

CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

Generally remembered as the composer of one or two relatively famous orchestral works, Charles Tomlinson Griffes made a lasting contribution in the field of vocal solo literature. In a brief composing career, basically 1906 to 1918, Griffes completed fifty-nine art songs. Thirty-eight of them have been published to date.

Although Griffes's composing career was short, a wide variety of styles are encountered throughout his art songs. To aid, therefore, in the delineation of Griffes's style, his songs have been grouped into three categories according to the following factors: influences from other sources, possible purposes for their composition, and potential impact on the history of American art song.

Analysis of Griffes's song style begins with discussion of the composer's selection of texts. Four chapters succeeding this discussion are devoted to each of the basic musical elements--melody, harmony, form, and rhythm. Additional chapters deal with piano-voice relations and functions, and with Griffes and the public.

There has been considerable debate concerning Griffes's susceptibility to stylistic influences and his position in the history of American song. The concluding chapter presents several opinions by musical scholars on these questions and pinpoints solutions on the basis of trends developed in the preceding chapters.

Musical examples to which the text refers follow the conclusion. Five of Griffes's unpublished songs are included in their entirety in the

appendix.

Research for the clarification of Griffes's song style stems overwhelmingly from the basic primary sources; all thirty-eight of his published songs and twelve in manuscript have been analyzed in depth for this thesis. A major secondary source used in this study is the descriptive catalogue of Griffes's works written by Donna K. Anderson.<sup>1</sup> Reviews and commentaries of Griffes's songs, particularly those contemporary with his era, have also proved enlightening.

### Grouping Griffes's Songs

The fifty-nine songs which Griffes composed almost defy classification in the usual sense. The typical "early," "middle," and "late" divisions are inadequate in Griffes's case for several reasons. In the first place, such a division presupposes that a late, or mature, style was in fact attained, a fact which for Griffes cannot be convincingly proved. In addition to this, his total song output is so limited that, with such divisions, undue emphasis is placed on each song.

Nor is another three-part division which is frequently used in relation to Griffes totally satisfactory. This system classifies his songs in the following manner: German romantic, impressionistic, and individualistic (sometimes labeled "tending towards atonality"). Such a system places too much emphasis on the influences affecting Griffes's style and minimizes his constant search for stylistic independence throughout all three phases of his development.

A categorization more amenable to the particular circumstances

---

<sup>1</sup>Donna K. Anderson, "The Works of Charles T. Griffes: A Descriptive Catalogue" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Indiana University, 1966).

of Griffes's career borrows aspects from both the chronological and the periods-of-influence classification systems. Most importantly, however, it adds to them the dimension of purpose and intention: the intention Griffes may have had in composing them and, in retrospect, their possible impact on the history of art song in America. The resulting three divisions can be described as:

Formative: Chronologically, this lasts from his first song in 1901 to the end of his German period of study in 1906. Obviously this is basically what others have called his German period, yet more is at issue during this stage than the particular language or even style involved. This is Griffes's student, or learning, period, during which time he became competent in the styles of past art song masters. But, more importantly, he became attuned to the nature of song itself by learning what its particular requirements are and at the same time facing decisions about his own efforts within that idiom.

The following two divisions run concurrently, beginning with Griffes's first English song in 1911 and ending with his last attempt in the song idiom in 1918.

Divergent: Forever the experimenter, Griffes was constantly investigating colorful or vibrant styles not so closely aligned with the mainstream direction of serious twentieth-century music. Therefore, this division includes songs in a wide variety of styles: oriental, folk, even popularistic. All result from Griffes's unflagging interest in contrasting musical vocabularies. Once such a new, attractive style was introduced to him, he felt compelled to experiment with his own creation using that vocabulary.

Mainstream: Simultaneous with his more divergent compositions are those which remain faithful to mainstream developments in Western music. These

songs demonstrate the development of Griffes's individual style and are the most forward-looking of his song compositions. Of all his songs, they have had most impact on the future developments of American art song, as they point towards the changing musical vocabulary of the twentieth century.

As in most classification systems, there are always some works which seem to fit into either of two divisions, or into neither of them completely. Yet there are surprisingly few possible deviations in the body of Griffes's songs, with only two as borderline cases. For the most part, Griffes's characteristics are evident in each division.

The research of Donna K. Anderson is the basis for the following chronological table of Griffes's songs.<sup>2</sup> Several of the unpublished songs will not be covered in this thesis: short explanations for their exclusion are noted in the table. Each song has been assigned an F for formative, D for divergent, or M for mainstream, depending on the division to which it most closely corresponds. A table outlining the major dates and events of Griffes's life follows the chronological table of his songs.

---

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

TABLE 1  
 CHRONOLOGICAL LISTING OF THE SONGS OF CHARLES T. GRIFFES<sup>a</sup>

Title	Poet	Date Composed	Group	Comments
1. Si mes vers avaient des ailes (If my poetry had wings)	Victor Hugo	1901	F	Manuscript
2. Sur ma lyre l'autrefois (Upon my lyre of yore)	Charles A. Saint-Beuve	1901(?)	F	Manuscript
3. Auf dem Teich, dem regungslosen (O'er the tarn's unruffled mirror)	Nikolaus Lenau	1906(?)	F	Published 1909
4. Auf geheimem Waldespfade (By a lonely forest pathway)	Nikolaus Lenau	1906(?)	F	Published 1909
5. Nacht liegt auf den fremden Wegen (Night on ways unknown has fallen)	Heinrich Heine	1906(?)	F	Published 1909
6. Der träumende See (The dreamy lake)	Julius Mosen	1906(?)	F	Published 1909
7. Wohl lag ich einst in Gram und Schmerz (Time was, when I in anguish lay)	Emmanuel Geibel	1906(?)	F	Published 1909
8. So halt' ich endlich dich umfangen (At last I hold you) ( <u>Four German Songs</u> , no. 4)	Emmanuel Geibel	1906(?)	F	Published 1970

TABLE 1 (continued)

9.	Das ist ein Brausen und Heulen	Heinrich Heine	1906(?)		Manuscript <sup>b</sup>
10.	Entflieh mit mir (Escape with me)	Heinrich Heine	1906(?)	F	Manuscript
11.	Es fiel ein Reif (A dew fell)	Heinrich Heine	1906(?)	F	Manuscript
12.	Auf ihrem Grab (Upon their grave)	Heinrich Heine	1906(?)	F	Published 1941
13.	Meeresstille (Calm sea) ( <u>Four German Songs</u> , no.3)	Johann Wolfgang von Goethe	1906(?)	F	Published 1970
14.	Mir war als müsste ich graben	Unknown	1906(?)		Manuscript <sup>c</sup>
15.	Gedicht von Heine (Poem of Heine)	Heinrich Heine	1906(?)	F	Manuscript
16.	Am Kreuzweg wird begraben (They buried him at the crossroads) ( <u>Four German Songs</u> no.1)	Heinrich Heine	1906(?)	F	Published 1970
17.	An den Wind (To the wind) ( <u>Four German Songs</u> , no. 2)	Nikolaus Lenau	1906(?)	F	Published 1970
18.	Wo ich bin, mich rings umdunkelt	Heinrich Heine	1906(?)		Manuscript <sup>b</sup>
19.	Des müden Abendlied	Emmanuel Geibel	1906(?)		Manuscript <sup>b</sup>
20.	Zwei Könige sassen auf Orkadal (Two kings sat together in Orkadal)	Emmanuel Geibel	1906(?)	F	Published 1910
21.	Elfe (Elves)	Joseph von Eichendorf	1906(?)	F	Published 1941

TABLE 1 (continued)

22.	Könnst' ich mit dir dort oben gehn (If I could go with you)	Julius Mosen	1906(?)	F	Published 1941
23.	The Water Lily	John B. Tabb	1911		Manuscript <sup>b</sup>
24.	Evening Song	Sidney Lanier	pre-1912	D	Published 1941
25.	The First Snowfall	John B. Tabb	pre-1912	M	Published 1941
26.	The Half-Ring Moon	John B. Tabb	pre-1912	M	Published 1941
27.	Phantoms	John B. Tabb	1912(?)	M	Manuscript
28.	Nachtlied (Night Song)	Emmanuel Geibel	1912	F	Manuscript
29.	La mer (The sea) ( <u>Four Impressions</u> , no.3)	Oscar Wilde	1912	M	Published 1970
30.	Pierrot	Sara Teasdale	1912		Manuscript <sup>b</sup>
31.	La Fuite de la Lune (Flight of the Moon) ( <u>Tone Images</u> , op. 3, no. 1)	Oscar Wilde	1912	M <sup>d</sup>	Published 1915
32.	Symphony in Yellow	Oscar Wilde	1912(?)	M	Published 1915
33.	We'll to the Woods, and Gather May ( <u>Tone Images</u> , op. 3, no. 3)	Charles d'Orleans	1914	D	Published 1915
34.	Le Réveillon (Dawn) <u>Four Impressions</u> , no. 4)	Oscar Wilde	1914	M	Published 1970
35.	Two Birds Flew into the Sunset Glow	Rumanian folk song	1914	D	Manuscript
36.	This Book of Hours ( <u>Two Rondels</u> , op. 4, no.1)	Walter Crane	1914(?)	D	Published 1915

TABLE 1 (continued)

37.	Come, Love, Across the Sunlit Land	Clinton Scollard	1914(?)	D	Published 1915
38.	Le Jardin (The Garden) ( <u>Four Impressions</u> , no. 1)	Oscar Wilde	1915	M	Published 1970
39.	Impression du Matin (Early Morning in London) ( <u>Four Impressions</u> , no. 2)	Oscar Wilde	1915	M	Published 1970
40.	Les Ballons	Oscar Wilde	1915		Manuscript <sup>c</sup>
41.	La Mer	Oscar Wilde	1916		Manuscript <sup>e</sup>
42.	Landscape ( <u>Five Poems of Ancient China and Japan</u> , op. 10, no. 2)	Sada-Ihe	1916	D	Published 1917
43.	The Old Temple Among the Mountains ( <u>Five Poems</u> , op. 10, no. 3)	Chang Wen-Chang	1916	D	Published 1917
44.	Tears ( <u>Five Poems</u> , op. 10, no. 4)	Wang Seng-Ju	1916	D	Published 1917
45.	In a Myrtle Shade ( <u>Three Poems</u> , op. 9, no.1)	William Blake	1916	M	Published 1918
46.	Waikiki ( <u>Three Poems</u> , op. 9, no. 2)	Rupert Brooke	1916	M	Published 1918
47.	Phantoms ( <u>Three Poems</u> , op. 9, no. 3)	Arturo Giovannitti	1916	M	Published 1918
48.	Song of the Dagger	Rumanian folk song	1916		Manuscript <sup>c</sup>
49.	So-Fei Gathering Flowers ( <u>Five Poems</u> , op. 10, no. 1)	Wang Ching-ling	1917	D	Published 1917
50.	A Feast of Lanterns ( <u>Five Poems</u> , op. 10, no. 5)	Yuan Mei	1917	D	Published 1917



TABLE 1 (continued)

51.	Sorrow of Mydath ( <u>Two Poems by John Masefield</u> , no. 2)	John Masefield	1917	M	Published 1920
52.	In the Harem	Chu Ch'ing-yu	1917(?)	D	Manuscript
53.	Djakoan	Javanese folk song	1917(?)	D	Manuscript
54.	Kinanti	Javanese folk song	1917(?)	D	Manuscript
55.	Hampelas	Javanese folk song	1917(?)	D	Manuscript
56.	An Old Song Re-Sung ( <u>Two Poems by John Masefield</u> , no. 1)	John Masefield	1918	M <sup>d</sup>	Published 1920
57.	The Lament of Ian the Proud ( <u>Three poems by Fiona MacLeod</u> , op. 11, no. 1)	William Sharp, pseud. Fiona MacLeod	1918	M	Published 1920
58.	Thy Dark Eyes to Mine ( <u>Three Poems by Fiona MacLeod</u> , op. 11, no. 2)	William Sharp	1918	M	Published 1920
59.	The Rose of the Night ( <u>Three Poems by Fiona MacLeod</u> , op. 11, no. 3)	William Sharp	1918	M	Published 1920

<sup>a</sup>Donna K. Anderson, "The Works of Charles T. Griffes: A Descriptive Catalogue" (unpublished doctoral dissertation. Indiana University, 1966).

<sup>b</sup>Not included: copy not available at this time.

<sup>c</sup>Not included: copy illegible.

<sup>d</sup>Borderline between mainstream and divergent.

<sup>e</sup>Not included: appears to be a varied transposition of the earlier version (see no. 29).

## TABLE 2

CHARLES T. GRIFFES  
A BRIEF CHRONOLOGICAL TIME-LINE

- 
- 
- 1884: Born September 17 in Elmira, New York, to Wilber and Clara Tomlinson Griffes. His family was to include two older sisters, one younger sister, and one younger brother. His older sister Katharine gave Charles his first piano instruction.
- 1899: Griffes began piano lessons with Mary Selena Broughton, a teacher at Elmira College. He began his high school training in this year.
- 1903: Griffes departed for Berlin, Germany. At his farewell concert at Elmira College his first two songs, "Si mes vers avaient des ailes" and "Sur ma lyre l'autrefois," were performed. At the Stern Conservatory of Music he began piano studies with Ernst Jedliczka and composition studies with Philippe Rüfer.
- 1905: Griffes left the conservatory to begin composition lessons with Englebert Humperdinck.
- 1907: Griffes returned to the United States and assumed position as Director of Music at Hackley School for Boys at Tarrytown, New York, a position he held throughout his life.
- 1909: Schirmer published the first Griffes's works: five German songs which may have been composed while he was studying in Berlin. Another German song was published in 1910.
- 1915: Griffes's first English songs were published, the Tone Images, Op. 3 and the Two Rondels, Op. 4.
- 1917: Five Poems of Ancient China and Japan were published as Op. 10 and performed by Eva Gauthier on November 1, accompanied by Griffes.
- 1918: First all-Griffes recital was given on February 26 at the MacDowell Club in New York City. Three Poems, Op. 9, and Three Poems by Fiona MacLeod, Op. 11, were published.
- 1919: Premiere of Three Poems by Fiona MacLeod, sung by Vera Janacopulos, accompanied by Griffes. A second all-Griffes recital was given on April 2. Demand for performances of Griffes's works was high in this year.
- 1920: Suffering from empyema, Griffes was taken to the Loomis Sanitorium, Loomis, New York, early in this year. He died at New York Hospital on April 8. Funeral services were held April 10.
- 
-