

David Wendell Guion:

An Inventory of His Collection in the Manuscript Collection at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator:	Guion, David W. (David Wendell), 1892-1981
Title:	David Wendell Guion Collection
Dates:	ca. 1902-1937
Extent:	1 box (.42 linear feet)
Abstract:	The David Wendell Guion Collection consists of handwritten manuscripts of Guion's music from about 1902 to 1937, primarily influenced by cowboy songs and African-American spirituals. All pieces are written for piano, and some have lyrics.
RLIN Record #:	TXRC03-A9
Language:	English
Access:	Open for research

Administrative Information

Acquisition:	Gift, 1960
Processed by:	Sarah Norris, 2002; Richard Workman, 2003
Repository:	Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

Biographical Sketch

David Wendell Guion was born in Ballinger, Texas, on 15 December 1892 to John I. and Armour Fentress Guion. His earliest musical influences included the cowboy culture of his rancher father and the songs of his family's African-American household servants. Piano studies took Guion to Vienna, Austria, in 1912 to study with Leopold Godowski at the Royal Conservatory of Music, but he was forced to return to Texas in 1914 by the onset of World War I.

Guion supported himself by teaching and composing and moved to New York in 1929. There an association with publishers G. Schirmer, Inc. brought new popularity for his arrangements of cowboy songs and spirituals. His biggest hit, "Home on the Range," emerged from his New York production *Prairie Echoes*. Guion hosted a weekly radio program entitled "Hearing America with David Guion" and later, "David Guion and his Orchestra" with an NBC studio orchestra. His larger work, *Ballet Primitive*, "*Shingandi*," was originally intended to be film music for Cecil B. DeMille's *Madam Satan*. When "talkies" changed the film landscape, however, Guion instead premiered *Shingandi* in 1931 in a different orchestration with a prominent jazz group, the Paul Whiteman Band. The work eventually toured as a ballet production with Dallas's Kosloff Ballet Company. In 1950 Guion was commissioned to write the suite *Texas* for the Houston Symphony Orchestra, and he completed the piece in 1952.

In addition to "Home on the Range," Guion is best known for his arrangements of "Turkey in the Straw," "The Yellow Rose of Texas," and "The Arkansas Traveler," and for his piano pieces "The Harmonica Player" and "The Scissors Grinder." He captured Texas cowboy culture in tunes such as "Ride, Cowboy, Ride," "Ol' Paint," "The Bold Vaquero," and "Lonesome Song of the Plains." His piano arrangements caught the interest of pianist and composer Percy Grainger, who included Guion's work in his own concerts to great acclaim. Guion's affinity for African-American spirituals appears in both his own songwriting and in collaboration with lyricist Marie Wardall in the opera *Suzanne*. He also worked with lyricist Jessie B. Rittenhouse, a poet and anthologist in New York.

Guion lived on a Pennsylvania estate he called "Home on the Range" from 1937 until moving to Dallas in 1965. He taught at Howard Payne University, Fort Worth Polytechnic College, Fairmont Conservatory, Chicago Musical College, Daniel Baker College, and Southern Methodist University. Guion died in Dallas on 17 October 1981 and was buried in his hometown of Ballinger. In 1987 he was honored by a permanent exhibit of his personal items and recordings at the International Festival Institute in Round Top, Texas.

Sources:

Buchanan, Steven Erle. "The Piano Music of David W. Guion and the Intersection of Musical Traditions in America after World War I." Ph.D. diss., University of Texas, 1978.

Dick, James. "Guion, David Wendel." *The Handbook of Texas Online*. Texas State Historical Association.
(<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook.online/articles/view/GG/fgu16.html>)

Scope and Contents

The David Wendell Guion Collection consists of handwritten manuscripts of Guion's music from about 1902 to 1937, primarily influenced by cowboy songs and African-American spirituals. The pieces are arranged in a single series, Compositions, ca. 1902-1937. All pieces are written for piano, and some have lyrics. Individual titles include "Home on the Range," "The Yellow Rose of Texas," "Turkey in the Straw," and others. Also included are scores for two larger works, *Ballet Primitive*, "Shingandi" and selections from the opera *Suzanne*. The music is often marked with handwritten notes and publication dates.

This collection reveals Guion alternately functioning as composer, arranger, and collector of folk tunes. Collaborations with lyricists include extensive work with Marie Wardall and Jessie B. Rittenhouse. Most compositions were written either in Texas or New York and are often marked accordingly.

Related Material

Other Guion materials are held in the Southwest Collection at Texas Tech University, the Crouch Music Library at Baylor University, the Dallas Public Library, and the International Festival Institute in Round Top, Texas.

Index Terms

People

Rittenhouse, Jessie B (Jessie Belle), 1869-1948.

Wardall, Marie.

Subjects

Composers -- Texas.

Cowboys -- Texas -- Songs and music.

Guion, David W. (David Wendell), 1892-1981

Piano music.

Songs.

Spirituals (Songs)

Document Types

Scores.

Compositions, ca. 1902-1937

"Home on the Range," original manuscript, 1908

Box 1
Folder 1

Ballet Primitive, "Shingandi," 1929

Folder 2

Suzanne, nd. Lyrics, Marie Wardall

Folder 3

Cowboy/Texas songs, 1906-1935

Folder 4

African-American spirituals, 1918-1929

Folder
5

Songs with other lyricists, ca. 1903-1937

Folder
6

Other compositions, ca. 1902-1936

Folder 7

Index of Titles

- "All Day on the Prairie"--1.4
- "Ally [*sic* for "Alley"] Tunes"--1.7
- "Arkansas Traveler (Old Fiddlers' Breakdown)"--1.7
- *Ballet Primitive, "Shingandi"*--1.2
- "Barcarolle Espanol"--1.7
- "The Bell-Buoy"--1.6
- "The Bold Vaquero"--1.4
- "Brudder Sinkiller and his Flock of Sheep" ("Alley Tunes: I")--1.7
- "Chloe (Negro Wail)"--1.5
- "The Cowboy's Dream"--1.4
- "Cowboy's Meditation (Texas Range Song)"--1.4
- "Country Jig"--1.7
- "Creole-Creola"--1.6
- "The Crucifixion (or) At the Cry of the First Bird"--1.7
- "Darkey Spirituals"--1.5
- "Embers"--1.6
- "The Ghostly Galley"--1.6
- "The Harmonica Player" ("Alley Tunes: III")--1.7
- "A Heartbreak"--1.7
- "Holy Bible" ("Darkey Spirituals")--1.5
- "Home on the Range"--1.1
- "In Galam" (*Suzanne*)--1.3
- "I Sees Lawd Jesus a Comin"--1.5
- "Jubilee"--1.5
- "Lef' Away (Negro Wail)"--1.5
- "Life and Love"--1.6
- "Lil' Black Rose"--1.6
- "Little Joe the Wrangler"--1.4
- "Little Pickaninny Kid"--1.5
- "Lonesome Song of the Plains" (Anonymous ink drawing on cover)--1.6
- "The Lonesome Whistler" ("Alley Tunes: II")--1.7
- "Loss"--1.6
- "Love Is Lord of All"--1.7
- "Mam'selle Marie" (*Suzanne*)--1.3
- "Mary Alone"--1.6
- "De Massus an' de Missus" (*Suzanne*)--1.3
- "My Own Laddie"--1.7
- "Negro Wail (Lef' Away)"--1.5
- "O Bury Me Not on the Lone Prairie (The Dying Cowboy)"--1.4
- "O Carry Me Back to the Lone Prairie (In Remembrance of Will Rogers),"--1.4
- "De Ol' Ark's a-Movin'"--1.5
- "Old Maid Blues"--1.6
- "Ol' Paint"--1.4
- "O' My Lawd, What Shall I Do? (Darkey Song)"--1.5
- "One Day"--1.6
- "Praise God and I'm Satisfied"--1.5
- "Prayer during Battle"--1.7
- "Rabbit's Foot (Gettin' Over the Blues)"--1.6
- "Rag Crazy (Jazz Scherzo)"--1.7

- "Resurrection"--1.6
- "Return"--1.6
- "Roll Along, Little Dogies"--1.4
- "Run, Mary, Run!"--1.5
- "Sail Away for the Rio Grande"--1.4
- "Satan's a Liar an' a Conjur Too" ("Darkey Spirituals")--1.5
- "Sinner, Don't Let dis Harvest Pass"--1.5
- *Suzanne*--1.3
- "Texas Cowboy's Meditation"--1.4
- "This Night Can Never Come Again!"--1.6
- "To the Sun" (*Suzanne*)--1.3
- "Turkey in the Straw"--1.7
- "Valse Arabesque"--1.7
- "Voodoo [*sic*]" (*Suzanne*)--1.3
- "De Voodoo [*sic*] Man" (*Suzanne*)--1.3
- "Voodoo Gal" (*Suzanne*)--1.3
- "What to Do with a Drunken Sailor (Sea Chanty)"--1.7
- "When the Work's All Done this Fall"--1.4
- "When You Go"--1.6
- "Wrong Livin' (A Slow Drag)"--1.5
- "The Yellow Rose of Texas"--1.4
- "You Jes' Will Get Ready, You Gwine a Die" ("Darkey Spirituals")--1.5