm. 28-36), two periods six measures long (mm. 37-49), and coda. The second movement begins and ends with a B minor harmony. The middle section is



in B-flat minor. The theme of the second movement is comparable to a plain-song chant in modern tonality (ex. 12).<sup>28</sup>

<Ex. 12> Second movement of the Piano Sonata, mm. 1-6

Tranquillamente  
*espressivo*

The musical score consists of three systems of staves. The first system shows measures 1-4, the second system shows measures 5-6, and the third system shows measures 7-8. The key signature has three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat), and the time signature is 12/8. The tempo/mood is 'Tranquillamente' and the performance instruction is 'espressivo'. The dynamic starts at 'p' (piano) and changes to 'mf' (mezzo-forte) in measure 5.

The final movement is marked *Allegretto con moto*. It is in sonata form without recapitulation: the first exposition (mm. 1-68), the second exposition (mm. 69-125), development (mm. 126-183), coda (mm. 184-223). It is in D minor and opens with a contrapuntal introduction showing the use of an artificial scale. This movement is based on only three diatonic chords, D major and minor, and B-flat major. All other notes used can be

<sup>28</sup> Donald Nau Morrison, "Influences of Impressionist Tonality on Selected Works of Delius, Griffes, Falla." (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1960), 74.

counted as non-harmonic tones. Since the basic chords used are very diatonic, the third movement sounds much more tonal than the rest of the sonata.<sup>29</sup>

The final movement is dominated by an exciting repeated note theme and driven by cross-rhythms, left-hand leaps, octaves, and powerful chords. There are drum and tympani effects, extreme dynamic contrasts, and a quotation from the slow movement. The final chord is repeated three times in order to emphasize on the end of the movement and uses a pedal tone in D minor chord without median (F) (ex. 13).

<Ex. 13> Final movement



### Conclusion

Griffes' career as a composer represents an evolution throughout his three stylistic periods which culminated in his most original and personal work the Sonata. *Three Tone Pictures*, Op. 5, *The Fantasy Pieces*, Op. 6, and *Four Roman Sketches*, Op. 7, are some important piano solo pieces that are reminiscent of Debussy and Ravel. In these pieces, Griffes created an

<sup>29</sup> Hwon Mo Kim Pratt. "The Complete Piano Works of Charles T. Griffes." (D.M.A. doc., Boston University, 1975), 203.



impressionistic style using whole tones, triads, sixths, pentatonic scales, tone color, and ostinato figures. These pieces are all inspired by poems, with each having the programmatic titles to express the poetic imagery. Griffes admired the music of Debussy and Ravel and was extremely influenced by their styles. Therefore he is often characterized as an "American Impressionist."<sup>30</sup>

In his last period, his music is neo-classic and was influenced by Russian composers. Griffes' Sonata (1917-18) reveals great musical integrity and shows his unique writing style. The Sonata features a complete break from his previous style. It is freely dissonant, and unlike the majority of Griffes' earlier piano compositions, it has no poetic program and no descriptive titles. His style transcended the stylistic limitations of early twentieth-century American music, which tended to be first German and later French-dominated. In this last period, he was able to develop a style that was uniquely his own. It is unfortunate that he died at a thirty-six, because it seems that he could have developed a whole new American Music style. However, his neo-classic sonata may have influenced the sonatas of later 20<sup>th</sup> century composers such as Samuel Barber's Sonata in E-flat minor, Op. 26 (1949).

Griffes' progression of musical style was influenced by his education in Europe followed by his return to the U.S. His musical style progresses from being extremely influenced by the music of his

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<sup>30</sup> Donna K. Anderson, *Charles T. Griffes: A Life in Music* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), 185.

predecessors and contemporaries to a style all his own. It is unfortunate that Griffes' music receives few performances in today's concert halls and is thus not well-known among musicians and audiences.



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## Appendix

### I. Griffes' piano compositions chronologically:

Piano Compositions	Publisher
Six Variations in B-flat Major, op. 2 (1898)	
Four Preludes, op. 40 (1899-1900)	
Mazurka (1899-1900)	
Sonata in F Minor, two movements (ca. 1904)	
Sonata in D-flat Major, one movement (ca. 1909-10)	
Sonata in D-flat Major, two movements (ca. 1911)	
Sonata in F-sharp Minor, one movement (ca. 1912-13)	
Barcarolle (arr.) from <i>Les Contes d'Hoffmann</i> , by Jacques Offenbach (1910 or before)	Peters (1997) Schirmer (1993)
<i>A Winter Landscape</i> (ca. 1912)	
<i>The Pleasure-Dome of Kubla Khan</i> (1912; revised 1915)	Schirmer (1915) Schirmer (1915)
Three Tone-Pictures, op. 5 (1915)	Schirmer (1915)
1. The Lake at Evening (1910)	
2. The Vale of Dreams (1912)	
3. The Night Winds (1911; revised in 1915)	Schirmer (1993)
Fantasy Pieces, op. 6	
1. Barcarolle (1912)	Peters (1984)
2. Notturmo (1915)	Peters (1978)
3. Scherzo (1913; revised in 1915)	
Rhapsody in B minor (1914)	
<i>De Profundis</i> (1915)	
Legend (1915)	Schirmer (1917), Masters
Piano Piece in B-flat Major (ca. 1915)	Alfred, Schirmer
Piano Piece in D minor (1915)	* White Peacock and
Four Roman Sketches, op. 7 (1915-1916)	Other Works for Solo
1. The White Peacock (1915)	piano - Dover
2. Nightfall (1916)	
3. The Fountain of the Acqua Paola (1916)	
4. Clouds (1916)	
Piano Piece in E Major (1916)	



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