

The University of Texas at Arlington

Charles Griffes's Piano *Sonata* as Emblematic of Mature Style

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Abstract

Composer Charles Tomlinson Griffes has had many labels placed upon him as an early figure of 20th-century music in America, most of which place much weight on his American nationality within the context of musical trends outside of the continent. Recognized most prominently for his impressionistic piano compositions, Charles Griffes had multiple periods of stylistic influence that are less-often discussed. His later works are experimental and modernist in nature, and as lesser-known works from a lesser-covered composer it is uncommon for scholars to cover them. The music of Griffes has much importance to both the history of American art music and the emergence of modernism in Europe and America. In Griffes's music specifically, there is room for deeper analyses to show how his music is constructed and operates. In this paper, I examine the form and salient features of his piano *Sonata* (1918) to provide deeper analysis of this work as well as to show this piece as the beginning of a new "mature style." Using Edward Said's book *One Late Style* as a basis, I argue that Griffes's final works (1917-20) in general represent his maturity as a composer who had fully gestated previous influences into a personal style. These elements of analysis and style show something of Griffes beyond a short label of "American Impressionist." They present, rather, a composer who reached compositional maturity combined with a personally unique style which placed him among the composers of note in the first half of the twentieth century.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Composer Charles Tomlinson Griffes has had many labels placed upon him, from “American Impressionist” to the “Harbinger of American Art Music” in the modern age.¹ As an early figure in 20th century music in America, these labels place much weight on his American nationality within the context of musical trends outside of the continent. Recognized most prominently for his impressionistic piano compositions, Charles Griffes had multiple periods of stylistic influence that are less-often discussed. His later works are experimental and modernist in nature, and as lesser-known works from a lesser-covered composer it is uncommon for scholars to cover them. The music of Griffes has much importance to both the history of American art music and the emergence of modernism in Europe and America. In Griffes’s music specifically, there is room for deeper analyses to show how his music is constructed and operates.

Charles T. Griffes was born in Elmira, New York in 1884, and took piano lessons from an early age with his sister, Katherine, and later with Mary Selina Broughton who taught at the Elmira College. In 1903 Griffes enrolled at the Stern Conservatory in Berlin, Germany to pursue a career as a concert pianist; the study of piano performance would serve him well in premiering his own piano works later in life. During his time in Germany, Griffes became more interested in composition, leading to him shifting focus toward composing. His first stylistic period appeared around 1907 when he returned to the U.S. and became director of music at the Hackley School in New York. This period is called his “Germanic period” and is characterized by the influence of Brahms and Strauss. From 1911 to roughly 1916, Griffes’s style changed to include elements of

¹ Edward Maisel, *Charles T. Griffes: The Life of an American Composer* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1984); Peggy Marie Walton, “The Music of Charles Tomlinson Griffes; Harbinger of American Art Music’s Transition Into the Modern Age” (Master’s Thesis, Houston, Texas, Rice University, 1988).

musical impressionism. During this time, he composed many of his well-known works, which are often poetic and free in compositional structure, notably *Three Tone-Pictures* and *Roman Sketches*. In 1916 and 1917, Griffes ventured into a new style of orientalism, a period during which he produced less than ten works which were influenced largely by Japanese music and scales. Griffes's final compositional period occurred from late-1917 to his death in 1920. This period shows a vein of neoclassicism and modernism which flaunt tonality and rhythmic complexity. Only three significant works were completed during this time, as Griffes spent much of 1919 ill with an empyema. Much of his time able to work was spent orchestrating previous piano compositions as well as publishing teaching pieces under the pseudonym Arthur Tomlinson. Griffes died in April 1920 as a result of influenza in tandem with his empyema.²

A mere two years before this untimely death in 1920, Charles Griffes set out to compose what would become his *magnum opus*. This *Piano Sonata*, completed in 1918, signifies Griffes at the height of his compositional prowess and maturity. Unchained from the typical additions of poetry or stylistic techniques favored by his contemporaries in their own sonatas, this intense work is the culmination of Griffes's mature style. This is shown in the rejection of simple sonata form, poetry, traditional scales or modes, and treatment of melody and harmony, and unapologetic use of dissonance and polyrhythms. An ever-evolving composer, Griffes adopted elements from neoclassicism, alongside sophisticated frameworks of modernist music, and eventually created a "Griffes style," that of a mature composer forging his own path.

In this paper, I am studying Griffes's *Sonata* as a representation of his ability as a fully-fledged composer. Griffes is a fascinating and significant composer whose compositional style

² Donna K. Anderson, "Griffes, Charles T(omlinson)" (Oxford University Press, 2001); Marion Bauer, "Charles T. Griffes as I Remember Him," *The Musical Quarterly* 29, no. 3 (July 1943): 357, 379; Maisel, *Charles T. Griffes: The Life of an American Composer*, 324-25.

has not been fully understood due to a lack of thorough analyses. Building on the work of earlier biographical studies of Griffes's life, I investigate how the Piano *Sonata* relates to the rest of his music. I determine that this work demonstrates that Griffes achieved stylistic maturity. In order to argue this point, I examine the work's formal design, the stylistic elements it shares with Griffes's other music, and the concept of artistic maturity. While scholars have said that Griffes's *Sonata* is the height of his mature style, there is much analytical work to be done to demonstrate what his mature style is, or how this work captures it. I examine this especially as it relates to so-called "late style," a phenomenon that was famously conceptualized by Edward Said and that has been applied to music studies by Marianne Wheeldon in reference to the music of Griffes's exact contemporary, Claude Debussy. I argue that Griffes's modernistic embrace of the two-dimensional sonata form, as well as a range of distinctive textural and rhythmic traits clearly demarcates *Sonata* from the works of Griffes's Impressionist and Exoticist periods, indicating the development of Griffes's mature style.

Chapter 2: Form

One of the most perplexing aspects of the construction of Griffes's *Sonata* is the form. The name of the piece gives a certain level of expectation as to how the material of the composition will be formulated, but, especially on first listen, the *Sonata* is very deviant from Classical period norms. A closeness with neoclassicism is seen in this penchant for deviations, an alluring style for the composers Griffes was familiar with near this time such as Debussy, Ravel, and Stravinsky.³ As the other elements of the *Sonata* are modernist in nature, with some similarities to late-romantic techniques, this work exemplifies the nature of Griffes's compositional style in his final years. The original program for the *Sonata* calls it a "Sonata in one movement." This is how Griffes saw his work, but there has been discourse about the proper formal type to assign.⁴ The *Sonata* is indeed in one long movement but is also split into three distinct sections which mostly reference thematic material that originated outside of that section in heavily fragmented manners. The opinions about these sections and how they contribute to the form are mixed, with some calling it one movement in sonata form and two largely free in form (Anderson, Maisel) and some calling the *Sonata* as a whole a double-function sonata (Walton).⁵ Regardless of analytical label, harmonic techniques and musical characteristics reinforce these sections without needing to properly name them. Over the course of this chapter, I will address these sections and how they are delineated in order to present a formal label for the *Sonata*. I argue for the label of two-dimensional sonata through the examination of previous ideas about

³ Donna K. Anderson, *Charles T. Griffes: A Life in Music* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), 186.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 214-15; Donna K. Anderson, "The Works of Charles T. Griffes: A Descriptive Catalog" (PhD Dissertation, Indiana, Indiana University, 1966), 315.

⁵ Anderson, *Charles T. Griffes: A Life in Music.*, 214-15; Maisel, *Charles T. Griffes: The Life of an American Composer*, 279-84; Peggy Marie Walton, "The Music of Charles Tomlinson Griffes: Harbinger of American Art Music's Transition Into the Modern Age" (Master's Thesis, Houston, Texas, Rice University, 1988), 111.

what the form of the *Sonata* is, what recurrent elements show about sectional divides, and how these sections relate to one another.

In a quick attempt to assign a form to this *Sonata*, it seems convenient to analyze based on what is expected. Many call the *Sonata* a work in three movements due to the three different double-bar markings that are present in roughly each third of the piece. The mood indications for each of these sections do also align with the Fast-Slow-Fast organization of a three-movement sonata. Even so, Griffes gave clear indication of the work being in one movement.⁶ Donna Anderson says of the form, “unlike the earlier works for piano, which were rhapsodic one-movement forms, it [the *Sonata*] is cast in three movements with the two outer movements in recognizable sonata structure.”⁷ This thought is shared by Daniel Boda, who argues for a sonata-form first movement, a three-part form second movement, and modified sonata-form plus coda for the third.⁸ These writers conceive of tonal relations which dictate the form because of the tonal contrast, even as they are very similar thematic material. It seems to me, and perhaps those that argue for a different formal structure, that an explanation which addresses the shared material which crops up throughout the three sections or movements is more necessary for accurately defining a form.

For those who have attempted to define the form of the *Sonata* in greater detail, the preferred label has been ‘double-function.’ The term used in this case references a typical sonata form on two levels, within the first movement as well as divided among *every* movement of the work. Therefore, the first, second, third, and fourth movements of a sonata operate in a similar

⁶ Anderson, *Charles T. Griffes: A Life in Music*, 186.

⁷ Donna Anderson, “Charles T(omlinson) Griffes,” *Grove Music Online*, 2001, 2.

⁸ Daniel Boda, “The Music of Charles T. Griffes” (PhD Dissertation, Florida, Florida State University, 1962), 105-06.

fashion in the *complete sonata* (cycle) as do the exposition, development, recapitulation, and coda in the sonata-form movement (form). Edward Maisel devotes several pages near the end of his book, more than he devotes to any other Griffes work, to the *Sonata* and its form and musical features. Maisel comes to see the formal nature of *Sonata* as relational, with the Exposition, Development, and Recapitulation of the sonata-form movement relating to each of the three sections of the work in order.⁹ Peggy Walton qualifies the nature of the double function sonata form in more detail than Maisel, assigning specific labels of thematic content and sonata sections to the measures of the *Sonata* and their place within the form.¹⁰ What lacks in Walton's account is a look at *why* these labels are put at certain measures and how they specifically relate to other thematic elements and musical textures.

Labeling *Sonata* as double function makes more sense than calling it a multi-movement work with an individual movement or two in sonata form, but existing attempts to do so have lacked a method for defining the internal elements of the form, specifically how material returns from the Exposition to the Recapitulation. This difficulty arises partially from the complex and modernist styling of the music, which contains to so much tonal and textural ambiguity that determining which passages are references to prior material is troublesome. The remaining difficulty in describing the form most coherently arises from the lack of consistent terminology regarding this double function form at the time; each scholar made ad-hoc decisions about the terms to use as labels, as well as about what those terms specifically mean. More recently, Steven Vande Moortele has attempted to create a framework for modeling this form and terminology in his book *Two-Dimensional Sonata Form*. This scholarship on what Vande

⁹ Maisel, *Charles T. Griffes: The Life of an American Composer*, 279-87.

¹⁰ Walton, "The Music of Charles Tomlinson Griffes: Harbinger of American Art Music's Transition Into the Modern Age," 116-18.

Moortele prefers to call two-dimensional sonata form has greatly aided my formal definition of this *Sonata*.

For Vande Moortele, double-function forms are distinct from two-dimensional forms in their lack of clear hierarchy between sections. His definition of two-dimensional form is similar to that of double-function form, “the different movements of a sonata cycle are combined within one single-movement sonata form.”¹¹ However, in the two-dimensional sonata there exists a defined hierarchical level to which formal units must align. These levels, shown in Table 1.1, display how each piece of a two-dimensional sonata fits into the form as a whole. For Vande Moortele, the only aspect of the sonata cycle that has received attention when reviewing ‘double-function’ form sonatas is “the way the separate movements of a composition are integrated into a cycle by means of thematic or motivic interruptions.”¹² This creates an equal hierarchical level in the combination of the sections of the sonata form with the movements of a sonata cycle within this single-movement form. In this theory, an analysis of the form which includes a coda becomes a near-essential formal unit to the double-functionality of the form. Indeed, a coda creates a more evenly balanced sonata form, as the closing group of the initial movement/section aligns with the coda in the final movement, as well as moves the finale to a closing material.¹³

¹¹ Steven Vande Moortele, *Two-Dimensional Sonata Form: Form and Cycle in Single-Movement Instrumental Works by Liszt, Strauss, Schoenberg, and Zemlinsky* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2009), 1.

¹² *Ibid*, 16.

¹³ *Ibid*, 196.

Cycle	Multi-movement work as a whole
Form	Each individual movement
Sections	Expo/Dev/Recap and any intro and coda
Segments	MT group, transition, ST group, closing theme group

TABLE 1. Vande Moortele's levels of hierarchy in two-dimensional sonata form

Sonata Form			
Exposition	Development	Recapitulation	Coda
MT Group	Transition	ST Group	Closing Group
Exposition/Recapitulation			

TABLE 2. Relations of formal elements within the form of a two-dimensional sonata

Vande Moortele remarks that the “two-dimensional Sonata form is very much a phenomenon of the musical modernism from around the turn of the 20th century,” meaning that the theory is particularly relevant to Griffes’s *Sonata*, composed in 1918.¹⁴ Vande Moortele applied this framework to single-movement sonata works written very close to the time of Griffes’s *Sonata*. He also analyzed works using two-dimensional sonata form by both Arnold Schoenberg and Alexander Zemlinsky which had been written between 5-10 years prior to Griffes’s work. These works show how similarities in compositional tendencies can be drawn out on the basis of formal analysis and provide examples of how the two-dimensional form was being utilized by contemporaneous composers within the increasing modernistic music. As such, this framework has precedent to be applied to a work such as Griffes’s *Sonata* and its musical

¹⁴ Ibid, 199.

style. The makeup of the work will contribute to the definition of form as well as what the form conveys as to the character and style of the *Sonata*.

To discuss the formal units of the *Sonata* and their alignment within Vande Moortele's two-dimensional framework, I will first lay out my analysis of their placement at the overall two-dimensional level before delving into a more detailed explanation of each formal section and its own components.¹⁵ At the two-dimensional level, the Exposition maps on to Section I of the sonata cycle. This is the most typical of the sections in regard to double function and two-dimensional sonatas as it is a straightforward sonata form. The Development section maps on to Section II of the work, which internally is in rounded binary form. This section develops the use of pitch sets and motivic fragments from the Exposition, but for most of its material it introduces new chromaticism from the pitch collection. The final piece of the two-dimensional framework is the dual Recapitulation and Coda which maps on to the third and final section of the *Sonata*. Beyond these delineations of sections based on the written barlines, each piece of the form has a musical norm or set of norms to which they correspond. These even follow a sense of Classical sonata movement layout, albeit with respect to intensity rather than tempo: instead of Fast-Slow-Fast movements, they are more Loud/Forceful-Softer-Loud again. Section I is framed upon the sonata form with a preference for building textures upon material introduced at the beginning of the section. Section II creates the texture of an alternating accompaniment-pattern repetition against complex treble line and a complex accompaniment against a thick but more lyrical treble line. The musical characteristics of Section III resemble those of the first section, with reference to the accompaniment patterns of Section II.

¹⁵ Throughout this paper, I will use capitalized "Section I/II/III" to indicate that I am referring to one of the three sections of the *Sonata*. Lowercase "section" will refer to the concept of a section in general or an internal formal section within a main "Section."

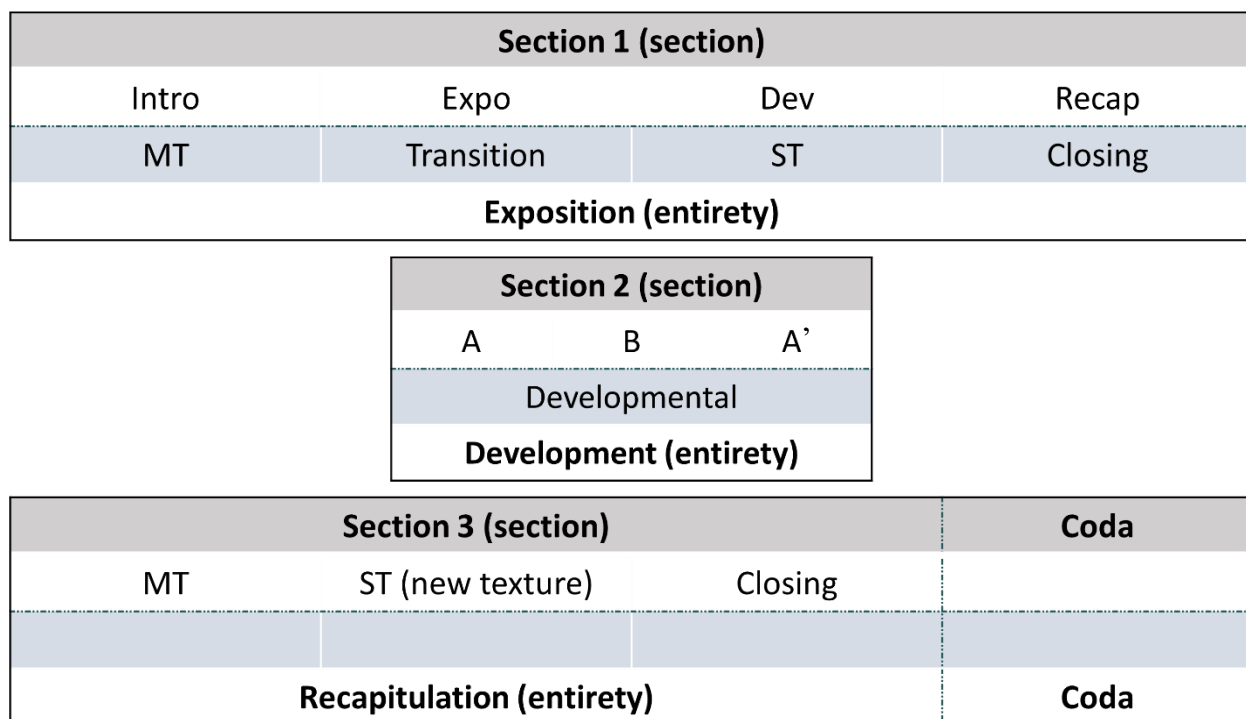


DIAGRAM 1.1. Elements of Griffes *Sonata*, sonata form and sonata cycle

Section I of the *Sonata* is contained within measures 1 through 124, the beginning to the first double-barline, and is in sonata form. After beginning with a short introductory motive, the Exposition of the section begins in m. 6. Here, the main theme begins, presenting a unique pitch collection, with a possible implied lean toward a tonal focus of D.¹⁶ This material continues through m. 22, fragmented and grown in multiple ways. Mm. 23-36 contain two sets of transitional material which reinforce the added F# before utilizing a prolonged B \flat -F tonality. The subordinate theme in m. 36 utilizes many augmented 2nds and diminished 3rd intervals while shifting many B-flats to B-natural. This theme is fragmented in a similar manner as the main theme but traverses multiple pitch centers and uses more non-thematic motions to transition between these fragmentations. Closing material beginning from mm. 51-56 uses increased

¹⁶ I address this pitch collection further in Chapter 3 on Salient Features.

rhythmic activity, added chromaticism, and thicker chord texture to end the Exposition of Section I.

The Development is structurally similar to the Exposition (minus the introductory motive), but it utilizes textural harmonies stacked on top of the thematic melodies as well as new ornamentation and interpolation. The way that these new tonalities relate to the first occurrence is that they are generally derived from the accompaniment material of the original statement. In the development of themes, there are typically multiple iterations of each theme which are supported by simpler accompaniment with more non-collection pitches. This is shown in Example 1.1, where the appearance of the subordinate theme in the Development of the sonata form differs from that of the initial appearance from the Exposition. A new transition between the main and subordinate themes is used which better shows a pitch focus on D. The developed subordinate theme material is quite short in comparison to the main theme, but experiences significantly more chromatic change from the initial appearance. The closing for the Development uses increased accompaniment rhythm and altered motivic material from the Exposition to transition to the Recapitulation.

(a) mm. 36-37

(b) mm. 105-106

EXAMPLE 1.1. Griffes, *Sonata*: ST in Exposition (a) and Development (b) in the sonata form

The Recapitulation begins in m. 89 with the return of the main theme. This time, the accompaniment is rhythmically quicker, using triplet 16th-notes under the full chordal texture of

inner notes of the theme. The main theme here is compressed from the Exposition, covering only six measures before the transition begins in m. 95. The extended transition now contains fragments of the main theme at short points and ends with a clear repeated B♭ under F. The subordinate theme returns now on D, giving further weight to the opinion that the pitch center of Section I of the *Sonata* is D as the subordinate theme returns on “tonic.” The closure of the section in m. 115 switches to a monophonic texture before shifting once again in m. 121 to a thick chordal texture. This repetition and altering of two sustaining chords signals the end of the section at m. 124.

<u>Section I</u>			
mm. 1-124			
mood/tempo equivalent		<i>Feroce</i> , forceful	
elements of cycle		Introduction, Exposition	
form		Sonata	
mm.	units	texture	rotation
--Introduction--			
1-9	Intro motive	mid, polyphonic	
--Exposition--			
10-22	MT Group	monophonic -> thick	
23-35	Transition	thick, active	
36-49	ST Group	thin -> thick	
50-56	Closing Group	thick, monophonic	
--Development--			
57-76	MT	thin, new accomp -> busy	
77-88	ST	thick	
--Recapitulation--			
89-94	MT Group	mid-thick	
95-104	Transition	thick, MT fragmentation	
105-115	ST Group	thin -> mid-thick	
115-124	Closing Group	thin -> mid-thick, homophonic	

FIGURE 1.1. *Sonata*, elements of Section I

The structure of the first section of the *Sonata* informs the way that the overall sonata cycle will proceed. As such, we see the first section appears to be a Type 3 sonata form with an introduction and a free development section, which resembles how Section II develops following

Section I. Within the strictures of this sonata form however, there are also some deviations that contribute to growth of activity between movements. In the recapitulation of Section I, the material that returns *is* structurally the same, but in nearly every case Griffes includes ornamental additions added onto the melody. An increase in the rhythmic speed of the accompaniment also appears in the recapitulation. This is a method of creating an altered texture for repeated material which appears quite frequently in the *Sonata*, in simple reappearances of material and in more complete ones such as repetition of a primary theme group.

The second Section of the *Sonata* is an overarching ABA form and runs from mm. 125 to 195. In the scheme of a two-dimensional sonata, this section contains the developmental material of the cycle as well as the transition to the material of Section III. Significantly, the section lacks a development of the material seen in Section I. However, Section II develops through an increased amount of chromaticism in the sonata cycle and contrasts the forceful texture of the outer sections. This is a method of modernist styling wherein the developed tonal nature of the motives is forgone in favor of showcasing new textures and motives which increase the complex chromatic and rhythmic feel in the section. The musical elements contained within the ABA form in Section II are also altered to better fit within the middle of the two connected sections it follows and precedes by utilizing small fragments of the main and subordinate theme in transitional material. Other analysts have not recognized this second Section as a developmental section because there is no development of motives from Section I here. I, however, argue that this is the development in this sonata cycle because this motivic development is replaced with a different kind of development, a chromatic development.

The beginning of Section II contains two phrases of three measures each (Example 1.2). This is the introduction of the material that is the basis of part A, but which is fragmented in a

new meter of $\frac{5}{4}$ in m. 131. As seen in Example 1.3, the motivic motion in mm. 131-132 contains the same pitches and order as the initial statement [$B\flat E\flat F G\flat - D$], but they are stretched out to cover two measures in $\frac{5}{4}$. Measures 135-145 are then a nearly identical repetition of mm. 125-134 with alterations to end on the $B\flat$. It is this repetition of material that ends on m. 145 that most clearly signals the end of part A. This, combined with the fermata and the introduction of new chromaticism in m. 146 give way to part B of Section II.

Molto tranquillo

125 126 127 128 129 130

p espressivo

EXAMPLE 1.2. Griffes, *Sonata*, mm. 125-130: Section II, opening of part

131 132 133

p *mf*

134 135 136 137

espressivo

EXAMPLE 1.3. Griffes, *Sonata*, mm. 131-135: Section III

The ending of the A part leads into the B part through a closure on B \flat with an ascending accompaniment of 4ths and 5ths to F-flat. This begins the main motivic idea of the first part of the B part through the ascending half-step motion, as seen in Example 1.4. Here, the treble and bass clef operate with separate ideas played together and using the same pitch classes. Increased rhythmic activity and complexity at this point align with a *poco agitato* marking in m. 152 to contrast heavily with the calmer indications of parts A and A'. The rest of the section continues through freely fragmenting and developing the main motive using various rhythms and pitch centers in order to land on a B \flat -major chord at m. 160.

The musical score for Example 1.4 consists of two systems of piano accompaniment. The first system covers measures 145 and 146. Measure 145 begins with a *rit.* marking and a *mf* dynamic. The right hand has a half note G \flat with a fermata, while the left hand plays a descending eighth-note line: G \flat , F \flat , E \flat , D \flat . Measure 146 is marked *a tempo* and *marcato*. The right hand has a half note B \flat with a fermata, and the left hand plays an ascending eighth-note line: D \flat , E \flat , F \flat , G \flat . The second system covers measures 147 and 148. Measure 147 features a *f* dynamic and a half note B \flat with a fermata in the right hand, and a descending eighth-note line in the left hand: G \flat , F \flat , E \flat , D \flat . Measure 148 features a *f* dynamic and a half note B \flat with a fermata in the right hand, and an ascending eighth-note line in the left hand: D \flat , E \flat , F \flat , G \flat . The score includes various musical notations such as triplets and slurs.

EXAMPLE 1.4. Griffes, *Sonata*, mm. 145-148: Section II, half-step motion in LH during part B

The second half of the B part, from mm. 161-173, heavily contrasts the first half. Here, a new motive begins with a *tranquillo* indication and a thin texture in both hands. One connecting element between the two parts of the B part are the pitch classes used, with the second part focused on a beginning and final pitch of D (Example 1.5). This aligns with the restatement of

the Main Theme material from Section I of the *Sonata*, which also restates the motive beginning on D. A sense of tonal ambiguity is still achieved here, however, through the simple accompaniment. Example 1.7 shows how the tonality centers on B \flat -major as a harmony from mm. 161-162, but the measures beyond this operate with the B \flat -F as a pedal. So, even as there is a motion to and from a major tonality, the underpinning of it does not reinforce but rather contradicts the melodic line. These features show how Griffes's music here is a pitch-centered approach rather than a tonal approach.

The musical score for Example 1.5, Griffes, Sonata, mm. 160-168, is presented in three systems. The first system (mm. 160-162) begins with a melodic line in the right hand featuring triplets and a piano accompaniment in the left hand with a steady eighth-note pattern. The second system (mm. 163-165) continues the melodic and accompanimental lines. The third system (mm. 166-168) concludes the passage with a change in dynamics and a final chord. Performance markings include *rit.*, *tranneillo*, *pp*, *p*, and *dim.*

EXAMPLE 1.5. Griffes, Sonata, mm. 160-168: Section II, part B motive 2, motion around D

The return of the part A material appears in m. 174 with only the main three measure phrase played (Example 1.6). This appendage, while not uncommon in binary form, is strikingly shorter than the B part before it as well as the retransition to Section III that it leads into in m. 180. As this A material is so short, the bulk of the actual part is used to transition to Section II. From mm. 180-195 the transition works to move from a pitch center on B \flat or F to one on A. Mm. 184-190 utilize an unusual pentatonic scale of [A B \flat C \sharp D E \flat] (Example 1.7). This pitch usage is expanded in m. 191 to increase the prevalence of A and to close with a homophonic texture on E \flat in m. 195. This change in texture signals the closure of the section and, combined with the more obvious double barline, signals where Section III will begin.

The musical score for Example 1.6 consists of two systems of piano music. The first system covers measures 174 to 177. The right hand plays a melodic line with a three-measure phrase in m. 174, followed by a four-measure phrase in m. 175, a three-measure phrase in m. 176, and a final three-measure phrase in m. 177. The left hand provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and moving lines. The dynamic marking is *pp*. The second system covers measures 178 to 183. Measure 178 continues the melodic line. Measure 179 has a tempo change to a dotted quarter note equal to a half note (♩ = ½). Measure 180 is marked *p* and features a pentatonic scale in the right hand. Measures 181 and 182 continue the melodic line. Measure 183 is marked *accel.* and ends with a final chord. The left hand continues with a rhythmic accompaniment.

EXAMPLE 1.6. Griffes, *Sonata*, mm. 174-183: A' of Section II into transition

The image displays a musical score for Example 1.7, consisting of two systems of music. The first system covers measures 184 through 188, and the second system covers measures 189 and 190. The music is written for piano in G minor (one flat) and 3/4 time. The first system shows a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. Measure 188 includes the dynamic marking *f sempre accel.* The second system continues the melodic and bass lines, with measure 190 showing a more complex melodic figure.

EXAMPLE 1.7. Griffes, *Sonata*, mm. 184-190: altered pentatonic scale

Section III operates as a dual Recapitulation and Coda in the scheme of the sonata cycle. Beginning in m. 196, this unit opens by taking the main theme group from Section I and its pitches and altering the melodic contour. Here, the pitch center focuses on A while stretching to the D, which was the center in Section I, above and below. The most apparent alteration here is the extension of the actual thematic material, which now includes a figure of A-G \sharp -A prior to the main theme motive that was previously familiar. This motion resembles a retransitional gesture of a Classical sonata. Example 1.8 marks where the initial material from Section I began the motive and what is extension material of Section III. In m. 206, a variant of this theme is again played now leaning the pitch center toward D through the usage of open fifth D-A (Example 1.9). The main theme has two more techniques of alteration applied to it, shown in Example 1.10, which work to increase the textural thickness and further enforce D as a pitch center. This material all leads to closing material from mm. 232-237.

EXAMPLE 1.8. Griffes, *Sonata*, mm. 197-201:

EXAMPLE 1.9. Griffes, *Sonata*, mm. 206-209:

(a) mm. 220-221

(b) mm. 228--229

EXAMPLE 1.10. Griffes, *Sonata*: further alterations of main theme material

The structure of the subordinate theme group's motive in Section III is contained within the space of three half-steps. However, the melodic contour is largely different from that of each previous occurrence of subordinate-theme material in that a slower rhythm is combined with passing notes to fill tone space. These elements make it difficult to recognize this as derived from subordinate-theme material, especially aurally, the upper and lower limits of each bar

emphasize the melodic notes of the subordinate theme. Example 1.11 shows how this small amount of tonal space is utilized to create a theme which grows from simple material, as well as highlights notes of the original theme. This theme is continually built upon until m. 259 where a short four-bar closure ends on a familiar B \flat -F. The return of main theme group material in m. 264 further shows the contrast of pitch focus on A and D. This return ends nearly mirrors that from the beginning of Section III but now ends with a transition to the altered ST material in m. 304.¹⁷ The new texture of the ST (Example 1.12) also signals the homophonic closing texture that will begin in m. 316 to end the Recapitulation portion of Section III.

The image displays a musical score for Example 1.11, consisting of two systems of piano and forte sections. The first system covers measures 238 to 241, starting with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The second system covers measures 242 to 245, starting with a forte (*f*) dynamic. Red circles highlight specific notes in the melody across both systems, indicating the subordinate theme. The score includes treble and bass staves with various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamics.

EXAMPLE 1.11. Griffes, *Sonata*, mm. 238-245: Section III, subordinate theme

¹⁷ The transitional material here, mm. 288-303, is utilized in faster rhythm in the Coda, mm. 329-331.

The image shows a musical score for Example 1.12, consisting of two staves (treble and bass) and four measures (304-307). The key signature has one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 7/8. Measure 304 starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic and features a series of chords in the treble staff and eighth notes in the bass staff. Measure 305 continues the chordal texture. Measure 306 begins with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic and shows a change in the treble staff melody. Measure 307 concludes the sequence with a final chord in the treble and eighth notes in the bass.

EXAMPLE 1.12. Griffes, *Sonata*, mm. 304-307: reappearance of ST in Section III

The Coda portion of Section III, and of the whole sonata cycle, begins in m. 321 and introduces free motivic movement, flourishing figures, and complex rhythmic connections.

Example 1.13 shows how the Coda begins with a $\frac{2}{4}$ against $\frac{6}{8}$ explicit polymeter before beginning its function as a long addendum to the rest of the piece. Melodic and motivic ideas are played in four-measure phrases, moving from one idea to the next with fast pace. This is a stark contrast to the uneven, overlapping musical ideas of the previous sections. Short references or iterations of previous thematic material appears throughout the Coda, creating a sense of the entire sonata being played through in short order. The final pages of the *Sonata* are a development of texture, with Griffes gradually increasing the chordal thickness in each hand as the Coda progresses. From mm. 394-410 the thickness of each hand's part is roughly equal while they operate offset rhythmically by a half-beat. Measure 411 begins the concluding material for the entire sonata, calling back to a similar thick, homophonic texture for closing (Example 1.14). The final chord of the work is an open consonance of D-A in m. 417, this forceful closing gesture shows glimpses of pitch centricity yet alludes certainty in favor of an open sonority.

Appassionato

8^{va} 321 322 323 324

EXAMPLE 1.13. Griffes, *Sonata*, mm.321-324: Beginning of Coda, Section III

(8) 413 414 415 416 417 418

EXAMPLE 1.14. Griffes, *Sonata*, mm. 413-418: Closing bars

The form of Griffes's *Sonata* is not simple or straightforward, which has led to many different interpretations of the form which have often been more abstract than specific. In this chapter, I have presented the framework of Vande Moortele's two-dimensional sonata form to categorize this piece as having a sonata form on two levels. I also address in more specific detail what the formal units of this work are and how they operate in the hierarchy of a two-dimensional sonata. This complex type of form shows that the composer was interested in planning an overall structure for the music, in particular using previous thematic material throughout the sections. The form also conveys a sense of evenness in its parts which contrasts with the vast amount of disjunct and often scattered nature of the inner elements of the music. As the form of the *Sonata* influences the listener's overall perception of the piece, so too do the

internal elements of music which exist within these formal units. While the form conveys a large-scale sense of structure and organized direction, the musical features convey the musical character of the work.

Chapter 3: Salient Features

In Griffes's *Sonata*, the form enforces a complex hierarchical structure that informs the direction of the musical material. Within the units of the form, the surface level musical elements also provide the character of the *Sonata*. The amount of understanding of musical style that one can derive from motivic development, connecting passages, and tonal or pitch-centric changes are greater than that of the formal skeleton. These salient musical features also help to reinforce the sections of the form through their gestures. As the form of the work shows a sense of formal progression that was the peak of innovation for Griffes, the interactions of salient musical elements operate on a similar plane. The *Sonata* shows a number of interactions, developments, and a uniqueness of tonal style which Griffes had not completely explored before. The presentation of salient features which appear in the *Sonata* set it apart from the salient features of Western Art Music. Here, the features often overlap, immediately follow or precede one another, and are not so clear to identify given the modernist structure of writing. The form and musical features of the *Sonata* connect to show the style of Griffes's writing at this time, and even separately require a deeper look at each part to show how the construction of the *Sonata* contributes to this style of composition.

A consistent method for categorizing, defining, and selecting features of salience in the *Sonata* will be necessary. As salience requires notability or difference, my process of attributing which musical parameters constitute salience is reliant on how these elements function. These features should operate to provide a contrast from the material that preceded it in some way, and the most contrasting element is then the features that is brought forward at that point. Given the modernist nature of the *Sonata*, typical concepts of salience, while operable to an extent, will require some qualification and redefinition as to how they convey meaning in this style without

clear tonal motion. In this chapter, I will use the features of salience from Leonard Ratner's *Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style* as a guidance for the elements I address. I utilize these features without interest in the style of music that Ratner describes, but rather as a consistent method for describing musical style. As mentioned previously, given that the salient features of the *Sonata* fall within the continuous as well as non-tonal nature of the work, many of the features will have to be adjusted to account for this. As such, Table 2.1 provides my account for the features of salience that Ratner categorizes and how they appear more specifically in the musical features of Griffes's *Sonata*.¹⁸

Features of Musical Salience		
<u>Ratner's Feature</u>	<u>In context of Griffes's <i>Sonata</i></u>	<u>Commonality</u>
Harmony	Pitch Collection	Less
Texture	Note density and alignment of voices	Prevalent
Periodicity	Closure	Less
Melody	Melody/Motive	Moderate
Rhythm	Rhythm	Prevalent

TABLE 2.1. Ratner's Features of Musical Salience in Context of Charles Griffes's *Sonata*

To begin drawing from Ratner's list of salient features, I will address the features which contribute to the main theme of Section I. In the previous chapter I discussed this theme in relation to the overall form of the *Sonata*, showing how the theme was developed into additional material in each section and operated to reinforce the boundaries of form. Here, I will address how the layers of musical features which make up the main theme each contribute to a more detailed understanding of overall construction of the *Sonata*. Features immediately apparent here

¹⁸ Leonard G. Ratner, *Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1980), vii-viii.

include texture, harmony, periodicity, and melody. Through each statement of the main theme a different feature of salience is emphasized in tandem with the others, creating a complex layering of elements which tip the balance of musical texture in different ways.

Harmony

To analyze the components of Griffes's *Sonata* most effectively, a certain degree of clarity about how these components relate to one another and function is necessary. As the tonal music of the common practice era has a coded motion of V-I to signal closure in the most basic sense, so too can music of post-tonal creation.¹⁹ In the post-tonal music of Griffes's *Sonata*, a simple way to explain this is that the tonal elements of a coded motion are more vague, while the elements of rhythm and texture step up to show what is being conveyed in the absence of recognized tonal motion. An example of this can be a non-changing harmony which mimics the slowing tempo of a harmonic closure yet substitutes a homophonic texture in place of a harmonic cadence. In the *Sonata*, there exists some level of influence from the tonal tradition, but such times rarely occur in a straightforward manner. Here, Griffes's tendencies have some level of influence from his symbolist compositions written prior. At the time of writing the *Sonata* however, Griffes had extended his foray into loosening tonality greatly to include the near absence of tonality in favor of a pitch collection of his own creation.

The most basic element that the *Sonata* is built upon is the pitch collection. In Ratner's terms of salience, this most closely aligns with harmony with the obvious understanding that the "harmony" we are talking about here is the pitch collection. While there are deviations from the collection, at times quite a lot of deviations, they operate in a similar manner to chromaticism

¹⁹ Paul Fleet, "Mining the gap of musics *with* and *after* tonality," in *Musics with and after Tonality: Mining the Gap*, ed. Paul Fleet (New York: Routledge, 2022), 2.

altering the underlying tonal focus or harmony in a Romantic-era work. Scholars given multiple possibilities for spelling this collection, but the most common choice includes the pitches [D E \flat F G \sharp A B \flat C \sharp].²⁰ These are seen most quickly in the main theme material of Section I. This ordering of pitches is based on the complete collection as seen in the full main theme, with the understanding that the pitch center that begins and ends the collection is D. In the first two measures of the theme, mm. 6-7, we see each pitch of the collection make at least one appearance (Example 2.1). This is a clean usage of the pitch collection, where it is adhered to throughout this appearance of the main theme. Further, as the main theme presents this collection, the rest of the *Sonata* continues to utilize it as well.

EXAMPLE 2.1. Griffes, *Sonata*, mm. 5-7: pitch collection in main theme

The notes of the pitch collection are a place for contemplation regarding composer choice. This collection contains many tritones and augmented or diminished intervals between the notes, which contribute to the post-tonal nature of the *Sonata*. In Table 2.2, I present a comparison of intervals that can be made from the collection and from a diatonic minor scale, showing a greater amount of tritones and minor 2nds in Griffes's scale. In full musical context, a

²⁰ Dean Luther Arlton, "American Piano Sonatas of the Twentieth Century: Selective Analyses and Annotated Index" (Ed.D. diss., Columbia University, 1968), 188; Renato Sergio Fabbro, "The Stylistic Traits of Charles Griffes's Piano Music: Roman Sketches, Op. 7 and Piano Sonata (1917-18)" (DMA diss., Rice University, 2001), 27.

great number of augmented and diminished intervals also contribute to lessening the impact of diatonic intervals which would aid in tonal motion. As I will show, the lack of tonal nature which the pitch collection helps to create makes defining functional elements within the Sonata more difficult, as so a pitch-centric view is more useful than harmony-centric. As a typical sonata form piece would utilize the tonic-dominant relationship to show contrast and motion, Griffes's *Sonata* shows these through alterations of the pitch collection and interval choice. Even when Griffes does stray from the collection, most commonly in transitional material and never in the first appearance of a motive, chromaticism (from the pitch collection), rather than tonality is apparent. Therefore, this nature seems to be the style that Griffes himself dictated and reinforced using this pitch collection.

Griffes's Scale						
<i>Interval</i>	m2	M2	m3	M3	P4	TT
<i>Occurrences</i>	4	3	3	4	5	2
Diatonic D Minor Scale						
<i>Interval</i>	m2	M2	m3	M3	P4	TT
<i>Occurrences</i>	2	5	4	3	6	1

TABLE 2.2. Comparison of interval prevalence in Griffes's pitch collection and D minor scale

Texture

The feature of texture is also prominent within the main theme, shown through the multiple statements of the theme that each vary in some way. Each of these repetitions of main theme material show progression through their development, including added texture and chromaticism. In Section I of the *Sonata*, the main theme first appears in m. 5 in a monophonic texture in both hands before switching to a full appearance with accompaniment in m. 10. As seen in Examples 2.3 and 2.4, there already exists some level of alteration between these

appearances. In m. 5 it appears in a thin texture, simply in order to clearly introduce the thematic material. The “full” appearance in m. 10 creates a different texture through an accompaniment figure as well as extending the theme to be two full bars in length. Even here, we see how the pitch collection is not neatly adhered to with the inclusion of an F# in the accompaniment figure; a facet that seems to give lift to the subsequent use of the main theme. Beyond this, the theme fragments and shows an increase in rhythmic activity as one might expect after the first statement of basic theme material in a Classical sonata. Even past this however, the main theme material reappears again in Section I after the subordinate theme.

EXAMPLE 2.3. Griffes, *Sonata*, mm. 5-7: first appearance of MT material

EXAMPLE 2.4. Griffes, *Sonata*, mm. 10-11: second appearance of MT, new accompaniment F#

What will become the most common of the alterations Griffes utilizes among themes is the addition of textural pitches. These alterations to secondary appearances of material largely function to influence the sonorities heard. This is a different use of pitches to influence texture

than was seen in Example 2.4 with the added F#. This other type of texture is first seen in m. 13 in the treble part. Example 2.5 shows how the previous measure plays the theme as a single-line melody, while m. 13 adds octaves and inner notes to further develop motion within the theme. In tandem with the accompaniment figure of the left hand, the chromatic alterations from the pitch collection add to the existing sense of tonal ambiguity by adding dissonant textures on multiple levels through these intervals. While the time spent with this additional material is quite short, its function includes contrast, development, and new tension. According to Donna Anderson, the choices of adhering to pitches of the collection here seem to be a personal choice of Griffes's, meant to best represent the sound heard in his head, not just one that fit within the parameters of the pitch collection.²¹ There is also a loosening of tonal sense, which later is tightened again through consonant passing. This control of tonal expectation provides a focused view of a fuzzy idea by incorporating some built-in expectations.

EXAMPLE 2.5. Griffes, *Sonata*, mm. 12-13: MT material with new intervals, alterations to the pitch collection, and increased rhythm

In m. 57, the main theme appears again with the main alteration this time being a new accompaniment figure (Example 2.6). This usage is largely simple in rhythm and consistent in its

²¹ Anderson, *Charles T. Griffes: A Life in Music*, 213-14.

pitch figure, showing the theme played out beginning on different pitches a tritone apart [C#-F*]. This seems like a modernistic approach to the developmental fragmentation and sequencing prior to the recapitulation of Classical sonatas. Example 2.6 is material from the development of Section I in sonata form. This motion between pitches functions to bring the range and pitch of the music lower in preparation for the theme which will follow it. In this case, Griffes also inserts additional material to extend and transition between themes. This has the main theme material lead to a mid-range F#4 and the transition lead to a low F#2 in m. 77 where the subordinate theme will be in the Recapitulation of the sonata form.

EXAMPLE 2.6. Griffes, *Sonata*, mm. 57-60: MT in development

In a more general sense, the motivic developments serve another function much of the time due to the intervals utilized in subsequent appearances. This is where additional support for tonal ambiguity and lack of tonality arises beyond the pitch collection, while still adhering to the collection. The compositional choice by the composer to include more prevalent open fourths and fifths is a salient feature near in of itself in the *Sonata*. The underpinning of this is common in accompaniment usage within the work but is seen clearly in melodic content of these motivic developments. In m. 13 of the main theme, the additional notes do provide more than just texture as they also give support for open harmony. In the motive developed in the right hand, the outer intervals prefer the fourths and fifths throughout the measure. Also, while these do line up

against notes in the accompaniment which break the open intervals, such notes do not enforce any sense of functional tonality. This texture of open harmonies is further reinforced by the left hand utilizing third-less arpeggiation. As a subtle compositional choice, straying from open arpeggiation only when the melody also strays from the open intervals helps to unify the texture of the two parts and push forward to the B \flat /D-minor implications of the following measure. This element of texture is very prevalent throughout the *Sonata*, but its variations show how the influence can extend to tonal and melodic implications.

Periodicity

Ratner discusses the feature of periodicity with two factors: cadence and symmetry. Griffes's *Sonata* has elements which resemble cadencing, but without the V-I tonal nature the use of texture fulfills a gap needed to signal closures within the music. These features in the *Sonata* are quite unique as their combination operates as a closing gesture, which is seen in each section's ending. This feature is the alignment of both hands in a thicker polyphonic texture utilizing the same rhythm. This texture is unique due to its exclusive usage to indicate formal divisions. This brings about a return to the idea of features which signal closure. Griffes was quite straightforward in his approach to closure in the *Sonata*. Each of the three sections, with the Recapitulation and Coda of Section III having separate closures, indicate their closures using very similar features and texture. These closures do seem to reference some Classical gestures of closure, but within Griffes's own style for the pitch choices, which leads to closure motions of texture rather than tonal closure. These operate as a *textural* cadence that signals a concluding thought through the specific chordal and textural alignment, rather than a Common Practice harmonic cadence. Examples 2.7, 2.8, 2.9, and 2.10 show the concluding measures of each section, in order to show their similarities.

Musical score for Example 2.7, showing measures 121-124. The score is in 4/4 time and features a piano accompaniment. Measure 121 is marked *ff*. Measure 122 is marked *mf* and *dim.*. Measure 123 is marked *p* and *pp*. Measure 124 is marked *pp*. Performance instructions include *Red. sempre* and *rit.*. The score includes a first ending bracket over measures 121-122 and a final cadence in measure 124.

EXAMPLE 2.7. Griffes, *Sonata*, mm. 121-124: Closure of Section I

Musical score for Example 2.8, showing measures 192-195. The score is in 4/4 time and features a piano accompaniment. Measures 192 and 193 are marked *p*. Measure 194 is marked *pp*. Measure 195 is marked *pp*. Performance instructions include *8va* and *rit.*. The score includes a first ending bracket over measures 192-194 and a final cadence in measure 195.

EXAMPLE 2.8. Griffes, *Sonata*, mm. 192-195: Closure of Section II

Musical score for Example 2.9, showing measures 316-320. The score is in 2/4 time and features a piano accompaniment. Measures 316, 317, and 318 are marked *cresc.*. Measure 319 is marked *ff*. Measure 320 is marked *ff*. The score includes a first ending bracket over measures 316-319 and a final cadence in measure 320.

EXAMPLE 2.9. Griffes, *Sonata*, mm. 316-320: Closure of Section III, Recapitulation

The musical score for Example 2.10 consists of two staves. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and one flat (Bb). The time signature is 2/4. Measures 413-415 are marked with a circled 8 and a dashed line above them. Measure 413 contains a series of chords. Measure 414 continues with chords and single notes. Measure 415 features a complex chordal structure with a fermata. Measures 416-418 show a final cadence with a forte (sf) dynamic marking. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

EXAMPLE 2.10. Griffes, *Sonata*, mm. 413-218: Closure of Section III, Coda

There is another feature which utilizes parallel rhythm but has a monophonic texture instead. Preceding the closing material in Sections I and II are short transitions built of monophonic motion within a single rhythmic alignment. This material is a sort of “pre-conclusion” which uses a similar texture to prepare for the concluding material. Examples 2.11 and 2.12 show these appearances as well as their distance to the final closing features. These function to slow down the rhythmic pace and introduce the concept before the held pitches or rests which helps signal a sectional end. They also contrast with the material they follow, giving a “clean musical palette” before the closure. In Section I (Example 2.11), this contrast is seen in the difference in pitch range between hands. The closing of the Subordinate Theme in the Recapitulation immediately before it on the downbeat of m. 115 ends with a high B \flat 6, and the following note of the pre-conclusion is four octaves lower at B \flat 2. The pre-conclusion then serves to fill the pitch space leading to the conclusion. The monophonic texture of the pre-conclusion of Section III is longer than is in Section I. Here, the pre-conclusion functions both to continue the *molto tranquillo* mood of the preceding material and to slow down rhythmically before a change of meter in m. 180.

EXAMPLE 2.11. Griffes, *Sonata*, mm. 115-118: Pre-conclusion monophonic texture

EXAMPLE 2.12. Griffes, *Sonata*, mm. 174-183: Pre-conclusion monophonic texture

For each of the sections of the sonata cycle, there exists both a pre-conclusion and conclusion texture which utilize the same framework for rhythmic and pitch alignment with only slight variations. While the rhythms align for the majority of the (pre-)concluding material, the

texture of the conclusion is homophonic while the texture of the pre-conclusion is monophonic. As a general principle for the *Sonata*, the musical texture is either polyphonic or monophonic with multiple simultaneous rhythmic units at any given time. This makes the alignment of rhythm and texture uncommon, with exceptions of these closing and pre-closing motions making them notable.

In examining the melodic themes and motives in the *Sonata*, how Griffes treats their repetition and alteration is important to note for the structuring of the work. As said previously, initial statements of themes contain only the pitches of the collection [D E \flat F G \sharp A B \flat C \sharp]. In subsequent usage of thematic materials however, such strictures become only guidelines. Griffes's continued usage of motivic material grows beyond the simplicity of most themes, using single-line parts and only notes of the pitch collection, to include more dense textures of chromatic lines and new notes added above or below the primary line. New alterations of increased rhythm or new accompaniment patterns are featured in returned usage of themes as well, furthering the complexity which is conveyed through the heavy chromaticism. In the context of this *Sonata*, which is not written within Classical period norms nor formal expectations, material being developed outside of a "Development" section and within the section of its origin shows a unique approach to composition.

Rhythm

Rhythm and meter in the *Sonata* are the most consistent features of salience, which also signal something about the style of Griffes's compositions in his final years. Overall traits of rhythmic organization include polyrhythms, complex tuplets, and syncopation. For polymeter, it is handled explicitly at times using two time-signatures and implicitly through alternations of

beats within traditional time signatures ($\frac{3}{4}$ in $\frac{6}{8}$ and vice-versa). The use of rhythm within the *Sonata* seems to be one of the most creatively free aspects which Griffes could utilize. Here, phrases have freedom in their length, covering six or twelve beats or even measures, for example. This is closely related to the rhythms we see in many late-Romantic compositions and especially in the rhythmically complex works of Stravinsky, such as “Augers of Spring” from *The Rite of Spring* (1913).²² As an organizing element of the work, rhythm and meter showcase a founded understanding of this organization and its manipulation to fit the style of the composition.

As rhythm is so featured within the *Sonata* as a whole, the points at which it is most salient is at the intricate interactions of different rhythms or meters. These points occur most often to show a growth of musical material or a building of dynamic quality. This exemplifies itself more specifically in combination with other features of salience as well as in the internal motives and themes of each section. A large part of the rhythmic usage in *Sonata* is also contrast, more so than any other element which is used in connection with others. Rhythmic contrast has the most accessible use for variety given the complexity built in by Griffes as well as the simplicity shown in some motives. In short, rhythm in the *Sonata* is omnipresent, salient rhythm in the *Sonata* is used to prop up important musical moments often in conjunction with other salient features. In this chapter on salient features, I will address two general aspects of salient rhythm seen in *Sonata*: polyrhythm and explicit polymeter. The former is quite prevalent throughout the piece, a signature element of Griffes’s mature works, while the latter is utilized only twice.

²² David J. Code, “The Synthesis of Rhythms: Form, Ideology, and the ‘Augers of Spring,’” *The Journal of Musicology* 21, no. 1 (2007): 120.

As stated previously, polymeter in the *Sonata* is utilized in two ways: implicitly and explicitly. Implicit polymeter occurs when the two clefs of the piano score utilize the same time-signature but they are notated so that the beats do not correspond to one another. Explicit polymeter occurs when the two piano clefs are notated with different time signatures, requiring different beat durations between them. This occurs within the Recapitulation portion of the sonata cycle, in Section III. It is used here during appearances of the main theme material to create new contrast within the theme as well as more easily show where main theme material ends and transitional material begins. Example 2.13 shows the first appearance of polymeter in *Sonata*, beginning a reappearance of main theme material. This shows an exploration into the writing of more complex metric usages as an outgrowth of Griffes's complex polyrhythms.

The image shows a musical score for five measures (219-223) of Griffes's Sonata. The score is written for piano, with a Treble clef on the upper staff and a Bass clef on the lower staff. Measure 219 is in 6/8 time. Measure 220 changes to 2/4 time. Measures 221-223 return to 6/8 time. The bass staff features a complex polyrhythmic pattern with accents and dynamic markings (f, mf, f, mf). The treble staff shows a melodic line with a slur over measures 221-223.

EXAMPLE 2.13. Griffes, *Sonata*, mm. 219-223: Explicit polymeter

The use of polyrhythm in the *Sonata* is used more commonly, giving flexibility to show emphasis to sectional motion as well as support textural devices. These polyrhythms range from simple hemiolas, to more complex hemiolas and complex polyrhythms. Example 2.14 shows how these polyrhythms can run this gambit. As the transitional material progresses, so does the polyrhythm increase in complexity. This usage of light polyrhythm in transitional material continues in mm. 119-120 which transitions away from the subordinate theme into the closing material (Example 2.15). This is an occurrence of a relatively simple polyrhythm, three quarter-

notes against six eighth-notes. The consistent nature of polyrhythms used in this way seems to work to create a more interesting texture outside of the motivic groups in the *Sonata*, thus creating rhythmic interest where melodic interest is not being sought.

monorhythmic

8^{va}-----7

95

96

3:4

5:6

f

mf

f

4

5

8^{va}-----

97

98

cresc.

3

5

5

5

f

4

5

EXAMPLE 2.14. Griffes, *Sonata*, mm. 95-98: polyrhythms in Section I transition

8^{va}-----

119

120

mf

molto cresc.

EXAMPLE 2.15. Griffes, *Sonata*, mm. 119-120: simple polyrhythms in Section I

The musical elements which make up Griffes's *Sonata* contribute heavily to the style of the work at the surface level. These features of salience are shown to have grown from those of

Classical works into an altered style for each feature in what could be called a neo-Classical approach. This approach is categorized by the weakening of tonal importance within these features, a more intimate view of these elements which do not overtly stand out in the same way, and a use of variety as a sort of creative freedom. It is this specific combination of elements which gives the *Sonata* a style which is both personal to Griffes and in the vein of neoclassicism, and the composition is marked with such accord. The composer crafting the layers of this work utilizing these elements and style with a deliberate and progressive method shows a mature writer.

Just as the ingredients a chef uses to create a unique recipe, the internal musical elements a composer employs in their composition give the piece its own stamp of uniqueness. How the composer uses these elements, in what order, in what amount, and with what degree of development are similarly imprints of style that can be difficult to avoid by a composer. This is seen in Charles Griffes's writing at this time, especially in the *Sonata* but also in the works written during the final years of his life as well. The way the features of salience are utilized craft Griffes's style even as he largely tossed tonality aside. This culmination of musical elements combined with the complex use of form in the *Sonata* showcase a maturation of compositional style that was unseen in Griffes's writings prior.

Chapter 4: Mature Style

The elements of form and salience previously discussed all contribute to the style of Griffes's *Sonata*. This, combined with biographical knowledge about Griffes and his life up to the time of writing in 1917 and after, help contextualize the *Sonata* within his overall compositional output. Many authors have labeled this final period Griffes's "late style." Donna Anderson does so, periodizing Griffes's compositional output into four discrete stages: Germanic influence (learning years), impressionistic years, eastern influences, and his final style of experimentalism.²³ Given that Griffes was quickly nearing his death by abscesses of the lung and influenza in 1920, though he would have been unaware at this time, and this was nearly his final composition, this label seems fitting.²⁴ However, I find that this assertion should be given additional analysis as to show how the *Sonata* encompasses this late style with regard to the overall period. Further, I consider if labeling this style as mature would better fit into what changed in Griffes's writing during this period, when he had moved beyond earlier influences. In my view, mature style represents a culmination of a composer's career where external influences are not a basis for their music but an element among others. This contrasts with late style represents a new style of composition embarked upon by a composer. These are not singularly exclusive terms, but the differences between them require specificity to properly attribute.

To begin, an overview of what late style is and how it can apply is warranted. In his final work, the book *On Late Style: Music and Literature Against the Grain*, Edward Said breaks down his views and others' of late style in the arts. This can be defined simply as an artist's final style of creation in their life. Said further categorizes this into two types, the first type of late

²³ Anderson, "Griffes, Charles T(omlinson)," 2.

²⁴ Anderson, *Charles T. Griffes: A Life in Music*, 169.

style being a “sense of return and repose” from a culmination of their creative life and the second type being a “nonharmonious, nonserene tension” within a mastery of art that goes against the communications of the established social order.²⁵ Both of these are apparent in a composer's final style of writing and they both display a complete understanding of the craft. However, they diverge in their method of communication for going forward. Late style is therefore not a style category unto itself but rather an attitude adopted by its creator, which must be assessed through a comparison amongst many of the creator's works.

So, what is Griffes's late style and how does it manifest within the *Sonata*? Furthermore, how can his final years of composition be called a “late style” in the Said-sense when Griffes died young at age thirty-five with little forewarning to his illness? Examining the musical content of Griffes's *Sonata*, as well as other compositions written during and after 1917 shows a compositional style which is exceedingly divergent from any Classical norms. Daniel Boda gives his own label to this time as Griffes's “modern period.”²⁶ As Said asks about artistic lateness as “not as harmony and resolution but as intransigence, difficulty, and unresolved contradiction,” I contend that Griffes falls into this second type of late style.²⁷ The overarching narrative about the *Sonata* is technical difficulty and the other final compositions of Griffes equally tell musical stories of complexity and new direction.²⁸ This divergence in style occurs not just from Classical norms but also from Griffes's former styles as well. The previous trend of taking his influences and building compositions in that style with a personal tilt has now been phased out for a fully personal style within minimal definable influences.

²⁵ Edward Said, *On Late Style: Music and Literature Against the Grain* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2006), 3-7.

²⁶ Boda, “The Music of Charles T. Griffes,” 14.

²⁷ Said, *On Late Style*, 7.

²⁸ Fabbro, “The Stylistic Traits of Charles Griffes's Piano Music,” 5; Walton, “The Music of Charles Tomlinson Griffes: Harbinger of American Art Music's Transition Into the Modern Age,” 61.

Perhaps a more pertinent examination of late style comes from Marianne Wheeldon in her book *Debussy's Late Style*. While Said gives some consideration to late style in the 20th century in Richard Strauss, Wheeldon provides an illuminating perspective of a closer contemporary to Griffes in Claude Debussy. In a very similar vein to Griffes, Debussy's late style also developed around World War I and a looming illness. Wheeldon says of the circumstances, "works that emerged during this time reflect the wartime concerns and the composer's own self-conscious desire to define his own musical legacy."²⁹ While it is difficult to say if Griffes felt a focused desire to craft a musical legacy, he did desire a personal style for his works.³⁰ This culmination would be his late style, showing a divergence from his earlier similarities of symbolism and orientalism that were shared to varying extents with Debussy into a more unique, personal style of composition that would mark the end of Griffes's legacy.

The problem of how to refer to this final period as a "late style" period arises from the deviation of Griffes's age during the period. That age, from 33-35, combined with a somewhat sudden illness and death, weaken the argument that Griffes was attempting to create his masterwork compositions to leave a legacy after his death. Rather, it would seem reasonable to view the uniqueness of these late compositions to be a result of compositional maturity, of shifting through previous influences and gestating them into some elements of the new style. This does more closely align with the view of critics and writers at the time of the *Sonata*'s premiere in 1918. After an initial review of negative understanding, Rudolph Ganz said about the *Sonata* in the *Musical Courier* in April 1918 "Charles T. Griffes' new piano sonata... is free from all foreign influences. He is going his own way."³¹ In 1923, Richard Aldrich wrote for the

²⁹ Marianne Wheeldon, *Debussy's Late Style* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 2.

³⁰ Anderson, *Charles T. Griffes: A Life in Music*, 146.

³¹ Maisel, *Charles T. Griffes: The Life of an American Composer*, 271; Anderson, *Charles T. Griffes: A Life in Music*, 141-44.

New York Times saying the *Sonata* “shows an advance on the road of independent thinking and expression that he was taking in other of his compositions.”³² This background understanding of how the style Griffes used fits both into his life to that point and now with a full view of his biography, his life overall is perhaps more a full definition of the style than just “late.” I find the final compositional style of Griffes’s life, from approximately 1917-1920, to be better termed as a “mature style” for these reasons of mastery, pushing of musical boundaries (furthering the art/craft), freedom of style (personal style), and specificity of creation.

This question of late style or mature style is not unique to Griffes, yet what is unique to him is the place in musical history, world history, and his personal history under which this work was created. As such, my interest in this chapter is with the musical elements, aesthetics, and influences that were in operation around Griffes and examining his *Sonata* in light and comparison with these. This music analysis will be comparative, using the *Sonata* and Griffes’s other works from this period as well as works by a selected few of his contemporaries. Through these comparisons there will be similarities in specific elements or aesthetics and a clashing of ideas regarding the treatment of tonality and texture. There will also be similarities of composition using neo-classical aesthetics in a broad sense. These connections and contrasts will obviously vary from composer’s addressed, but as the music of Mozart and Beethoven share threads of common musical culture and features, so too would this be expected of composers who share a time period.

I shall begin only with the *Sonata*, as we have seen the complexity of formal and internal organization which shows a sense of compositional craft. The maturity shown in *Sonata* arises

³² Marion Bauer, “Charles T. Griffes as I Remember Him,” *The Musical Quarterly* 29, no. 3 (July 1943): 377.

then in three main ways: the specificity, the complexity, and the free sounding nature of the piece. Each of these elements relate to Said's three elements of late style (unresolved contradiction, difficulty, intransigence) and were seen in my previous discussions. The formal structure shows a complexity of formation previously unseen in Griffes's works. The salient elements which comprised the formal units show an increased intransigent nature through its continuous successions of such elements as well as presenting a specificity of how these elements should overlap, relate, and be performed. The *Sonata* then exhibits itself as the first piece which showcases this mature style, which is continued in Griffes's proceeding music.

Of Griffes's other 1918 work, *Three Poems of Fiona MacLeod*, Donna Anderson says "the style distinctly resembles that of the sonata in its use of disjunct melodic shapes and sharp dissonance, the harmonic treatment, and the boldness of conception."³³ It is this idea of "boldness of conception" that so permeates the mature works of Griffes. There is a parallel between boldness and Said's term of intransigence here. Boldness means that which stands out, and the *Sonata* shows this boldness of conception in its difference. The style and form, which both deviate from the usual as well as the actual inner materials of the work, further this idea of dissonance into a continual nature. There is a certain degree of intransigence which the boldness of the *Sonata* relies on in its construction. To return to the *Three Poems of Fiona MacLeod*, the similarity of its style to that of the *Sonata* is not surprising given the close time of their composition but does also help to reaffirm the mature style label utilized. The tonal organization and rhythmic organization are quite linked as I will focus on here, showing a peak of command for the utilization of these elements.³⁴

³³ Anderson, "Griffes, Charles T(omlinson)," 2.

³⁴ William Treat Upton, "The Songs of Charles T. Griffes," *The Musical Quarterly* 9, no. 3 (July 1923): 328.

The first stylistic similarity between *Three Poems* and *Sonata* is the tonal organization. Both works utilize intense dissonance with little regard with its treatment, especially vis-à-vis resolution. Rather, the resolutions are of the notes themselves. Marion Bauer says Griffes “used a polyphonic technique rather than harmonic.”³⁵ This does describe the treatment well enough, given the pitch collection used which gives a more intervallic approach as well. While Griffes’s previous idioms utilized much dissonance, it was structured through extended tertian chords rather than used for the sake of dissonance.³⁶ The general lack of open harmonies is also divergent, stepping further to be truly post-tonal without this ‘open’ sound. Heavy chromaticism and intervallic relations are a featured component of this style of modernism used in full steam by Griffes at this point. These two components then can operate as an “idiosyncratic signification” which create feelings of texture, closure, and motion through this refocused usage.³⁷ These two components play off of each other in their general preference for specific sound in lieu of tonal function, so that the degree of intransigence can be manipulated by the degree of ‘familiar’ gesture, tonal or not.

As this use of dissonance is so similar, the treatment and evolution of it is as well. The subordinate theme in Section I of the *Sonata* (as well as the main theme, though previously addressed), is given simple accompaniment with the monophonic texture of the motive at the first appearance. As seen in example 3.1, this motive uses the notes of the *Sonata*’s pitch collection with an open, flowing accompaniment arpeggiation. At the subsequent appearance of the subordinate theme in mm. 46-47, the intervallic additions in both clefs as well as an increase

³⁵ Bauer, “Charles T. Griffes as I Remember Him”: 376.

³⁶ Richard Oscar Johnson, “The Songs of Charles T. Griffes” (DMA Dissertation, Iowa City, University of Iowa, 1977), 46; Walton, “The Music of Charles Tomlinson Griffes: Harbinger of American Art Music’s Transition Into the Modern Age,” 61.

³⁷ Paul Fleet, “Mining the gap of musics *with* and *after* tonality,” in *Musics with and after Tonality: Mining the Gap*, ed. Paul Fleet (New York: Routledge, 2022), 3.

in rhythmic speed provides a new texture. The intervallic additions are the focus of example 3.2, showing how the intervals are supporting not as an open harmony but a polyphonic and intervallic one.

The image displays a musical score for Example 3.1, consisting of three systems of piano music. The first system covers measures 36 to 38, marked *mf espressivo*. The second system covers measures 39 to 40, marked *pp*, and includes a subordinate theme starting at measure 39. The third system covers measures 41 to 42. The score is in 12/8 time and features a subordinate theme starting at measure 39. The music is marked *mf espressivo* and *pp*. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings.

EXAMPLE 3.1. Griffes, *Sonata*, mm. 36-42: Initial appearance of subordinate theme

The image displays two systems of musical notation for Example 3.2. The first system, labeled '46', shows a piano (f) dynamic. The right hand has a melodic line with a slur over four chords. The left hand has a complex accompaniment with multiple chords and moving lines. The second system, labeled '47', shows a restatement of the subordinate theme. The right hand has a melodic line with a slur over four chords. The left hand has a simpler accompaniment with a repeating bass note and moving lines.

EXAMPLE 3.2. Griffes, *Sonata*, mm. 46-47: Restatement of subordinate theme

This seems to be a common feature for Griffes's mature works as well upon viewing his "Thy Dark Eyes to Mine" from *Three Poems*. Shown in example 3.3 and 3.4, we can see the similarities in texture and tonal organization between the two appearances as was in *Sonata*. In the first melodic appearance, while the accompaniment contains harsher dissonances and more complex texture than the *Sonata* example does, the accompaniment motion is quite simple in its support. Because the notes of the accompaniment in the right hand support the outlined notes of the vocal melody, the aural sense of dissonance is lessened. As in the *Sonata* example, the reappearance of this melody includes alterations to the support. Here in example 3.4, the repeating bass note now alternates between Ab and Eb instead of only the previous Eb. The quicker overall rhythmic texture as well as increases in the pitches placed against the melody notes give a renewed character to this melody. It is the continual transformation of intervallic relations and tonal implications that contribute to the stylistic similarities of these two works.

Andantino (♩ = circa 63)

Voice: *p* Thy
 Piano: *p* *dim.*
pp *i due Pedali*
 4 dark eyes to mine, Ei - lidh,
 6 Lamps of de - sire!
p *espressivo*

EXAMPLE 3.3. Griffes, “Thy Dark Eyes to Mine,” mm. 1-7: Initial melodic statement

23

If that called me to thee,

dim.

p

26

Aye, I would leap a - -

p

5

EXAMPLE 3.4. Griffes, “Thy Dark Eyes to Mine,” mm. 23-27: Restatement of melody

The next element of stylistic similarity I will note is of rhythm and meter. This element is, in my opinion, the most important and pronounced. To be sure, rhythmic complexity characterizes Griffes’s previous works such as “The White Peacock” (1915), and he made use of multiple meters seen in works such as “Lake at Evening” (1911). What is seen in the *Sonata* and Griffes’s other mature works is an outgrowth of this rhythmic development that was growing in popularity at the time.³⁸ After such a style, the boundaries of rhythm are pushed to encompass polymeter, polyrhythm, and many variations of simultaneous complex tuplets in different parts.

³⁸ Johnson, “The Songs of Charles T. Griffes,” 67-68; David J. Code, “The Synthesis of Rhythms: Form, Ideology, and the ‘Augers of Spring,’” *The Journal of Musicology* 21, no. 1 (2007): 113-15.

The use of rhythm overall is important due to its use as a common thread for connecting between different phrases and transitions as well as its influence on the texture through the variations of rhythm which Griffes employs.³⁹ In *Three Poems*, these rhythms are seen in similar fashion with some differences due to the necessity of setting music to text.

The first rhythmic technique I will cover is one which Griffes had not employed prior to writing the *Sonata* but which shows a willingness to engage with complex uses of rhythm. Shown in Example 3.5, Griffes's first utilization of polymeter in *Sonata* is explicitly written in Section II in mm. 220-231. As the meter of $\frac{6}{8}$ in m. 219 is continued in the bass clef, the time signature changes in the treble clef to $\frac{2}{4}$ in m. 220. This polymeter reoccurs once again in mm. 321-324, with both instances showing a fully realized occurrence of polymeter which Griffes had explored previously in the *Sonata*. Building up to this, alternating groupings of two and three within a $\frac{6}{8}$ meter were used commonly as a device for variation from measure to measure. These points of explicit polymeter were supported by polyrhythmic occurrences as well, which gave added weight to the disjointed rhythmic feel. Transitions between a single meter and polymeter in the *Sonata* are treated with regard for marking the different meters by less complex rhythms before and immediately after the metric change. This increased the feeling of salience from the rhythm.

³⁹ Boda, "The Music of Charles T. Griffes," 108.

EXAMPLE 3.5. Griffes, *Sonata*, mm. 219-223: transition to polymeter

As explicitly written polymeter was not common in *Sonata*, just as exploration of ability, polymeter in *Three Poems* occurs without changes in meter only metric accent. A method of polymeter similar to the subtle feel of $\frac{6}{8}$ against $\frac{3}{4}$, as used in *Sonata*, is shown in the opening measures of “The Rose of the Night.” Example 3.6 shows the beginning vocal melody following the notated time signature of $\frac{3}{4}$ while the piano accompaniment ventures within a contrary $\frac{9}{8}$ feel. The maturity of Griffes shows in this usage of polymeter, which is of greater length than in the *Sonata*, as the whole of “The Rose of the Night” engages with it nearly constantly. The only time this piece deviates from this polymeter is during the second stanza material, which switches to a syncopated pulse again the $\frac{3}{4}$ vocal line. To go from light occurrences of polymeter in the *Sonata* to polymeter as a near structural element of a song written approximately a year later shows a continual growth to push the boundaries of specificity and complexity using this rhythmic/metric technique.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Walton, “The Music of Charles Tomlinson Griffes: Harbinger of American Art Music’s Transition Into the Modern Age,” 65.

5 *p* 6
The dark rose of thy

7 8
mouth Draw night - ter, draw

EXAMPLE 3.6. Griffes, “The Rose of the Night,” mm. 5-9: polymeter

Even more prevalent among each Griffes’s mature works, however, is the use of polyrhythm. The use of tuplets of varying ratios against common rhythms or other tuplets are the most common ways of using these disjointed rhythms. Altered metric grouping can be implied within chunks of polyrhythmic material, but they are not the main focus of rhythmic usage by-and-large. In the *Sonata*, a good example of this complex usage occurs in mm. 24-28, where several polyrhythms occur. Example 3.7 shows and provides labels for the different polyrhythms occurred through tuplets and metric rhythms. In tandem with the quick pacing, the polyrhythms add to the busy texture of the transitional material. Such complex examples of polyrhythm in *Sonata* show Griffes’s compositional maturity, which he continued to refine in *Three Poems* in order to accommodate the song text. These polyrhythms are often utilized under the umbrella of

syncopations as well, the combination of which creates a complex alignment of lines. It is this multi-faceted use of rhythm and rhythmic techniques which is a fundamental feature of the *Sonata* and so heavily contributes to its stylistic character.

The musical score is divided into four systems, each with a treble and bass staff.
 System 1 (mm. 24-25): Treble staff has a forte (*f*) dynamic. Bass staff has a 4-measure phrase and a 5-measure phrase.
 System 2 (mm. 25-26): Treble staff has a crescendo (*cresc.*) marking and an 8va (octave) marking. Bass staff has a 5-measure phrase and a 5-measure phrase.
 System 3 (mm. 26-27): Treble staff has a forte (*f*) dynamic. Bass staff has a marcato marking. Treble staff has a 2-measure phrase and a 4-measure phrase. Bass staff has a 4-measure phrase and a 5-measure phrase.
 System 4 (mm. 27-28): Treble staff has an 8va (octave) marking. Bass staff has a 4-measure phrase and a 4-measure phrase.

EXAMPLE 3.7. Griffes, *Sonata*, mm. 24-28: polyrhythms in *Sonata*

In *Three Poems*, “Thy Dark Eyes to Mine” again shows similarity to the *Sonata* in the usage of polyrhythms. These elements arise largely in the bifurcation of rhythm between the vocal line and piano, but also within the individual lines the piano plays. In mm. 16-17 we see 3:2 imposed over a 5:4 tuplet which follow a simple 3:2 rhythm, which seems docile in comparison (Example 3.8). Throughout this piece, the left hand in the piano rarely strays from a compound feel. The right hand is more rhythmically flexible in order to match either the left hand or the vocal line, or to contrast with them. The use of polyrhythm here adds to the contrasting rhythmic variation which is intended here by moving outside of evenly aligned rhythmic ratios.⁴¹ As in *Sonata*, the rhythm in *Three Poems* has a very consistent use as an element of consistent manipulation to enhance the desired character or texture of the moment.

The image shows a musical score for measures 16 and 17. The top staff is the vocal line in treble clef, with lyrics: "Heard but a whis - per, But a lost e - cho lost". The piano part is in grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with a piano (p) dynamic. The score features complex polyrhythms with 3-beat and 5-beat groupings. The vocal line has a 3-beat group over "whis - per," and another 3-beat group over "lost e - cho". The piano right hand has a 3-beat group over "whis - per," and a 5-beat group over "lost e - cho". The piano left hand has a 5-beat group over "lost e - cho".

EXAMPLE 3.8. Griffes, “Thy Dark Eyes to Mine,” mm. 16-17: hemiolas

The elements which reinforce the idea of maturity in the *Three Poems of Fiona MacLeod* each show a compositional method which reinforces the whole of the work. The tonal organization is focused on polyphonic and intervallic relations between notes to create a unique

⁴¹ William Treat Upton, “The Songs of Charles T. Griffes,” *The Musical Quarterly* 9, no. 3 (July 1923): 323.

soundscape. This utilization of dissonance without regard for traditional resolution shows Said's element of intransigence. The rhythmic organization of *Three Poems* represents difficulty through the complex rhythmic interactions and unresolved contradiction through the use of multiple rhythms/meters simultaneously without need for realignment. The features show how the boldness of conception which has been applied to the *Sonata* can be shown in each of Griffes's mature works. In *Three Poems*, this boldness shows through a careful balance of intransigent tonal and rhythmic motion, difficulty of piano and vocal parts, and the contradiction that exists between these parts.

Griffes's other notable late work was his *Three Preludes* for piano. What was to be a set of five pieces, was left unfinished; Donna Anderson edited the three complete preludes together into Griffes's final work. These pieces are experimental in nature. Griffes described his vision for them in a letter from April, 1919: "I have been sketching out some rather experimental short pieces for piano."⁴² To compare the elements of maturity shown in *Three Preludes* and *Sonata*, I will address similar elements as I did in *Three Poems of Fiona Macleod*. For each prelude I will focus on one musical element and show how it aligns, and sometimes contrasts, the way the same technique appears in the *Sonata*. The overall nature of the *Three Preludes* contrasts greatly with *Sonata* as they are restrained in length and texture. With a limit of thirty-two bars each, the quality of these pieces resembles that of the neo-classical works of *Les Six* or Erik Satie while still retaining the tonal and rhythmic qualities of Griffes's mature style.⁴³ As such, though I still categorize *Three Poems* into Griffes's mature style period as the maturity shown remains and grows, Boda's assertion of a "modern period" begins to fit well here. As a composer with an eye

⁴² Anderson, "The Works of Charles T. Griffes: A Descriptive Catalog," 339-340.

⁴³ Jane F. Fulcher, "The Composer as Intellectual: Ideological Inscriptions in French Interwar Neoclassicism," *The Journal of Musicology* 17, no. 2 (Spring 1999): 207, 222-23.

toward the experimental music of his day, Griffes was looking to push boundaries with these pieces.

As in the *Sonata* and *Three Poems*, *Three Preludes* utilizes great freedom of pitch usage and dissonance. The preludes operate essentially without tonality, using no tonal motion or even pitch motion absent repeated figures. In “Prelude II” all twelve pitches are given within the first six measures, quickly giving the impression of going nowhere. The right-hand motive, which begins a half-step lower than the left hand, also adds to this feel (Example 3.9). The only element which carries weight, interestingly, is the abundant usage of tritones in mm. 19-21 which seems to signal a closure in part before leading to the returning right hand motive (Example 3.10). Even the closure of this prelude deliberately avoids tonality by a pair of open fifths F-C in m. 32. The usage of these pitches is supported by the F-C motion in previous measures, and a certain implication of F-minor tonality with a treble A \flat is given, but the overall repetition of such short figures throughout the piece more so creates intransigence of motion here as well. This closure resembles that of the *Sonata* which similarly ends with light meandering before closure on doubled open fifths (Example 3.11), a method which avoids tonality but does close with consonant intervals. As in “Prelude II,” this closure in *Sonata* references the D-minor center that has some merit for implication, yet does not contain a progression which would lend weight to a ‘final tonality.’ “Prelude II” shows the most complete disregard of tonal limitations, though “Prelude III” utilizes a chromatic scale set within a perfect 5th as another method of tonal vagueness. Though Griffes appears to have no set organization for how to avoid tonality, his intent of finding any means necessary to craft the sound in his mind shows in his personal style.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Anderson, *Charles T. Griffes: A Life in Music*, 213.

0 e 4 5 1 0 5 6 7 8
9 4 6 0 1 t 4 6 1 2 3

EXAMPLE 3.9. Griffes, “Prelude II,” mm. 1-6: occurrence of all pitch classes in six bars

EXAMPLE 3.10. Griffes, “Prelude II,” mm. 19-22:

(8) 413 414 415 416 417 418
sf sf sf

EXAMPLE 3.11. Griffes, Sonata, mm. 413-418: final closing bars showing open 5th cadence

Even as the *Three Preludes* seem simpler and more contained than the *Sonata*, the rhythmic usage in the pieces fall into his mature style similarly to the *Three Poems*. Taking “Prelude I” as the vessel for this comparison, as I showed how “The Rose of the Night” uses polymeter as a structural element, so too does “Prelude I” utilize polymeter and hemiolas as a consistent device throughout the entire thirty-two bars. Beginning from m. 1 in Example 3.12, the piece operates with 2:3 throughout the entire work, with the right hand operating in simple time and the left hand operating in compound. The only departure from this strict hemiola usage is in the closing measures where the left hand suspends the final note of a triplet and begins four measures of syncopated quarter notes out of alignment with the right hand (Example 3.13). This divergence shows the similarity with Griffes’s *Sonata* where he shows no qualms about abandoning these rhythmic devices at important points in favor of those that better signal the completion that he desires.

3

5

EXAMPLE 3.12. Griffes, “Prelude I,” mm. 1-6: polymeter beginning the prelude

26

8va

3

EXAMPLE 3.13. Griffes, “Prelude I,” mm. 26-32: divergence from polyrhythm in closing measures

Evidence of polymetric usage arises in “Prelude II” through the phrase markings and rhythmic beaming. From mm. 8-15 (Example 3.14) the slurs in the right-hand show grouping of

four eighth-notes in $\frac{3}{4}$ meter. Here, the left hand begins in alignment with the right-hand groupings before quickly falling out of connection in m. 10. From there, the left hand seems to use the $\frac{3}{4}$ meter to contrast the unaligned groupings of four eighth-notes. Mm. 13-14 also diverge from this pattern for a short moment to give a pulse of three half-notes before returning to alignment in mm. 15. This metric technique resembles a middle ground between the explicit polymeter we had seen in the *Sonata* and the lengthy use of polymeter in “The Rose of the Night.” Because the rhythm here is so specific, the constraints of barlines must be bent to make fit. This new placement provides a new type of rhythmic texture which moves beyond the confines of alignment as the *Sonata* had before it.

EXAMPLE 3.14. Griffes, “Prelude II,” mm. 8-15: misaligned rhythmic groupings

The elements of textural variation in the preludes also contribute to this idea of control or specificity. As the *Sonata* contained many uses of monophonic and polyphonic variations, so too does “Prelude III.” This prelude utilizes polyphonic, monophonic, and homophonic texture within the span of twenty-four bars. The opening motive appears in a polyphonic texture of two

independent voices utilizing a free melody and a spaced-out chord [0 3 6] (Example 3.15). From here, a short passage of monophonic texture in both hands encompasses every pitch of the perfect 5th between A and E in mm. 7-8. In mm. 11-12, the aligned chords are in homophonic texture showcasing a unique device for pitch organization: each chord the left-hand plays is identical to the immediately preceding chord played by the right hand. This specific prelude shows a unique approach to texture that shows in many fewer measures how Griffes can alter the textural elements within a piece to create variety and gesture without the use of tonality.

The image displays three staves of musical notation from Example 3.15, Griffes' "Prelude III," mm. 4-12. Each staff is labeled with its texture type in a box above it.

- Polyphonic (mm. 4-6):** The right hand plays a series of chords, while the left hand plays a melodic line. A bracket underlines the left-hand line across the three measures.
- Monophonic (mm. 7-8):** Both hands play a single melodic line. A bracket underlines the entire passage across the two measures.
- Homophonic (mm. 10-12):** The right hand plays chords, and the left hand plays a melodic line. A bracket underlines the left-hand line across the three measures. A dashed line labeled "8va" indicates an octave shift in the right hand.

EXAMPLE 3.15. Griffes, "Prelude III," mm. 4-12: three textures used

In Griffes's own mature works, we see two strains of creative activity. The first is that of a furthering of creative output from what is contained in past experience. Both *Three Poems* and *Three Preludes*, show this through the tonal style and rhythmic organization. I demonstrated that such elements not only developed from Griffes's previous styles of symbolism and orientalism, but also show a level of growth in certain areas from the *Sonata*. By taking these elements and furthering them in various ways, such as creating new textural or rhythmic effects, Griffes shows compositional growth in this period. As the elements of maturity – difficulty, intransigence, and unresolved contradiction – themselves are present in all three works and are used with similar mastery to mostly different amounts, the label of mature style to these works applies. They each show a consideration for specific ideas that were realized while giving consideration to the type of music that was being composed, be it large-scale piano work, shorter piano works, or a song cycle. Anderson refers to *Three Poems* as the climax of Griffes's achievement in art song and relates the *Sonata* to that as similarly climactic.⁴⁵ Beyond these, the *Three Preludes* is another forward-looking composition of what Griffes could have become given time. The *Three Poems*, *Sonata*, and *Three Preludes* give an early representation of what could come within the advancement of rhythmic principles and the push toward systematic atonality, but still retain a grounding in music with push-and-pull appeal to an overarching aural journey.

The second of these two factions is the idea of “going against.” Edward Said places this idea among the elements which define the late style that is nonserene, nonharmonious, and goes against the productive intent.⁴⁶ These play into an avoidance of resolution in favor of intransigence within the artist's style. The three works discussed here showcase a mature style

⁴⁵ Anderson, “Griffes, Charles T(omlinson),” 2.

⁴⁶ Said, *On Late Style*, 7.

through their elements of salience and form which focus on Said's second type of late style.

They also contribute to this style through the action the composer takes to go against that which is current or popular and create something that is personal or unique. Even as uniqueness lasts a short time, this deliberate development of a personal compositional style is assignable to that composer, at least within the period of time they write in such a style. *Sonata*, *Three Poems*, and *Three Preludes* show this idea of *going against* through their differences, the subtle variations of the similar elements that each utilizes. These differences, yes, fall under the same compositional style, but create a non-linear forward path which has less and less obligation to follow that which came before it.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

The piano *Sonata* of Charles T. Griffes has a long history of discussion within American music history, but has rarely been given a focused study into the inner workings and features. In this paper, I tackle the *Sonata* in order to understand its structure, its musical characteristics, and its relation to Griffes's style to that point. This paper seeks to contribute further analysis into a few of these elements and show how they work together to form an important work of music. Moreover, within the composer's life this work provides foundational details of style and personality. I seek to show that there is room for further in-depth analysis of works by Charles Griffes, especially his mature pieces.

I conclude that the formal structure of the *Sonata* is of the complex two-dimensional sonata form theorized by Steven Vande Moortele. This form gives the appearance of sonata features on two levels of hierarchy, within the first Section of the work as well as through the entire *Sonata*. This is a new way of framing Griffes's *Sonata* which had not previously been analyzed as such. This label gives more weight to a complex compositional intent behind this form, which ties in to Griffes as a composer at the height of his ability. As this structure must be deliberately formulated, it also exemplifies an attempt at the difficult – what Vande Moortele calls “the peak of formal innovation.”⁴⁷ I argue for this formal label due to the often-shared musical materials, the written double-barlines, and the textural breaks which aid in narrative understanding in place of the lacking tonality.

It is the features which comprise the formal sections that give full weight to understanding the stylistic tendencies of the *Sonata*. These salient features are often typifications

⁴⁷ Steven Vande Moortele, *Two-Dimensional Sonata Form*, 199.

that operate without the norms of tonal motion, yet operate to create salience through a unique style of multi-feature usage. I cover the features of Harmony, Texture, Periodicity, and Rhythm derived from Leonard Ratner's *Classic Music*. These features show how Griffes had roots in the Common Practice and its gestures, yet the musical features of the *Sonata* diverge from Ratner's strict classifications by through the lack of clear tonality. These elements by-and-large point toward a stylistic change from Griffes's previous idioms and show a marked new style.

I chose the *Sonata* as the vessel for understanding Griffes's mature style due to it being the first piece in this new style, as well as the sheer number of unique features of this style it contains. As Edward Said asserts that one type of mature style is that of going against what came before, I posit that this description fits Griffes's late style well. Many authors have written about the *Sonata* as the height of Griffes's compositional achievements, for good reason, but without substantial explanation. Here, I examine how this work fits into Griffes's final period within the light of his previous styles as well as what his contemporaries were also doing. The *Sonata* shows this mature style, as opposed to a 'late style,' through the features of formal complexity and modernist and contradictory musical elements. The style also falls into Said's framework of mature style through the elements of difficulty, intransigence, and unresolved contradiction. These are shown through the complexity of the piece, the weak tonal nature, and the misaligned rhythms, meters, and pitches. The examination of these elements in connection to this style further shows how the other works from Griffes's mature style also contain these elements.

Each element and feature of the *Sonata* that I have touched on shows something of Griffes beyond a short label of "American Impressionist." At this point in his compositional life, the composer had grown beyond this label to that of a mature composer who reached compositional maturity combined with a personally unique style which placed him among the

composers of note in the first half of the twentieth-century. It is therefore important to address what Griffes was on a stylistic and formal level in order to understand the direction of a pioneer of American modernism. As Griffes died so young, this venture into modern styles was perhaps only in its early stages and could have progressed to new or different heights. Understanding these things about Griffes provides an open door for his other works to be analyzed for their form, musical features, and style as they contribute to a whole composition. In another vein, the study of Griffes and his music shows an early contribution toward modernism and an example of stylistic maturity in a modernist. As shown throughout this paper, Charles Griffes was a composer whose music went against the grain and who reached stylistic maturity through his willingness to tackle difficulty and embrace the new.

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