

THE PIANO MUSIC OF DAVID W. GUION AND THE
INTERSECTION OF MUSICAL TRADITIONS
IN AMERICA AFTER WORLD WAR I

by

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David Guion (b. 1892) grew up with the folk music of ex-slaves and cowboys in a small West Texas ranching town. When he showed an interest in music, he began a traditional musical education which culminated in his study with Leopold Godowsky in Vienna. After he returned from Europe, he accepted a series of teaching appointments in Brownwood (Texas), Dallas, and Chicago. He also began to publish his compositions. The success of his folk derived works such as "Turkey in the Straw" caused him to give up teaching and to move to New York to devote his time to composition. He staged a successful Broadway show, starred in weekly radio programs, and gave many performances of his music. His works were also performed by prominent pianists and singers as well as leading orchestras and bands.

In this paper, the success of his music is studied in relation to the convergence of several musical traditions in America in the 1920's and 30's.

The folk music movement which began in America with Dvorak's tenure at the National Conservatory reached the point of public popularity just as Guion's first folk derived pieces were published. It is likely that Guion both influenced and benefited from this development.

The nineteenth century piano virtuosos created a particular repertoire of display pieces and pieces of a certain popular flavor. Guion became acquainted with this tradition during his Vienna years. He composed a few works in this vein, and its influence appears in his transcriptions and in many original piano pieces.

Following World War I, the popular and serious musical spheres in America influenced each other and in some cases actually merged together. Guion's piano music and its success among a cross section of American performers and audiences are an illustration of the blurring of the boundary between the cultivated and vernacular traditions at that time.

Following the text are appendices: A. Manuscript Sources, B. Published Sources of the Piano Music, and C. Discography.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Since schools in the Southwest were still somewhat provincial or at least lacking in prestige before World War I, many Texas families who could afford it sent their children either "back East" or to Europe for their education. So, it was perhaps predictable that David Guion decided to go to Europe to study piano when he was nineteen years old. Leopold Godowsky was at the height of his fame as a pianist and was teaching at the Royal Academy in Vienna. Guion had heard Godowsky play in this country and decided to go to Vienna to study with the famous artist. After arriving in Vienna in the summer of 1912 along with another student from Texas, Marian Douglass, Guion made arrangements to audition for Godowsky. He recalls that he played rather poorly for the great virtuoso, and

After I had finished playing for him, he asked me what made me think he would accept me as a student--and why had I come so far to study piano with him. I was a bit taken back at this but was determined to stay in Vienna and study piano whether he took me or not. So I summoned up all the courage I could and answered that my Father had told me any teacher would accept me if I paid enough for my lessons. I shall never forget how Mr. Godowsky laughed at this. He then asked me if my father owned a big cattle ranch in Texas. I said, yes, he does and he is also a lawyer. "So," he said, "I am to be bought, like your father buys a fine bull." I replied, "Well, my father always got what he wanted, and what he wanted was to send me over here to study with you." We both had a good laugh . . .¹

¹David Guion, My Memoirs (unpublished), p. 17

Godowsky accepted the boy as a student. Guion had planned to remain in Europe four years, but the beginning of World War I forced him to return to Texas in 1914.

Guion's study in Europe was a significant influence upon the development of his musical style, but his early years in Texas were equally important. David was born December 15, 1892 in the West Texas town of Ballinger. His family can trace its heritage from ancient French nobility, and his ancestors in this country have included two governors of Mississippi. His father, John Isaac Guion, was a lawyer in Mississippi who moved to Ballinger only a few years before David was born. The Guions became prominent and prosperous members of West Texas society. It was from his mother, a musician, that David and his sisters received their first piano instruction.

During his childhood he came into contact with the rich folk music traditions of the region. As a baby he was cared for by a Negro servant named Neppie, who had been a slave in the Guion family in Mississippi. Neppie sang old Negro melodies to young David and carried the boy with her to the Negro church in Ballinger on Sundays. Guion was so fascinated with the music he heard that he frequently attended the church even after he became older, much to the embarrassment of his family.² After Mammy Neppie died, David was attended by Andrew, a Negro boy who sang and played the guitar.

²Ibid., p. 6.

Another ex-slave and servant in the Guion home, Elijah Cox, was a fiddle player. Thus, a variety of sacred and secular folk music was an important part of Guion's childhood.

After his first piano lessons from his mother, David's early traditional musical training started with a weekly trip to study with Charles J. Finger in San Angelo. When Finger moved to Arkansas, Guion's father decided it was time to send David away to school. In 1907 he was sent to the Whipple Academy in Jacksonville, Illinois.³ He did not make friends among the other students his age, however, and became so lonely that he returned to Texas after a year. Then he was sent to Fort Worth, Texas, where he stayed with a sister and became a student at Polytechnic College. Guion remained at Polytechnic four years, during which time he studied piano with Wilbur McDonald until McDonald's death in 1912. It was at this point that Guion's father offered to send him to Europe to continue his piano study, an offer that David eagerly accepted.

His life as a student in Vienna was a happy experience, and he was disappointed to have to give it up. After he returned from Europe, Guion stayed in Ballinger for a year. Then he began a third phase of his life, a career in teaching which occupied the next thirteen years of his life. His first position was Director of Music at Daniel Baker College in Brownwood, Texas--a little

³Shirley McCullough, David Guion and the Guion Collection, p. 20.

town about forty miles from his father's home in Ballinger. He taught there for two years; but after the excitement of Vienna, Guion found the cultural life of West Texas frustrating. During his tenure at Brownwood, he gave his Dallas debut recital. The program was a conventional one, and he used two of his own compositions for encores. The reviews of this recital were quite complimentary both to his playing and to his pieces.⁴ In 1921 Guion was married to Marion Ayres, but the union was a brief and unhappy one, ending in divorce two years later. Guion's next teaching job was at the Fairmont Conservatory in Dallas, and from there he went to the faculty of Southern Methodist University. In 1926 he was offered a position at Chicago Musical College--at that time one of the most respected American conservatories. After two years in Chicago, Guion returned to Dallas to head the Music Department of the Southwest School of Fine Arts.⁵ For four summers in the mid-1920's he taught at a music camp in Estes Park, Colorado. Throughout his years as a teacher, Guion continued to be active as a pianist, collecting many excellent reviews from his recitals in Chicago and in numerous Texas cities.

He was also building a reputation as a composer. Beginning in 1917, Guion made many trips to New York City to contact publishers and to promote performances of his music. On his first

⁴Ibid., p. 23.

⁵Ibid., p. 25.

visit he met Nora Bayes, a popular blues singer at the time. She asked him to write a song for her, and he responded with "Old Maid Blues." Bayes used the song in the 1918 George M. Cohan Review and subsequently had it published.⁶ In the same year, Guion took a collection of his arrangements of Negro spirituals to M. Witmark and Sons, who published the entire set. His setting of "Swing Low Sweet Chariot" became popular at once, and his career as a composer and arranger was launched.

Probably the most significant step in becoming established as a composer was Guion's contact with Schirmer's publishing house. In 1918 he took a piano transcription of "Turkey in the Straw," and a collection of songs--"De ol' Ark's A-moverin," "Greatest Miracle of All," and "Lil Pickaninny Kid"--to Schirmer. Both Rudolph Schirmer, then president of the company, and O. G. Sonneck, head of the Publication Department, became interested in his music and in his career.

They sent Guion's music to performers such as pianists Percy Grainger and John Powell and singers Mabel Garrison and Sophie Braslau who began to include his pieces on their concert programs. "Turkey in the Straw" was a particular success. In a matter of weeks after it was published it was heard in an arrangement for John Philip Sousa's band and in an orchestral version conducted by

⁶Guion, op. cit., p. 26.

Toscanini. By the mid-1920's this piece was widely regarded as the epitome of the folk music movement in America.

Guion continued to divide his time among teaching, performing, composing, and traveling to New York to promote his music. In 1929 he finally decided to give up teaching, move to New York permanently and concentrate on composing. He wrote to S. L. Rothafel, the director of the Roxy Theater, about plans for a musical production using some of his cowboy songs, and Rothafel invited him to come for an audition.⁷ When Guion arrived in New York in 1930, he went to see Rothafel, who liked Guion's music and agreed to produce the show. After a few weeks of rehearsal Prairie Echoes opened at the Roxy on July 25. It was one of eight short stage productions preceding a movie, and it was the featured attraction for the week. Most of the music in the show was already known to New York audiences: "Turkey in the Straw," "The Harmonica Player," "The Bold Vaquero," and "Cowboy's Meditation." One song was new to them, however--"Home on the Range." Prairie Echoes ran for ten days and the show was a success. An article appeared in the New York Times under the headline, "Texas Musician 'Makes' Old Broadway on Very First Try."⁸ Another reviewer announced, "Guion has proved there is a wealth of racy and

⁷McCullough, op. cit., p. 26.

⁸"Texas Musician 'Makes' Old Broadway on Very First Try," New York Times, Aug. 9, 1930.

native music in America aside from jazz and its various forms."⁹ The show attracted the attention of the national radio networks. While Guion's production was still playing at the Roxy, NBC engaged him as guest artist on the weekly coast-to-coast broadcast "The General Motors Hour." Later that month he also appeared on NBC's "Eveready Hour," and in September he was a guest on "Metropolitan Echoes."¹⁰ These were only the beginning of Guion's radio appearances. In the following year, the New York station WOR began a weekly program of Guion's music called "Hearing America with Guion." The series ran for thirty-two weeks. Later in 1931, NBC began a national series following the same format but under the name "David Guion and his Orchestra." For this show Guion's music was performed by an NBC studio orchestra, Paul Ravell, and the composer at the piano. This program continued for thirty-eight weeks. When it was over, Guion and Ravell were engaged for many recitals of cowboy songs throughout the Northeast.

Others were performing his music as well. Metropolitan singer John Charles Thomas gave a Town Hall recital in November, 1930. The Times reported, ". . . the surprise of the day came with the inclusion among English texts of several American negro spirituals and cowboy tunes rescued from oblivion by living

⁹"Prairie Echoes at Roxy," New York Times, July 27, 1930.

¹⁰McCullough, op. cit., p. 26.

composers, one of whom was in the hall."¹¹ The cowboy tunes were Guion's "All Day on the Prairie," and "Home on the Range." The composer was called to the stage and introduced to the audience. After that, Guion's cowboy songs became popular with several members of the Metropolitan Opera Company. Artists such as Lawrence Tibbett, Sophie Braslau, Mable Garrison, James Melton and John Charles Thomas included them in their concerts and recorded them. By 1934, one radio official announced that Guion's "Home on the Range" held first place among all lists of favorites on radio circuits throughout the United States. At that time a suit was brought against Guion for infringement of copyright. The suit was filed by William and Mary Goodwin of Arizona, who claimed on the basis of a 1905 copyright that they were the composers of "Home on the Range."¹² Although the court found that the Goodwins had no grounds for their complaint, the controversy continued for many years and eventually involved several folk song collectors and folklorists, a television station, and even the state of Kansas. The controversy was gradually forgotten rather than settled, and Guion still collects royalties on his arrangement of the melody.¹³

¹¹"John Charles Thomas Sings Cowboy Songs," New York Times, Dec. 1, 1930.

¹²McCullough, op. cit., p. 44.

¹³Ibid., Chapter IV.

Guion's cowboy songs and piano transcriptions of fiddlers' tunes had given him a reputation as a Southwestern or Cowboy composer. Reporters were fond of pointing out that Guion was an expert horseman as well as a pianist-composer. A frequently published photograph showed Guion on horseback in full cowboy regalia and the Wyoming Rocky Mountains in the distance.

His music encompassed other styles as well. Before moving to New York, he had written what he called a "Primitive African Ballet." The manuscript sketch is dated 1929, and the piece was first performed in a two-piano version in the Little Theater in Dallas on January 12, 1930. It was originally written at the suggestion of Theodore Kosloff, who had intended it as film music for Cecil B. DeMille's Madam Satan; but the advent of the "talkies" caused DeMille to change his plans.¹⁴ When Guion moved to New York in 1930, he met Paul Whiteman who became interested in the piece. Whiteman sent the two piano score to the famous composer-arranger Ferde Grofé, who began working on an orchestration for Whiteman's band. This version--renamed "Shingandi"--was performed in a concert at the Studebaker Theater in Chicago on November 22, 1931. There were four large works on the program, and two were featured as premiers: Guion's Shingandi and Grofé's Grand Canyon Suite. Guion's music was enthusiastically received by the Chicago

¹⁴Works Premiered at Little Theater, "Dallas Morning News, Jan. 13, 1930.

audience. A week later NBC arranged a national broadcast of Shingandi and Grand Canyon. Guion was the pianist for these performances, and Variety reported, "Guion interpreted 'Shingandi' on the piano, proving himself as able at execution as at creation."¹⁵ An orchestral version of the work was later performed at an American Music Festival in Richmond, Virginia with the Washington Symphony and John Powell as pianist. It was also heard in Fair Park Bowl in an all-Guion program played by the Dallas Symphony.¹⁶

Since Guion had written a libretto for his "Primitive Ballet" describing the tribal rituals of African warriors, he still wanted the piece to be staged as a ballet. In 1932 he signed a contract with the Roxy Theater to produce the ballet, but unfortunately, the Roxy went into bankruptcy before rehearsals could begin.¹⁷ The following year, Theodore Kosloff became interested in the project, and staged the work in November 1933 at Fair Park Auditorium in Dallas with the Dallas Symphony and David Guion and Harlan Petit as pianists. Several years later the Kosloff Ballet Company took its production of Shingandi on a tour that included performances in San Diego, the Hollywood Bowl, at Grauman's Chinese Theater, and several performances in Mexico City.¹⁸

¹⁵McCullough, op. cit., p. 31.

¹⁶"Plans for 'Shingandi' After Performance at Bowl Here Sunday," Dallas Morning News, Aug. 17, 1931.

¹⁷Ibid. ¹⁸McCullough, op. cit., p. 33.

In 1937 Guion gave up his Greenwich Village apartment and bought fifty acres in the Pocono Mountains in eastern Pennsylvania. For several years he made frequent trips to New York to promote his music. He began to devote more of his time to other interests, however. He redecorated his old Dutch house and accumulated an impressive collection of Early American antiques: furniture, cut and pressed glass, china, rugs, and silver. He spent time gardening and entertaining his friends, who included musicians, writers, poets, and composers.¹⁹ He still found time to compose and perform his music.

In 1950 the Houston Symphony Society commissioned Guion to compose a work for the following concert season. He reworked some of his earlier music and added it to new material to produce a suite. The work, titled "Texas", consists of fourteen descriptive movements. The orchestration was contributed by Foster Case. The Texas Suite was premiered in 1952 by the Houston Symphony with Efrem Kurtz conducting. The audience response was so enthusiastic that the piece was repeated on the orchestra's next concert. Although Guion had expected Schirmer to publish his suite, they published only the two-piano versions, and it was thirteen years later when Carsan, Inc. bought the publishing and recording rights. In 1965 the Houston Summer Symphony recorded several movements of the suite.

¹⁹Guion, op. cit., p. 36.

Guion continued to live on his Pennsylvania estate, which he named "Home on the Range," until 1965 when the Army Corps of Engineers designated the entire valley as the site of a water and recreation project. Guion and his neighbors tried to save their property, hired lawyers and wrote letters to many government officials. He recalls, "I fought--we all fought, but it did no good."²⁰ He was bitter about losing the estate and believed that he and his neighbors were the victims of a political corruption in which the property owners were paid only a fraction of the value of their land. Guion decided to move back to Dallas. He bought the old home he and his mother had built when he was teaching in Dallas and has been living there to the time of this writing.

After World War II the cultural atmosphere in America changed in many ways, and the popularity of Guion's music diminished. Today much of it is considered "dated" and has gone out of print. The original popularity of his style arose partly from the fact that it appeared at a critical time when several musical traditions intersected in the musical culture of America in the 1920's. Guion, who was a talented man acquainted with these different musical currents largely as an accident of birth and training, synthesized the various elements into a single style. The piano works, in particular, illustrate that synthesis which included elements both from his traditional musical training under one of the

²⁰Ibid., p. 37.

last great Romantic virtuosos and from his acquaintance with the folk and popular styles he recalled from his childhood in West Texas.

A brief survey of Guion's music reveals how important vocal literature was: it accounts for at least sixty-five songs including arrangements of Negro spirituals, sea chanties, cowboy ballads, popular, and art and sacred songs. There are four orchestral works, and many of the piano pieces and some of the songs have been orchestrated for ensembles of various sizes. The piano music includes twenty published works, one unpublished etude, several pieces now lost, and the original two-piano version of the ballet Shingandi.

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY VIRTUOSO
TRADITION IN GUION'S MUSIC

Liszt's retirement from the concert stage in 1847 marked a change in the social role of the virtuoso pianist. The change involved several factors among which were the decline of aristocratic patronage, the rise of the public concert, and Romantic ideals of the mission of the artist. All of these affected the repertoire of pianists which in turn had its effect on the output of composers. Since this tradition of Romantic virtuosos was at its height when Guion finished his education and began his career as a composer, and since his only formal musical training was his piano study, the aesthetic of the virtuoso tradition was significant in the development of his style.

Until the middle of the nineteenth century the secular arts had been supported almost exclusively by the aristocracy. The instrumental virtuoso played primarily in the salons of royalty and the wealthy. The solo recital was a rare event before 1840. The usual program included several performers on different instruments perhaps including a small ensemble to assist in concertos. The famous pianists received a rather small part of their income from playing recitals. Hummel, for example, was primarily a conductor and teacher, Clementi a piano manufacturer and music publisher, and Field

mainly a teacher of the daughters of the Russian aristocracy. All virtuosos were also composers. There was no standard repertoire and performers largely played their own music. Even Chopin and Liszt made their reputations as pianists in this environment. The next generation of performers, however, faced a different situation. With the decline of aristocratic patronage and the increasing popularity of public concerts, it became possible to make a living exclusively as a pianist--and the professional touring virtuoso appeared. The repertoire of these late nineteenth century pianists was shaped by several conflicting influences. On the one hand, the new professional had to know his market and provide repertoire that the public demanded--and the public taste was by no means as discriminating as that of the Paris salon. The public could be relied upon to react favorably to virtuoso display pieces, transcriptions, and variations on popular themes, especially if they were composed by the performer. On the other hand, the Romantic ideal of the artist as one who edified and educated the masses, as well as the artistic standards which were the natural result of professionalism, motivated pianists to present the best music of the older masters.

Anton Rubinstein was one of the first of the new professionals to make established masterpieces by Beethoven, Weber, Schumann and Chopin staples of the repertoire.²¹ He had tremendous influence as one of the greatest pianists of his generation.

²¹Arthur Loesser, Men, Women, and Pianos, p. 516.

Nevertheless, the pianist as composer still remained. Although the works of recognized masters dominated piano recitals, the performer was still expected to provide a few numbers of his own composition. Professionals are by nature a conservative group, and as composers the Romantic pianists were no exceptions. They selected from a small number of audience-tested styles and forms--usually those handed down from the previous generation. Thus the music of Anton Rubinstein and Moritz Moszkowsky is the virtuoso continuation of the style of Mendelssohn, and pieces by Paderewski or Moritz Rosenthal are clearly descended from Liszt. Pieces of this type were generally transcriptions, concert etudes, capriccios, minuets, variations on well known themes, or waltzes. The more successful examples became absorbed into a growing repertoire of such music.

The virtuoso tradition came to America rather early via tours by the great European pianists beginning in the mid-1840's. Rubinstein's visit in 1872-3, sponsored by Steinway, had a considerable impact on America and was remembered by music writers and critics for years--even becoming something of a popular legend.²² Rosenthal first came to this country in 1888, Paderewski in 1891 and 1896, followed by many others. America had every opportunity to become acquainted with the best Romantic pianists.

²²Harold C. Schonberg, The Great Pianists, p. 261.

Louis Moreau Gottschalk became the first native pianist-composer to achieve an international name. He studied and began his career in Europe where his playing and his compositions were popular and admired by such personalities as Chopin and Liszt.²³

In 1853 he began his American tours. His diary, published as Notes of a Pianist, colorfully describes the difficulties of the touring virtuoso in nineteenth-century America and suggests that his own fantasias as well as improvisations provided most of the repertoire for his American concerts.

A view of the concert repertoire after the turn of the century is provided in a scrapbook Guion kept during his years in Vienna.²⁴ Besides pictures of buildings and scenes in and around Vienna, letters he received there, and some newspaper clippings, the book preserves the programs of concerts he attended while he was in Europe along with pictures of many pianists and occasional notes that Guion added. One page, for example, has a picture of Moritz Rosenthal accompanied by Guion's note: "Moritz Rosenthal, born in 1862 at Lemburg, pupil of Mikuli, Chopin, Joseffy and Liszt. His technic is phenomenal and he is a virtuoso of the highest rank." On the same page are two programs and two ticket stubs from Rosenthal's concerts.

²³Ibid., p. 206

²⁴Scrapbook in the Guion Collection.

Recitals resembling those common today--filled exclusively with serious large-scale works or groups of pieces by clearly recognized masters--were not completely absent, although they were rare. The scrapbook contains an all-Beethoven sonata program played by Bufo Peters and an all Chopin program by Ignaz Friedman. Guion also heard Busoni play Beethoven's "Hammerklavier," all the Chopin Preludes, and the Liszt B minor Sonata in a single recital. These were exceptional, however. Several features emerge from the programs as a group: there are rarely more than two large works on a concert and rarely more than one sonata; these large pieces are usually near the beginning of the recital. Most of the programs end with a group of virtuoso display pieces of the sort described above, and over half end with one of Liszt's famous brilliant works--Hungarian Rhapsodies, Don Juan Fantasy, Norma Fantasy and the like. Even Artur Schnabel, who was later considered one of the most classically oriented, scholarly, and restrained of pianists, ended a program in 1913 with four short Liszt pieces and the Strauss-Tausig False Caprice "Nachtfalter." Approximately half of the programs include the pianists' own pieces. Guion heard Rosenthal play his Papillons, Busoni and Eugene d'Albert play their transcriptions of Bach and Emil Sauer several groups of his own etudes and capriccios.

There appears to be a style of programming which attempts to balance cultivated taste with popular appeal. The programs listed

below are representative of the repertoire and programming practice reflected in Guion's Vienna Scrapbook.

MORITZ ROSENTHAL, December 13, 1912

Chopin: Concerto, op. 11

Goldmark: Traumgestalten
Bedrangnis

Leschetizky: Gavotte Antique e Musette Modere

Poldini: Etude in A-flat major

Rosenthal: Papillons

Liszt: Concerto in E-flat

EMIL SAUER, February 1, 1913

Beethoven: Sonata, op. 31, no. 1

Brahms: Handel Variations, op. 24

Schumann: Romanze in F-sharp
Traumeswirren

Chopin: Ballade, op. 47

Berceuse, op. 57

Etude, op. 25, No. 11

Sauer: "Le Retour: (Capriccio)

"Propos de Bal"

"Meeresleuchten" (Konzertetude no. 7)

Liszt: Rhapsodie no. 12

WILHELM BACKHAUS, October 28, 1913

Beethoven: Sonata, op. 110

Jules Wertheim: Variations in E-flat Minor, op. 4

F. Chopin: Ballade in G minor

Nocturne in C minor

Nocturne in G major

Rachmaninoff: Five Preludes

St. Heller: Two Freischützstudien
 A. Rubenstein: Etude in C major

A survey of the reviews of piano recitals in the New York Times for the season of 1920-21 reveals a similar state of affairs in this country when Guion's music began to be popular. One critic, for example, reported that Grainger opened a program with the Bach D minor Tocatta and Fugue in which he combined the Busoni and Tausig versions.²⁵ A tendency toward too serious a program seemed worthy of note by a reporter who observed that Rudolf Ganz "played to a full house at Aeolian Hall . . . , a musical assembly that found no terrors in the fact of two sonatas in one recital. The works were Beethoven's Op. 26 in A flat, and Chopin's in B minor."²⁶ (emphasis added) Perhaps to compensate for such heavy fare, Ganz ended the program with four of his own compositions and a couple of Liszt pieces. One imagines that in the early years of the twentieth century modern programming practice would be considered a lapse of taste.

This distinctive virtuoso literature was not considered mere empty display at the time. In a recital on October 11, 1920 in New York, Godowsky premiered his set of pieces Triakontameron subtitled "Thirty Scenes and Moods in Triple Time." The New York Times reported, ". . . in all these pieces there is of course a fine

²⁵"Grainger Plays," New York Times, Dec. 8, 1920.

²⁶"Rudolph Ganz," New York Times, Jan. 22, 1921

feeling for harmony touched with modern freedom of effect."²⁷ The "modern freedom" amounts to occasional touches of impressionism. America was slower to accept modern styles. Jacque Barzun recalls of this period that Americans "still felt the need to expound Wagner and to regard Richard Strauss as on the outer rim of respectability, the modern young man on probation. . . . I well remember, in 1921 or '22, the murmuring after a performance of Debussy by the Philadelphia Orchestra, and a few years later in New York the outright hissing of Varese's *Ameriques*."²⁸ For the most part, Godowsky's Triakontameron is strictly an extension of a nineteenth century tradition in something of the same style of his fifty-three transcriptions of the Chopin Etudes or his transcriptions of Symphonic Metamorphoses on Johann Strauss's Waltzes. If Godowsky exemplified the extreme development of the virtuoso-composer--his pieces were considered unplayable by anyone but himself--he was not dismissed as a Philistine. The program notes for the Curtis American Piano Music series described in Chapter III declared, "Leopold Godowsky's gift to the piano literature is as great as Liszt's--perhaps greater."

Guion began his career as a pianist in this atmosphere and his own recitals naturally followed the prevailing pattern. For his Dallas debut he played Brahms, Bach-Busoni, Chopin and two

²⁷"Godowsky Premier," New York Times, Oct. 12, 1920.

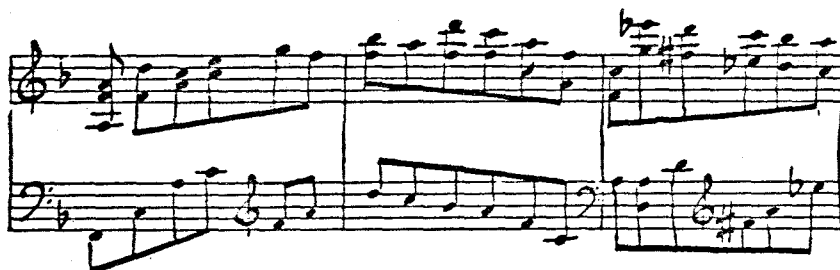
²⁸Jacque Barzun, Music in American Life, p. 31.

encores of his own: a waltz and a concert etude. There were several popular genres within the virtuoso repertoire, and Guion's output contains examples of most of them. Probably the best established form involved either transcription or variation, or both, of famous pieces. The most frequent originals were opera overtures, Bach organ works, and Strauss waltzes. Guion's fiddler's breakdowns belong to this vein. Although the "Turkey in the Straw" types of pieces by Guion and Grainger were distinguished from the rest of the transcription literature by the themes they used, the technique of molding them into virtuoso keyboard versions was the same: crossing of hands, frequent use of octaves and rapidly changing full chords, wide leaps to create "three hand" illusions, and so on. At the same time, it was this virtuoso treatment which distinguished these works from the rest of the folk-tradition literature and gave them a wide appeal both to pianists and to their audiences. These transcriptions as well as original pieces in the same style, such as Sheep and Goat or the Harmonica Player, closely parallel the music of Gottschalk; and no doubt both derived their success from the same combination of elements: novel material dressed up in a popular virtuoso idiom. Others of Guion's pieces are more squarely within the European tradition, however.

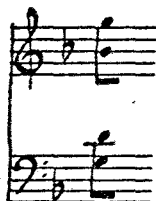
Next to the transcription, the most useful forms for the virtuoso-composers were the Waltz and Minuet because of their tradition as popular forms. The 1922 catalogue of music rolls

available for the Ampico player mechanism contains more entries named Waltz, Valse, or Minuet than any other single form. There are examples by most of the famous nineteenth century composers: Chopin, Liszt, Moszkowsky, Saint-Saens, Glazunov, Paderewsky, Schulz-Evler, and a host of now forgotten names. Guion's Valse Arabesque is a good example of the virtuoso waltz in Viennese style reminiscent of the famous Schulz-Evler Arabesques on the Blue Danube or the waltzes of Godowsky and Rosenthal. There are other waltzes by Guion in the same Viennese style, though with fewer technical difficulties, and several unpublished waltzes that have been lost.

Style within the virtuoso tradition did progress, but remained a generation or two behind the significant musical developments of Europe. Just as Rubinstein and Moszkowsky had looked back to Mendelssohn and Liszt, so early twentieth century virtuosos finally began to imitate impressionistic effects or the harmonic vocabulary of Richard Strauss. The virtuoso's musical vocabulary actually expanded rather than progressed since any style of the standard repertoire was available to him. It was not unusual for a waltz in the popular Viennese style to contain some passage such as this one from Guion's Valse Arabesque which echoes the Chopin Andante Spianato.



A musical score for a piano piece, consisting of two staves: a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The music is written in a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The treble staff features a complex, rapid figuration with many beamed notes and slurs, moving across the staff. The bass staff has a more rhythmic accompaniment with fewer notes, also featuring some beaming and slurs. The overall texture is dense and technically demanding.



A musical score for a piano piece, consisting of two staves: a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The music is written in a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The treble staff shows a few block chords, and the bass staff shows a few block chords. The overall texture is sparse and simple.

Guñon's Staccato Etude (unpublished) somewhat resembles Rubinstein's piece by the same title (Op. 23. no. 2). It exploits the same point of technique and shares the same Czerny-like phrasing and sequencing of figuration:



A musical score for a piano piece, consisting of two staves: a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The music is written in a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The treble staff features a complex, rapid figuration with many beamed notes and slurs, moving across the staff. The bass staff has a more rhythmic accompaniment with fewer notes, also featuring some beaming and slurs. The overall texture is dense and technically demanding.



It contains a lyric middle section with rich seventh harmonies, however, that is more akin to Rachmaninoff. Guion's The Scissors Grinder (1930) contains clear echoes of Ravel's Jeux d'eau:



While Impressionism was slow to be accepted in the United States (only Charles T. Griffes composed much in the style through World War I), it had certainly become established by 1930 and had begun to influence many American composers, even some who were trying very hard to be uniquely national, such as Farwell. It became a part of the repertoire which constituted the stylistic vocabulary of the virtuoso-composers.

After 1930, this whole tradition began to decline. The display piece was confined more and more to encores and became increasingly rare, although it has never disappeared completely.

GUION AS FOLKLORIST AND NATIONALIST

While Guion's compositional style included more than mere folklorism, his reputation arose almost entirely from this aspect of his music. He was certainly not the first American composer to explore the uses of ethnic musical materials, indeed he was not even particularly early in the folk music tradition in this country. But he entered the field at a critical time in the development of that tradition.

Folk music has attracted the interest of composers and scholars for centuries, but it had a special appeal for the Romantic mind. During the nineteenth century, the peasant was idealized as an unspoiled child--as a simpler and more natural state of humanity. This view was a heritage from the period of the Enlightenment with its view of the noble savage as not yet being corrupted by the evils and complexities of civilization. Naturally, the music of the peasant could then be regarded as a correspondingly natural collective art--occasionally even as the essence of musical expression. Beyond this, folk music proved to be an invaluable tool for composers who were seeking to assert their cultural identity in music. In countries where there was no existing national art musical tradition, it was difficult for composers to define exactly what gave a style some particular national flavor, and folk

tunes were one of the few elements which could be objectively defended as belonging to a specific cultural tradition. Consequently, every emerging national school of composers turned first to their folk sources for the materials for declaring their musical independence.

Mikhail Glinka was one of the first to react to the German dominance of European music in this fashion. He combined folk materials and national subjects in such works as A Life for the Czar and Ruslan and Ludmilla in an attempt to establish a Russian music. Soon after mid-century, the "Mighty Five" followed his example and indeed began a tradition of Russian national composers which lasted into the twentieth century. During the last half of the nineteenth century various other nationalities found composers to represent their causes. Dvorak, who spurred the interest in American folk traditions, aimed at creating a Bohemian idiom; Grieg became a champion of Norwegian music; and after 1900, Bartok explored the peasant songs of eastern Europe and Vaughan-Williams encouraged English composers to develop an independent style. In these and many other cases the procedure was essentially the same: collect and transcribe folk songs, arrange them, develop and imitate them, and try to discover in them some seed for a unique national color.

At the same time, attitudes toward folk material were varied and often complex. The idealization of the "folk" in cultured circles lent an exotic appeal to their music--particularly to

foreign folk music. A Mazurka or a polonaise or a Hungarian Rhapsody could exert such an exotic attraction in the salons of Paris even if it were only distantly related to authentic ethnic examples. In consciously national movements there was an effort to appreciate the folk song on purely aesthetic grounds--to understand the strength of its simplicity or alternately to perceive subtleties and variations of unexpected complexity. Also there was a growing anthropological interest in folk music. Occasionally there were collectors and scholars in the field years before composers began to make use of the material. This was the case particularly in America. When MacDowell wanted Indian melodies to use as themes in his Second (Indian) Suite, Henry Gilbert suggested that he refer to Theodore Baker's Die Musik der Nordamerikanischen Wilden.²⁹ And similarly Arthur Farwell or Harvey Loomis could look in the Peabody Museum Report for 1893 for Indian melodies collected by Alice Fletcher to use as the basis for their music.³⁰ In Bartók's case, the composer collected, classified and analyzed the material himself.

Although America's folk music found expression during the nineteenth century in the music of Anton Philip Heinrich, the folk element achieved notoriety in the piano pieces of Louis Moreau Gottschalk. Although he received his musical education and began his career as a pianist in Europe, his childhood in the racially

²⁹Gilbert Chase, America's Music, p. 362.

³⁰The Wa-Wan Press, no. 1, p. 1; no. 12, p. 4.

and culturally diverse area of New Orleans, and his familiarity with the rich variety of folk and popular music there, provided the material for some of his compositions. His fantasies on Afro-Caribbean themes were quite popular in Europe as well as America; on the whole, however, he stood outside the main tradition of folk-derived nationalism. He had little interest in establishing an "American School" of composers, and his use of ethnic material appears to have come neither from a scholarly interest nor from a romantic aesthetic but rather from his realization as a showman of the audience appeal of novelty and the exotic. American composers at the time were so much under the influence of European--specifically German--style that they took little interest in Gottschalk's music. With the exception of a few sentimental salon works, his music was forgotten almost immediately after his death. Thus, although America made an appearance rather early in the Romantic trend toward nationalism, it was one of the last countries to develop an interest in nationalistic music of sufficient breadth and continuity to be described as a movement.

There were some scattered signs of interest in folk music during the 1870's and 80's such as the successful tour of the Fisk (University) Singers, a group of black performers who took their programs of Negro Spirituals on tour both in America and Europe.³¹

³¹Merton Robert Aborn, The Influence on American Musical Culture of Dvorak's Sojourn in America, p. 230.

A few articles and even some song arrangements of Negro origins appeared in American periodicals in the 1880's;³² but a real movement of musical nationalism had to await the arrival of Dvorak in 1892. In light of the European orientation of American musical culture, it was perhaps necessary that the impetus for this development come from an established European composer.

When the trustees of the National Conservatory in New York were searching for a new director, they wanted to attract a European "name." At the same time they hoped to find someone who shared their belief in musical nationalism. After several months of negotiations, they convinced Antonín Dvořák to come to America and assume the position.³³ Having established his reputation in Europe as a Bohemian composer with a keen interest in his folk music heritage, he naturally began to explore America's folk sources. He was attracted by the Negro melodies he found and became convinced that here was the ethnic material for America's musical identity. In many newspaper interviews as well as an article in Harper's, Dvořák told American composers to look to their native sources and develop them. Moreover, his symphony From the New World was written and premiered during his three year visit to this country as an illustration of the potential of the style of Negro themes.

³²Joseph A. Mussulman, Music in the Cultured Generation, p. 261.

³³Aborn, op. cit., p. 79

His ideas were not accepted immediately, however. A critical debate arose at once and has continued to the present day concerning the extent to which Dvorak's symphony is "American" and even to what extent the themes themselves are identifiable as American in origin. The more conservative musical establishment through its spokesman Edward MacDowell also reacted to Dvorak's ideas. He stated categorically that "so-called Russian, Bohemian, or any other purely national music has no place in art," that in the process of cultivating the musical culture of America, "masquerading in the so-called nationalism of Negro clothes cut in Bohemia will not help us."³⁴

Nevertheless, some composers were affected by Dvorak's visit. His students at the National Conservatory included composers who became active in the folk movement in this country: Harvey Worthington Loomis, Henry Waller, and Harry T. Burleigh. Another student, Rubin Goldmark, extended this influence in his role as the teacher of many later American composers, a group that included George Gershwin and Aaron Copland. Even MacDowell, in spite of his avowed opposition to Dvorak's ideas, produced an orchestral suite based on Indian themes.

Perhaps the most important reaction to Dvorak's American visit was a publishing venture organized by Arthur Farwell. He and a small group of composers interested in Indian music had been

³⁴Chase, America's Music, p. 355.

unable to publish their work because of what they felt to be the German orientation of the American musical establishment and publishing industry. With no capital and without being sure of the possible extent of support for such a movement, Farwell began what he called the Wa-Wan Press.³⁵ From the beginning it was an exercise in idealism--largely a personal cause of Farwell's, frequently supported from his own pocket when income from subscriptions failed to cover expenses. It began as a quarterly publication in the winter of 1901 with a collection of arrangements of Indian melodies by Farwell and some songs by Edgar Stillman Kelly. In an introduction Farwell described the aims of the Wa-Wan Press: to provide an opportunity for publication of works of American composers--particularly those derived from folk sources. He intended it to constitute a "definite acceptance of Dvořák's challenge to go after our folk music."³⁶ In introductory essays to many of the issues from 1901 to 1904 he expanded his ideas about Americanism in music. Although he was convinced of the value of ethnic sources, ". . . notably ragtime, Negro songs, Indian songs, Cowboy songs, . . ."³⁷ his vision was much larger than mere folklorism. He felt the American music should be music of a Universal aesthetic rather than a

³⁵Ibid., p. 394.

³⁶Ibid., p. 395.

³⁷The Wa-Wan Press, no. 15, p. 3.

restricted European one.³⁸ While he had no wish to completely abandon the Romantic German tradition which he held in the highest regard, he felt a need to expand this country's musical horizons to include French and Russian influences as well as popular and ethnic sources. Beyond this he hoped for the emergence of a style that would "bind together sheaves from the different fields, and give us the greater harvesting, a single art that shall contain all these elements, and represent America broadly, as a whole."³⁹ Farwell had difficulty defining what would constitute such a national style, and the question was one that occupied writers and composers for several decades. But the Wa-Wan Press was an important early step in the direction of freeing American composers from the domination of European traditions. If the success of the Press must be judged solely on the quality of the music published or the composers represented, one must admit that it did not result in the outstanding artistic achievement Farwell had hoped for. The pieces published in the series, even those based on folk melodies (which comprise less than half the works in the catalogue), are still quite European—even German—in conception and not particularly distinctive in any respect. If one of Farwell's or Gilbert's arrangements is compared with Edward MacDowell's "Indian" Suite, however, it is clear that non-German influences were beginning to be felt.

³⁸Ibid., no. 12, p. 1.

³⁹Ibid., no. 15, p. 4.

The Wa-Wan Press was born largely out of Farwell's inability to find a publisher for his music. In 1904 he still complained of the oppressiveness of European tradition, pointing out that in America "the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Schirmer's publishing house represent European musical art."⁴⁰ In this light it is significant that in 1912 the rights to the entire Wa-Wan catalogue (with only a few exceptions) were bought by G. Schirmer. Whether or not Farwell's publishing experiment was a powerful influence, it was at least symptomatic of the growth of an interest in American musical nationalism, which by 1912 had gained a wide enough respectability to attract the interest of America's major music publisher.

In spite of this growth, as late as 1915, Henry F. Gilbert, another composer active in the Wa-Wan movement, lamented, "In a truthful and honest consideration of the art of Musical Composition in America, one is compelled to admit that there are as yet no real American composers."⁴¹ He attributed this deficiency partly to the fact that "Music by an American is not wanted, especially if it happens to be American Music. It is merely tolerated with a sort of good-natured contempt."⁴²

The composers of the Wa-Wan movement felt that they represented a minority viewpoint. The tone of their prose is alternately

⁴⁰Ibid., no. 18, p. 2.

⁴¹Chase, The American Composer Speaks, p. 95.

⁴²Ibid., p. 97.

defensive or apologetic or polemical; the style of the music is stiff and clearly self-conscious. The end of World War I, however, marked a turning point in the movement toward nationalism. Folk styles entered a period of wide popularity with the concert-going public. It is likely that one of the factors contributing to the success of Guion's music was his arrival as a composer at exactly this time. In 1920 Percy Grainger, while admitting that American composers might not be appreciated to the extent they deserved, observed that their works were well received. Perhaps reacting to the tone of men like Farwell or Gilbert, he said,

I think it would be utterly inaccurate and ungrateful to pretend that the gifted American composer of today walks a thorny and unholpen path. There are probably few, if any lands where deserving composers are more likely to find their works more worthily published, more satisfactorily performed (and this whether their works be easy or exacting, severe or popular in style) and more humanly and sincerely received. All these things are splendidly fortunate, and no composer who loves the welfare of his fellow composers could fail to feel warmth and fratitute and happiness for such generous and favorable and constructive conditions.⁴³

Always a champion of contemporary composers, Grainger had been a pioneer in introducing the works of Debussy; and during the twenties he turned his attention to the British and American nationalities.

Beginning at about this time it is not uncommon to find entire programs of Negro spirituals advertised in the New York Times. Guion's first published work was a set of 14 spirituals

⁴³ Percy Grainger, "Why Wait for the American Composer?," Musical America, Jan. 21, 1920, p. 9.

(1918) with the simplest possible piano accompaniments—frequently only one chord per measure. Like many of his later Negro-derived pieces, the texts were in the dialect he had heard in West Texas. When these pieces began to be included in the programs of established singers such as Ernestine Schumann-Heink and Amelia Galli-Curci, Guion began to compose more seriously.⁴⁴ He also began to develop a more individual style. In contrast to their policy at the time of the turn of the century, Schirmer apparently made an effort to promote the music of American composers among performing artists. Several letters from O. G. Sonneck to Guion report that pieces had been sent to various singers or pianists and frequently mention that works had been included on concert programs. When "Turkey in the Straw" was published, Schirmer sent a copy to Grainger, who immediately began to include it in his recitals. In a letter to Guion he said, "I cannot tell you how much I admire your arrangement of 'Turkey in the Straw.' What you have done could not possibly be better done, it seems to me. The piece appeals to me tremendously in your transcription, and I shall play it in my concerts and teach it all I can."⁴⁵

Folk songs in virtuoso piano transcriptions were popular with concert audiences in America for several decades after this.

⁴⁴Guion, My Memoirs, p. 19

⁴⁵Letter, Grainger to Guion, Jan 22, 1920, in the Guion Collection.

In a review of a concert in which Grainger included a group of his own arrangements as well as Nathaniel Dett's "Juba" dance and one of Guion's transcriptions, a critic noted that the "'Juba' dance might have been paired with 'Turkey in the Straw,' a transcription of a sailor's work song or chanty--and then some more. These were what the audience hungered and thirsted for."⁴⁶ A few years later Olin Downes reported that in a recital in which Horowitz played Guion's "Harmonica Player," "The piece so delighted the audience that crashing applause silenced the last measures of the music."⁴⁷

To many musical observers in the twenties and thirties, this folk music movement was one of the most significant developments in America since the turn of the century. In describing the acceptance of American music in Europe, Grainger said,

When I played compositions by Balfour Gardiner, Carpenter, Cyril Scott, Nathaniel Dett, Guion, Griffes and Dillon, for instance, I realized a spontaneity in the attitude of the listeners which showed me that the serious world of music is as ready to capitulate to the English-speaking composers as the "popular" public of the world has to American Jazz.⁴⁸

All of the composers he lists except Scott and Griffes were known principally as folklorists.

In 1931 the first edition of John Tasker Howard's Our American Music appeared and was established as the definitive

⁴⁶"Grainger Plays," The New York Times, Dec. 8, 1920.

⁴⁷Quoted by McCullough, op. cit., p. 15.

⁴⁸P. J. Nolan, "Music More Vital in Europe Today, Says Grainger," Musical America, Sept. 1, 1923, p. 1.

work in its field. In that edition, Howard devoted a chapter titled "We Climb the Heights" to what he considered the two greatest composers America had yet produced--Edward McDowell and Ethelbert Nevin. In another chapter he surveys the field of contemporary composers. Approximately half of the names mentioned, among whom Guion has a prominent place, belong chiefly to the folk movement. Another section is devoted to folk music itself exclusive of its uses by art composers. Most of the men who are now considered representative of the trends in American music in the twenties are treated briefly in a section labeled "The Modernists." Here are mentioned Ornstein, Copland, Sessions, Roy Harris, Virgil Thomson, and Charles Ives along with frequent reminders that the music of these composers should be given a fair hearing even if it is a bit extreme.

In 1939 the Curtis Institute sponsored a series of three recitals of American piano music played by Jeanne Behrend. The list of composers represented is exclusively late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with the sole exception of Alexander Reinagle. Within that period, however, it presents a good cross-section of styles and techniques. Several members of the Wa-Wan group are included as well as Guion, MacDowell, Griffes, Gershwin, Bloch, Godowsky, Copland, and Ives. The extensive program notes revealed a certain contempt for Copland, Marion Bauer, Ives and

others who had "tried to make cacophony into a musical language."⁴⁹ On the other hand, Gershwin, Godowsky, and Farwell are cited as some of the most important contributors to American piano literature. Again, folk-oriented works fill almost half the programs.

There are several ways in which the nineteenth-century nationalists approached the use of folk music. At one level, composers collected the melodies and provided only simple accompaniments or perhaps tried to create arrangements idiomatic to some particular medium but otherwise faithful to the authentic material. Many of the Indian and Negro pieces appearing in the Wa-Wan Press are of this type. Composers studied folk songs, trying to absorb their characteristics, and then wrote original melodies with the intention of capturing the spirit of the originals. Dvorak based his recommendation of this process upon his procedures in developing the themes of the New World Symphony. Finally, composers tried to create styles derived from folk music characteristics, but not necessarily meant to be imitative of authentic peasant songs. The sophistication of style to which this process of distilling "folk" characteristics can be carried is evident in the masterful works of Bartok.

A rather small part of Guion's music is of the simpler first type. His first published pieces, a set of 14 spirituals, were perhaps the only works which actually left the authentic

⁴⁹Program in the Guion Collection.

tunes unaltered. In most of the music based on authentic melodies, Guion made alterations or additions. Among the piano works, there are only two real folk tunes: "Turkey in the Straw" and "The Arkansas Traveler," but both contain additional melodies to provide contrast with the familiar themes.

Piano pieces such as "Pastoral," "Negro Lament," or "The Lonesome Whistler" as well as many of his songs imitate the Negro folk style after Dvorak's fashion by means of such devices as pentatonic melodies, frequent use of the minor harmonic formula I-IV-I, lowered seventh scale degree, and the prominent use of characteristic rhythmic patterns.

Guion's other folk-related pieces are of a type which has more precedents throughout a wide segment of European art music, that is, the imitation of peculiar peasant instruments or their idiomatic limitations. For example, musette effects hint at rustic color--however much stylized--in works by composers from Rameau to Bartok; Scarlatti imitates guitar idioms on the harpsichord and Gottschalk images the minstrel age instrument of the banjo in a work with that title. Two peculiarly American peasant instruments were the banjo and the harmonica, and Guion's "Harmonica Player" is a comparable keyboard transcription of the dissonances and grace-note chords characteristic of that simpler instrument. In somewhat the same vein, Guion wrote pieces derived from the North American rural fiddler's tradition which is firmly established in

Texas. He employs some of the stereotyped figuration and variation formulas in his Country Jigs and "Sheep and Goat." In this connection, "The Arkansas Traveler" and "Turkey in the Straw" are melodies closely associated with the fiddler's tradition in Texas.

Although Indian and Negro folk music had attracted interest among artistic circles much earlier, the popularity of cowboy songs and fiddler's breakdowns, or "hoedowns," seems to have begun well after 1930. If Guion was not actually the first to introduce these styles, the success of his breakdowns in arrangements for orchestra and band as well as piano must have contributed significantly to its growth. It was not until well after the success of Prairie Echoes with its cowboy and cowgirl ballet, and also after several members of the Metropolitan Opera Company had sung many of Guion's cowboy ballads, that Copland established his popular style in his well known series of ballets or Roy Harris built his reputation with symphonic works based on Western material.

Nationalist musicians in America did not restrict themselves to folklorism, however. Beginning soon after 1920 they discovered the wealth of native popular styles in jazz, ragtime, and blues and recognized the possibilities they contained for producing a unique American music. Guion's musical relation to this tradition--one perhaps ultimately more "American" than the folk-tradition--will be discussed in the following chapter.

THE CULTIVATED AND VERNACULAR
TRADITIONS IN UNION'S MUSIC

In his book Music in the United States, Wiley Hitchcock traces the development of two musical traditions in this country which he calls the cultivated and the vernacular traditions. These are approximately equivalent to what Americans colloquially refer to as "classical" and "popular" music. The cultivated tradition in America includes that body of music which is self-consciously written with an awareness of the long history of European art music. It is music of a certain pretension, intended somehow to edify the listener; it is to be approached with effort, and generally appeals to a rather restricted audience. Vernacular music, on the other hand, is written completely unself-consciously with the immediate aim of entertaining its generally middle-class audience. It is intended to have a broad popular appeal, and its aesthetic value is judged by the size of its box office returns and royalties. With the enlargement of the middle classes, the existence of these traditions as more or less independent currents of musical culture began early in the nineteenth century, and the distance between them became greater as the century progressed. The cultivated tradition--in both its music and its musicians--was largely an import from Europe and it was most firmly established in the older Eastern cultural centers of the United States; whereas the

vernacular, such as the sentimental ballad and the minstrel-type dance tune, was a domestic product found virtually all over the country.

In the 1920's the boundaries between these traditions became blurred. They began to share common musical sources, sometimes common techniques; to the extent that they were still distinct, the same musicians might participate in both. Signs of the merging of popular and serious styles appeared around the turn of the century with contributing factors coming from both traditions. Guion's training and the beginning of his popularity coincide with this development and in many ways his music and career illuminate the extent to which the older barriers were broken down.

According to Hitchcock's definition, the chief distinction between cultivated and vernacular is in the matter of self-consciousness or pretension. When vernacular composers began to be aware of the differences between higher quality popular style and cheap or trivial popular style, they had already taken the first step toward becoming cultivated on their own terms. This stirring of self-consciousness occurred in the world of ragtime around the turn of the century. As early as Ben Harney's Rag Time Instructor (1897) there was sufficient recognition of a definable authentic ragtime style to make the marketing of a method feasible. Not long afterwards other pedagogical works appeared, including

Axel Christensen's Instruction Book Number One for Rag Time Piano Playing (1904) and Scott Joplin's The School of Ragtime--Six Exercises for Piano (1908).⁵¹ In his method Joplin tried to explain the source of the effectiveness of his syncopated style. He went far beyond that, however; he tried to combine ragtime and other popular styles to create a type of vernacular "opera". The results were two works--A Guest of Honor (1903) and Treemonisha (1909)--which, if they received no popular acceptance in their day, are still monuments to the artistic aspirations of the vernacular tradition.

Jazz underwent the same awakening a little later. This time the self-awareness included the listeners as well as the composer-performers. David Riesman has analyzed the parallels between the mental processes of listeners of jazz and those of cultivated styles. Both share a serious technical approach and vocabulary, an aversion to commercialism and a resulting elitism with its impatience toward the ignorant.⁵²

After jazz came of age there existed a cultural plurality which both prevented a single broadly popular style from representing a vernacular tradition and also necessitated a self-consciousness of each style that defined its place within the

⁵¹Chase, America's Music, p. 445.

⁵²Jacque Barzun, Music in American Life, p. 89.

plurality. These cultivated tendencies in ragtime and jazz were further encouraged by European interest in America's vernacular.

By the mid-twenties, the cultivated tradition was beginning to take on more popular characteristics as well. Even in the nineteenth century, the tradition of the virtuoso may be regarded as a vernacular tendency within the cultivated tradition. If the Romantic age virtuoso felt a need to edify the public with his art, he also realized the economic necessity of entertaining it. Public patronage required that he adopt a style with sufficient vernacular characteristics to have broad popular appeal; hence, many variations on popular tunes and the frequent waltzes of the Viennese ballroom type were composed and arranged.

Probably significant in the cross-currents between styles was the beginning of commercial radio broadcasting in 1920. For the first time there was a performing medium shared by an entire musical culture including all its styles and traditions. Where the concert hall was the exclusive domain of the cultivated tradition and jazz grew up in night club and restaurant orchestras, radio broadcasting brought them into such close contact that it became impossible for composers to remain unaware of developments outside their own sphere of activity. Technical improvements in the phonograph and a corresponding growth of its popularity further expanded public access to music of every kind. Over a brief span of a few years in the early 1920's these two media became the means of mass dissemination of music that they are today,

thus helping to create an atmosphere of cultural exchange which practically did away with stylistic isolationism except for the extreme avant-garde.

Coinciding with these developments in mass communication was an interest in popular styles--especially jazz--by strictly cultivated composers. Some of Copland's works of the mid-1920's such as his Music for the Theater or his "Jazz" piano concerto were symptomatic of the trend in America. Since jazz was America's most important musical export at that time, the same tendency appeared in European works such as Stravinsky's or Hindemith's ragtime movements or Milhaud's Ox on the Roof.

George Gershwin represents a point at which the cross-currents reached a genuine synthesis. Schooled both in the popular styles of ragtime and jazz and in the classics from Bach to Debussy, his fusion of traditional cultivated forms and techniques with vernacular idioms is so complete that it is not quite possible to classify his Rhapsody in Blue either as a jazz piece in the form of a piano concerto, or as a traditional concert piece which utilizes various jazz elements. This confusion of classification that resulted from such a mixture of style was the subject of debate for some time after the Rhapsody appeared.⁵³ The debate is somewhat reminiscent of the discussion about "Americanism" in Dvorak's New World Symphony.

⁵³Chase, America's Music, p. 489.

The 1930's saw a concern in many areas of art and literature about the relationship of the creative artist to society. The predominant ideal was that of the artist submerged in society.⁵⁴ There was an effort to consider the needs of the people and to create "useful" works of art. In music this resulted, for example, in the writing of pieces for high school and college bands, the production of a literature intended for amateurs, and cultivated composers writing music for films.

There was a corresponding flexibility of performance possibilities. A survey of the variety of artists who performed Guion's music illustrates the extent to which the dividing line between the cultivated and the vernacular had been blurred in the area of performance. There was no other period in America's musical history when one composer might hear his works realized by such a diversity of artists as the Chicago Symphony, Paul Whiteman's Band, Sousa's Band, Bing Crosby, Lawrence Tibbett, Nora Bayes in the Cohan Review, Percy Grainger, and the NBC Symphony. Guion's music was heard in Broadway theaters, on the Madison Square Garden Night of Stars, as ballet music and as film music.

Outside the heritage of both serious and popular styles is folk music. For the most part, the use of folk music represents a cultivated development in which ethnic material is taken up

⁵⁴Robert Crunden, From Self to Society, p. x.

self-consciously for some purpose such as musical nationalism. Thus, the distinctions between folk and popular music, and folk- and popular-styled music have another element that must be discussed. At some level, folk songs may represent a sort of regional vernacular, that is, there are relative degrees of folk and popular depending upon the region involved. In Guion's folk related music, the composer used both styles and materials that were popular in West Texas during his childhood. Some of these pieces he actually wrote while he was still living in Ballinger; they were originally intended merely for the entertainment of his family and friends. This vernacular flavor was one of the things which sets Guion's "Turkey in the Straw" type pieces apart from the earlier works of the folk music movement. It is also one of the sources of its American character.

A certain vernacular quality has always been associated with Americanism in music. It has been represented by such devices as the "stride-bass" accompaniment found in ragtime. The dance and march "oom-pah" bass is older than ragtime, of course, and its popular application is distinguished both by its consistency and by the accented quality of the afterbeats. The same accompanimental style, common in the songs of Stephen Foster, provides a good deal of the American color in many of Gottschalk's pieces such as The Banjo. The same device appears in the pieces

of Grainger, Guion and later nationalist works such as Farwell's Sourwood Mountain.

Taken as a whole, Guion's piano music illustrates how a composer could create an eclectic idiom drawing upon a wider range of styles, both historically and culturally, than could have been combined before 1920. With the possible exception of the earliest works--those published before 1925--Guion's style draws upon the whole range of the European classics through Debussy, which Guion learned as a pianist, and includes the popular styles of the day as well as the folk music he recalled from his childhood. The synthesis is close to that of Gershwin's in completeness but even broader in scope. There is none of the self-conscious sense of quotation of the vernacular found in Copland's jazz inspired works. At the same time, Guion exhibits none of the strain of a pretension to "art" which characterizes Joplin's Treemonisha on the one hand or the works of the Wa-Wan Press on the other. The following pages will attempt to describe some of the specific sources of that style.

The Texas of Guion's youth was far removed from the centers of the cultivated tradition. While he had some traditional training before going to Vienna, the most prominent features of his musical style were certainly of a popular sort. He was conversant enough with popular styles to write music strictly in ragtime and early jazz idioms. His Texas Fox Trot and Jazz Scherzo are two

such pieces. In another popular vein, his Old Maid Blues is an example of a popular blues song in the best Tin-Pan-Alley tradition. Although Guion's style is not predominately Jazz-Blues derived, this remained a consistent element in his vocabulary:

Mother Goose Suite, "Hey, Diddle Diddle"

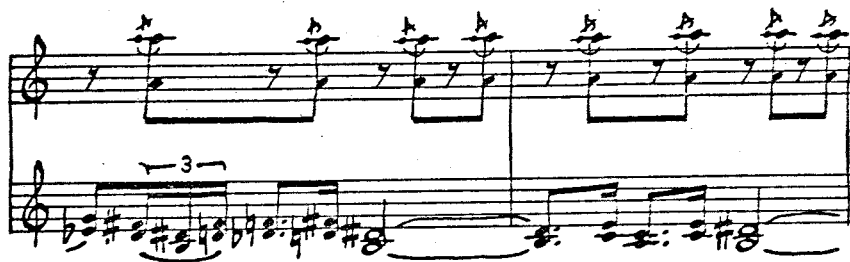
The image displays musical notation for the piece "Hey, Diddle Diddle" from the Mother Goose Suite. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system has two staves: the top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat), and the bottom staff is in bass clef with the same key signature. The top staff contains a melody with eighth and sixteenth notes, while the bottom staff provides a bass line with eighth notes. The second system also has two staves, with the top staff in treble clef and the bottom staff in bass clef, both in the same key signature. The top staff shows a continuation of the melody with some rests, and the bottom staff continues the bass line.

His Nocturne in Blue is strongly reminiscent of Gershwin's famous Rhapsody:



Elsewhere, there are hints of the softer "swing" style of jazz in the frequent use of ninth, eleventh and occasionally even more complex harmonies for the purpose of texture or color without affecting the basic triadic functions.

Although Guion recalls that works of Debussy and Ravel were not widely accepted or performed during his student days in Vienna or when he first visited New York, by 1930 he has assimilated some of the impressionist techniques. As mentioned in Chapter II, The Scissors Grinder is almost a quotation from Ravel. In Prairie Dusk, Guion incorporates some of the color of Debussy in an essentially folk-oriented piece:



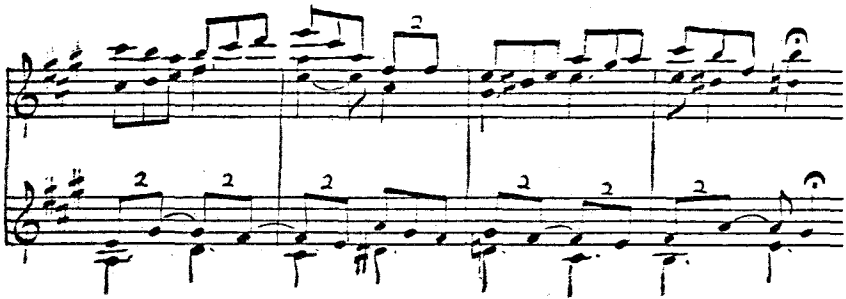


Guion's keyboard technique relies upon thick chordal textures, wide leaps, and frequent large stretches--particularly in the left hand. There is a conspicuous absence of rapid scales and figuration; there is also a contrapuntal consistency of a Romantic type. In instrumental treatment it is most closely related to Schumann. It is significant that Guion names Schumann and Bach as his favorite composers, and that reviews of his early piano recitals most frequently cite his playing of Schumann, and Bach-Busoni or Bach-Tausig. The square rhythm and phrasing as well as the pianistics of Schumann can be seen in humorous passages such as this one from "The Man in the Moon":





Similarly Schumann-like is the vocal rhythmic independence in a romantic counterpoint illustrated by these measures from "Curly Locks":



Chopin-like counterpoint is revealed in a comparison of the second variation of the F minor Ballade with this passage from Guion's "Arkansas Traveler":



The contrapuntal characteristics of Guion's style were noted by observers in the thirties. John Tasker Howard wrote, "His polyphonic subtleties never interfere with the melodic outline of the original, or destroy its delicious impertinence."⁵⁵ Probably the best example of this aspect of his music can be found in "Tom, Tom." The theme,



⁵⁵Howard, Our American Music, p. 456.

ends with a figure which, combined with a horn fifths motive, provides the material for a short development.

The first system of musical notation consists of two staves, treble and bass clef, in a key signature of one sharp (F#). The treble staff begins with a quarter rest, followed by a series of eighth and sixteenth notes. The bass staff features a similar rhythmic pattern with eighth and sixteenth notes, including some beamed pairs. The system concludes with a double bar line.

The second system of musical notation continues the development on two staves. The treble staff shows a more complex melodic line with many beamed eighth and sixteenth notes. The bass staff provides a rhythmic accompaniment with eighth and sixteenth notes. The system ends with a double bar line.

The third system of musical notation shows the final part of the short development on two staves. The treble staff has a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The bass staff continues with eighth and sixteenth notes. The system concludes with a double bar line.

Before the theme's complete return, its first two measures in

augmented form are combined with the development figure and its accompanying motive:

The image displays two systems of musical notation. Each system consists of a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The first system shows a melodic line in the treble staff and a bass line in the bass staff. The second system continues the same musical material. The notation includes various note values, rests, and dynamic markings.

Even in Guion's essentially conservative style, a few contemporary characteristics are in evidence. The use of quartal harmonies in a solidly tonal context occurs in this example:

Mother Goose Suite, "Sing a Song of Sixpence"

The image shows musical notation for the piece "Sing a Song of Sixpence" from the Mother Goose Suite. It features a treble staff with a melodic line and a bass staff with a bass line. The notation includes various note values, rests, and dynamic markings.



In "Pussy-cat, Pussy-cat" the composer uses polytonality to create a humorous effect via the irony of material of child-like simplicity in a dissonant context.



The Mother Goose Suite (1937), from which most of the above examples are taken, is perhaps the best example of the synthesis of traditions in Guion's music. The tunes themselves were written by James Williams Elliot as settings for the famous nursery rhyme texts. His songs, Mother Goose, which appeared in 1872, became so popular that by the time Guion took the melodies as the basis for his suite, they were widely regarded as traditional children's songs. To that extent, the suite exploits those elements of the virtuoso and national traditions which adopted folk-popular materials for their respective purposes. It is an interesting note

on the relationship of the cultivated and vernacular spheres at the time that the Mother Goose Suite, in an early version, was arranged for a small radio orchestra by Wallingford Riegger, who was considered a composer of the experimental avant-garde.

While individual pieces may partake more of one particular tradition, as the examples above show, the synthetic quality of Guion's style is present everywhere. His blending of musical elements never exhibits the qualities of a pastiche, nor do specific style sources assert themselves as musical quotation or parody. The diversity is integrated into a single individual style in which boundaries are completely submerged.

APPENDIX A. MANUSCRIPT SOURCES

The manuscripts of Guion's music are currently housed in three libraries: Crouch Music Library at Baylor University, the Dallas Public Library, and the Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin. There are many published works for which no known manuscripts survive; conversely, there are a few unpublished works, sketches, early versions, and fragments among the manuscripts. Not all of the scores are in Guion's hand. He recalls that he occasionally had friends make copies for him because of the sloppiness of his own handwriting. In this appendix, scores in Guion's hand are designated "original ms." Two other hands account for most of the remaining copies. There are also a few copies which appear to have been made by publishers' copyists. Guion has used many of these copies as working manuscripts, and he has occasionally added labels and comments at a later date.

This appendix includes all the manuscript sources, regardless of the medium of performance.