

# Elliot Griffis:

## An Inventory of His Collection at the Harry Ransom Center

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### Descriptive Summary

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|---------------------|---|
| <b>Creator:</b>     | Griffis, Elliot, 1893-1967  |
| <b>Title:</b>       | Elliot Griffis Collection   |
| <b>Dates:</b>       | 1913-1968   |
| <b>Extent:</b>      | 3 document boxes, 1 oversize box (osb) (2.26 linear feet)   |
| <b>Abstract:</b>    | This collection of John Elliot Griffis, an American composer, pianist, and teacher, contains manuscript and out-of-print scores, articles, programs, photographs, catalogs, and correspondence.   |
| <b>Call Number:</b> | Manuscript Collection MS-4995   |
| <b>Language:</b>    | English.  |
| <b>Access:</b>      | Open for research. Part or all of this collection is housed off-site and may require up to three business days notice for access in the Ransom Center's Reading and Viewing Room. Please contact the Center before requesting this material: <a href="mailto:reference@hrc.utexas.edu">reference@hrc.utexas.edu</a> |

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### Administrative Information

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|----------------------|---|
| <b>Acquisition:</b>  | Gifts, 1968, 2007 (07-06-006-G), 2018 (18-07-003-T)                             |
| <b>Processed by:</b> | L. Christine Amos, 2004; Catherine Stollar, 2005; updated by Hagan Barber, 2012 |
| <b>Repository:</b>   | <a href="#">Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin</a>          |

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## Biographical Sketch

The American composer, pianist, and teacher John Elliot Griffis was born in Boston, Massachusetts on January 28, 1893. His father, William Elliot Griffis, came from a family of ship captains and coal merchants and is remembered for his books on the Far East and U. S. History. His mother, Katherine L. Stanton, hailed from a family comprised of ministers and college professors. Griffis grew up attending public school in Ithaca, New York but also attended the Manlius School before spending the years from 1909-1913 in study at Ithaca College. During childhood, Griffis studied piano with various teachers.

Griffis' compositional skills opened doors for further opportunity to him, including studies with Horatio Parker at Yale from 1913-1915 and Mason, Redman, Pattison, and Chadwick at New England Conservatory from 1917-1918. A period of service in the U.S. Army interrupted Griffis' composing beginning in 1919. Other major scholarships won by Griffis included a scholarship to Juilliard in 1922 and a Pulitzer Traveling Fellowship in 1931.

Throughout his teaching career, he was an active composer and recitalist, often premiering his own works with other performers. In the 1920s, he taught at Grinnell College, Iowa and the Brooklyn Settlement School, and from 1935-1936 he served the Head of the Theory Department at the St. Louis School of Music. In 1937, he was awarded a doctorate from the New York College of Music. After serving as the director of the Westchester Conservatory of Music in White Plains, New York in 1942-1943, Griffis settled down in Los Angeles.

The bulk of Griffis' output is works for piano and songs or song cycles, although he has also written a number of chamber and orchestral works. He is also known for his 1963 opera *The Port of Pleasure*. Although Griffis was knowledgeable in modern music, he preferred to write in a clear tonal style based on a long time study of counterpoint and was inspired by the Romantic Period.

Griffis died June 8, 1967 in Los Angeles.

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## Sources

Griffis, Elliot. Letter to Harold L. Butler, 13 June, 1943.

Renton, Barbara A. "Griffis, Elliot" *Grove Music Online*, <http://www.grovemusic.com> (Accessed 6 May, 2004).

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## Scope and Contents

The collection of American composer Elliot Griffis contains annotated copies of manuscript scores, out-of-print scores, articles, programs, photographs, catalogs, and correspondence dating from 1913-1968. The papers are arranged in three series: I. Works, 1920-1964, II. Professional Activities, 1913-1967, and III. Other Papers, 1915-1968. The papers, excluding the scores which are arranged alphabetically, have been integrated by date in order to give a clearer picture of Griffis' work as a composer, performer, and teacher.

The works in the first series are organized into two subseries: Musical Compositions and Other Writings. The musical compositions in Subseries A. are arranged in alphabetical order and include both printed music and copies of manuscript scores. The copies of the manuscript scores contain autograph corrections either in the hand of Griffis or his niece, Katherine M. Johnson, and are clearly labeled. Subseries B. contains published articles by Griffis primarily on performance techniques as well as a large amount of draft notes for articles on time spent at MacDowell Colony.

The second series, Professional Activities, is also organized into two subseries: Chronological Files and Publicity Materials. Subseries A. traces Griffis' career as a composer, performer, and faculty member through newspaper, magazine and journal articles, programs, flyers, studio announcements, and other school-related documents. As one follows his career by date through the files, more and more programs are sent to him, indicating the spread of others performing his music. Subseries B. contains a publicity packet, catalogs from sheet music and record companies, and works lists. The works lists encompass Griffis' own works, ASCAP works, and a partial list compiled by Katherine M. Johnson detailing Griffis' handwritten scores housed in UCLA Library of Special Collections.

The third series is comprised of other papers. These include a large number of photographs, passports, draft papers, memberships in musical organizations, sheet music given to him as gifts, and a small amount of correspondence. Of note are photographs of portraits made by Dayrell Korthener and Russell Iredell. Notes have been made throughout the collection and initialed by Griffis' niece, Katherine M. Johnson.

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## Index Terms

### People

Lichtenwanger, William, 1915- .

Meyers, Henry.

Rogers, Delmer Dalzell, 1928- .

Rosenberg, Sylvia.

### Subjects

Composers--United States--20th century

### Document Types

Sheet music.

Photographs.

Passports.

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**Series I. Works, 1920-1964, undated**

## Subseries A. Musical Compositions, 1920-1964, undated

A-G **Container 1.1, osb 4**H-P **Container 1.2, osb 4**R-Sn **Container 1.3, osb 4**So-Su **Container 1.4**T-To **Container 1.5, osb 4**Tr-Y **Container 1.6, osb 4**Rousseau Variations and Sonata for Piano, inscribed **Container 3.8**

## Subseries B. Other Works, 1920-1954, undated

Articles, 1920-1954, undated **Container 2.1**

**Series II. Professional Activities, 1913-1967, undated**

## Subseries A. Chronological Files, 1913-1967

|           |                      |
|-----------|----------------------|
| 1913-1921 | <b>Container 2.2</b> |
| 1922      | <b>Container 2.3</b> |
| 1923-1925 | <b>Container 2.4</b> |
| 1926-1929 | <b>Container 2.5</b> |
| 1931-1939 | <b>Container 2.6</b> |
| 1940-1949 | <b>Container 2.7</b> |
| 1950-1959 | <b>Container 2.8</b> |
| 1960-1967 | <b>Container 2.9</b> |

## Subseries B. Publicity Materials, 1920-1965, undated

|                        |                       |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Catalogs, 1920-1961    | <b>Container 2.10</b> |
| Publicity packet, 1965 | <b>Container 2.11</b> |
| Work lists, 1920-1964  | <b>Container 3.1</b>  |

**Series III. Other Papers, 1915-1969, undated**

Griffis, Elliot

Personal documents, 1915-1967 **Container 3.2**Photographs, 1918-1967, undated **Container 3.3-4, osb  
4**Sheet music autographed and/or dedicated to Griffis, 1931-1955 **Container  
3.5**Sheet music, undated **Container 3.9**Sheet music autographed and/or dedicated to Griffis, 1922, 1937, 1944, undated **Container  
3.10**Johnson, Katherine M., 1967-1968 **Container 3.6**Meyers, Henry, 1966 **Container 3.7**

Oversize materials

Photographs **Container osb 4.1**

Musical compositions

A-G **Container osb 4.2**H-P **Container osb 4.3**R-T **Container osb 4.4**

**Elliot Griffis Collection--Index of Correspondents**

- Brooks, Eulan B.--3.7
- Brower, G. Ackley (Grover Ackley), 1884- --3.2
- Butler, Harold L.--3.2
- Childs, James B., Mrs.--2.8
- Johnson, Katherine M.--3.6
- Lichtenwanger, William, 1915- --3.7
- Meyers, Henry--3.7
- Rogers, Delmer Dalzell, 1928- --3.6, 3.7
- Rosenberg, Sylvia--3.6
- United States. Army. Demobilization Office--3.2
- University of California, Los Angeles. Library. Dept. of Special Collections--3.6



**Elliot Griffis Collection--Index of Works**

Starred (\*) compositions indicate manuscript photocopies.

- À la Chaconne--1.1
- Arabesque--1.1, 1.5
- "At Your Pleasure" from Transmutations--1.6
- Atonement, for organ\*--1.1
- Birds in May--1.5
- Cameo--1.1
- Canticle, for organ\*--1.1
- A Caravan from China Comes--1.1
- The Chubby Mariner (high voice)\*--4.4
- The Chubby Mariner (low voice)\*--4.4
- Corporal Lollipop--1.1
- Dance suite for Piano--4.2
- Dawn Song--1.1
- Dialogue--1.5
- Dixie Parade--1.1
- Dynamics - A Study in Color--1.1
- Ecstasy for Piano\*--4.3
- Eldorado - Songs from Poe (published with To the River)--1.5
- The Enchanted Hour\*--1.1
- Folk Songs, arrangements\*--1.1
- For a Broken Doll--1.1
- A Fun Package--1.1
- Ghosts - A Keyboard Palpitation--1.1
- A Girl's Day of Sunlight and Shadow\*--1.4
- Goldenhair--1.1
- Happy Song--1.1
- Harlequin--1.5
- In the Temple--4.3
- Invention--1.2
- Iowa Folk Song--1.2
- Jig--1.2
- Julianne - Waltz Memories of Vienna--1.2
- Legend\*--4.3
- Letters from a Maine Farm--1.2
- March of the Khaki Clad, Op 15, No. 10--1.2
- Memory of Youth--4.3
- Men Are the Devil--1.2
- Montevallo - Concerto for Strings, Piano and Organ\*--1.2
- Montevallo - Concerto for Strings, Piano and Organ, IV Allegro\*--4.3
- Moonlight--4.3
- Mountain Folk - A Set of Tunes for Violin and Piano\*--4.3
- Nina--1.2
- Nocturne--1.2
- Nocturne in b--4.3
- North Carolina Folk Song\*--1.1
- Ostinato, for organ\*--1.2
- Pauline--4.3

- Piece for the Left Hand--1.2
- Playa Laguna\*--4.3
- Prelude in c# for Piano\*--4.3
- Prelude in e for Piano--4.3
- Recessional\*--4.4
- Romance--1.3
- Rousseau Variations--1.3, 3.8
- Scene from a Drama\*--4.3
- "Second Waltz" from Transmutations--1.6
- A Set of Eight\*--1.3
- Six Pieces for String Trio--4.4
- Slumberland Boat--4.4
- Sonata in A-Flat Major for the Pianoforte--1.4, 3.8
- Sonata in G Major for Violin and Piano--1.4
- Sonata in G Major for Violin and Piano\*--1.4
- Spun Gold--1.5
- Tango Español (2 pianos, 4 hands)--1.5
- Tango Español (for piano)--1.5
- Tapestry--4.4
- Ten Little Stories, Op. 15, no. 1: Solemn Prelude--1.5
- Ten Little Stories, Op. 15, no. 2: Skip Dance--1.5
- Ten Little Stories, Op. 15, no. 3: Bluebell--1.5
- Ten Little Stories, Op. 15, no. 4: Menuet Fantastique--1.2
- Ten Little Stories, Op. 15, no. 5: Legend of the Cascadilla--1.2
- Ten Little Stories, Op. 15, no. 6: The Meadow Path--1.5
- Ten Little Stories, Op. 15, no. 7: Waltz--1.5
- Ten Little Stories, Op. 15, no. 10: Teddie and the Terrible Dodum--1.5
- A Thought--1.5
- To a Daffodil--1.5
- To an Iris--1.5
- To Helen - Songs from Poe--1.5
- To the River - Songs from Poe--1.5
- Toy Waltz--1.5
- Transmutations--1.6, 4.4
- Transmutations\*--1.6
- Trillium, Op. 15, No. 9--1.5
- Tunes for two, three and four hands--1.6
- Workout for the Left Hand (published with Happy Song)--1.1
- Yellow Rose--1.6

**Bar Code List**

- 1--059188000054661
- 2--059188000054640
- 3--059188000054650