

Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, Music Department

**Title: Chester Kennedy MacKee Collection**

Overview of the Collection

**Reference Code:** Pittsburgh Music Archive #39

**Creator:** Richard L. Fisher, David Stock, Miles Groth

**Dates:** 1917 - 1970

**Extent:** 3 boxes

**Language:** English

**Repository:**

Music Department, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh-Main, 4400 Forbes Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15213

**Acquisition Information:** Donated to the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, Music Department by Richard L. Fisher

**Copyright:** yes

**Restrictions:** none

**Requested Citation:** Chester Kennedy MacKee Collection, Pittsburgh Music Archive #39, Music Department, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh

**Finding Aid Created by:** Mina Belle Wichmann, Joelle Killebrew

Notes on the Collection

**Abstract**

The MacKee archive was annotated by Richard L. Fisher, who organized and donated the materials.

**Historical Note**

Chester Kennedy MacKee, a pianist/composer/conductor, was born in Allegheny, PA, traveled abroad, occupied the post of Chief du Chant in the French municipal opera house Rouen's Theatre des Arts, and conducted the Vienna Symphony Orchestra, probably being the first American to direct the last organization. His compositions include French poems set to music and about twenty-five other songs mostly symphonic in character.

## Scope and Content Note

- Music manuscripts
- Correspondence from Richard L. Fisher, who donated the archive to the Head of the Music Department, Kathryn Logan
- Cassette tapes and CD copies of 78 RPM recordings
- Photographs
- Correspondence from Miles Groth

## Container List

### **BOX 1 - Compositions and miscellaneous papers:**

1. Two letters to Kathryn Logan, Head, Music & Art Department, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, from Richard L. Fisher, 1111 Tamarack Lane, Pittsburgh, PA 15237

- Letter 1:

March 28, 2005

Dear Ms. Logan:

This letter accompanies an unfinished symphony composed by Chester MacKee, and is the last of his works to be sent to you. It was owned by Robert Gearinger of Pittsburgh, who died on February 24th, this year, and was passed on to me, by Bob's wife, Marion, for forwarding to you, to be kept with the two transmittals of Chester's work that I sent to you previously. This work appears to have been written in France.

This work is in a folder measuring 21 ¼ inches by 13 ½ inches. The outside label identifies the work by a label AO followed by AO-1, -2, -3, -4, and -5.

Inside the front cover is a handwritten page glued to the cover naming the instruments for which the music is written.

The work is entitled "Les Elfes" and Chester has written his name in the upper right of the first page of music. Part AO-1 has 48 numbered pages, but there is some confusion about the numbering of several pages beginning at page 14, and continuing throughout this part.

Part AO-2 is written in pencil, has 4 unnumbered pages, obviously not completed.

Part AO-3 (12 pages) is labeled as such, titled "Dagmara" with the name Andre Spire in parentheses at the top right of the first page. This part appears as a vocal work, perhaps intended to be a theme for the whole part. This song appears to be completed on page 10 and is signed on page 10, C. MacKee, November '58. We have no idea who Andre Spire is. As far as we know, parts AO-4 and AO-5 never were started.

I can't imagine anyone with the time and inclination to make anything out of this work, but felt it better to send it to you to be kept with the rest of his work in your files than

to trash it. Thank you once more for making the library the repository for Chester's work. Some of it, someday, may be heard again. Who knows?

Sincerely, /s/ Richard L. Fisher

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- Letter 2:

March 29, 2005

Dear Ms. Logan:

My earlier correspondence with Richard Stoltzman, and David Stockman, contained some history on Chester MacKee, but I'm not sure any of it was forwarded to you in connection with the original manuscripts you have in your Rare Books Section.

The following are direct quotes from a letter to me dated 5/7/01, from Dr. Robert Gearing, a longtime friend of Chester's, when I asked him for some history on Chester.

"Chester was one of God's workmen. He was born just before 1900 in Mount Washington in that huge white house at the top of the ramp which leads up from the bridge. I'm not sure who (or if) he studied with in Pittsburgh. His mother took him to Paris when he was eleven. After some time, she left him there. Probably in someone's care. There he had the advantage of some of the best teachers, including Paul Auger (1). He obviously worked at it, and obviously with some of the famous of that time."

"He concertized all over France and Germany, and was quite a success (2). The most prominent was probably in Vienna. At 21, he became the first American to conduct the Vienna Philharmonic. A huge success. He had to return (to the US) in '18 or '19 for induction in WWI, and while in Pittsburgh, taught French at U. of Pitt."

"Back to Paris where he held two symphony posts and gained stature in composition. This was in the 'twenties when the greatest American brains in the arts did their best work. He knew them all."

"He left Paris in '38 when Hitler came in (3). He had two suitcases and a trunk. His music was shipped after WWII. I have most of it—and the best musical education anyone could get. Academics can only get you so far then association and application take over (4)."

END OF QUOTES.

Footnotes:

1. spelling on name not clear. Could be Raoul Anger, or Pooul Auger?
2. as a Pianist
3. Bob is being very general here. Hitler, as Bob knew, didn't come into Paris till later.
4. Bob is referring here to his association with Chester and "hands-on" musical efforts.

The above is all the history we have. My wife, Dorothea, and I knew him personally. I used to lunch with him in New York in the '70's when there on business, and we visited with him several times at Gearinger's home in Natrona Heights, PA, when he was visiting Bob and Marion. My wife has sung several of Chester's songs with Chester playing.

If this history is duplicated in any of the other correspondence you have, disregard it. If not, I thought it might someday be of interest.

s/s Richard L. Fisher

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## 2. COMPOSITIONS

- A-1 Les Elfes (Réduction pour Piano et Chant) - signed C. MacKee, Nice, (France), 1951
- AA-1 Venetian Air - signed C. MacKee, 602 Grandview Ave., Pittsburgh, Jan. 1939
- AA-2 The Deren Maid - unsigned
- AA-3 Elizabeth - unsigned, dated March 3, 1938
- AB-1 Night Flowers - unsigned, undated
- AC (AC-1) Revolt - unsigned, undated
- AD (AD-1) Nights of Music - signed C. MacKee, 602 Grandview Ave., Pittsburgh, PA, Dec. 31, 1936
- AE Aubade - *Bob Gearinger told me [Richard L. Fisher] that Chester used "Norman Granville" as a pseudonym in this case, and that Volkweins published it at the urging of Paul Sladek, who was a friend of Chester's, and who was in some capacity at Duquesne University school of music. To my knowledge, this is the only piece of Chester's music that was published. But there is so much unknown that we can't verify that.*
- AF Musique sur L'eau - unsigned, undated
- AG Child's Song - signed C. MacKee, 602 Grandview Ave., Pittsburgh, Jan. 20, 1929
- AH Le Parfum imperissable (2 copies) - signed C. Mackee, 602 Grandview Ave., Pittsburgh, Dec. 22, 1938
- AI Balade Pour Prier Notre Dame - unsigned, dated Oct. 10, 1938
- AJ White Hands - signed C. MacKee, 602 Grandview Ave., Pittsburgh, PA; undated
- AK The Water Nymph and The Boy - signed Chester MacKee, 4405 Centre Ave., Pittsburgh, PA, USA, undated
- AL My Harp has one unchanging Theme - unsigned, undated

- AM Chinoiserie - unsigned, dated April 20, '38 (faded)
- AN Three Little Songs
  - AN-1 Hi! Hi! Hi! On this Green Morning - unsigned, undated
  - AN-2 A Song of Spring - unsigned, undated
  - AN-3 Fairy Song - signed C. MacKee, 602 Grandview Ave., Pittsburgh, PA; undated
- B Confiteor (B-1, B-2, B-3, B-4) - apparently a work in progress; unsigned, undated, unfinished
- C The Isle of Lost Dreams (C-1 voice, C-2 viola, C-3 violin). Written especially for Bob Gearing (tenor). C-1 signed C. MacKee: "finally in New York" June 1970
- D-1 Chinoiserie (see #16 above). *Don't know if this is rewrite or which came first, or if a duplication, which is doubtful. Signed Chester MacKee, April 20, 1948. Also, this shows his NY address, which we knew, at 325 W. 57th St. New York 10019. I believe "Weibel," whose name is shown as in c/o, was the building owner and landlord, also friend of Chester's. [Ed.: 5-digit zip codes began c. 1963; so this part of the address could have been added later than the original signature.]*
- E E-1, Ròseen-dhu - signed C. MacKee, 602 Grandview Ave., Pittsburgh, PA
- E E-2, Roseen-dhu [sic], violin obligato; E-3, Roseen-dhu [sic], voice, violin, piano; E-4, Ròseen-dhu [sic] voice, piano - none signed; E-4 dated Pittsburgh, November 18, 1937
- **NO F, G, H**
- I I-1, I-2, I-3- Factory Girls (apparently unfinished work). I-1 unsigned, undated. I-2 and I-3 signed by Dwight Fiske, 102 ave Victor Hugo, Paris 17. Don't know who he is, perhaps a collaborator with Chester MacKee, or just a friend. The signature definitely does not look like Chester's writing.
- J-1 Nocturne in a Factory Town. Again, looks like a Dwight Fiske piece, signed with Paris address. Not Chester's writing.
- K-1 Hunger. Another Fiske piece, undated
- K-2 Hunger. Unsigned, undated, looks unfinished
- K-3 Hunger. Signed Dwight Fiske; dated Jan. 10-31, 1924
- L-1 Metamorphosis. Signed Dwight Fiske, 102 Ave, Victor Hugo, Paris.
- M-1 Yonder are the Islands. Unfinished, unsigned, undated. Looks like Chester's writing and noting.
- **NO N, O, P, Q**

- R-1 Musique sur L'eau (see #9 above). Unsigned, undated. Earlier work in progress?
- R-2 Untitled work in progress; no signatures or dates
- S Midi. S-1, S-2, S-3, S-4, S-5. Unfinished work - comprehensive piece for orchestra. Looks like Chester's notes, etc.
- T-1 The Bird of Christ. Unsigned, undated, unfinished. Looks like Chester's noting and writing.
- U-1 Revolt. (see #6 above). Signed Chester MacKee, 602 Grandview Ave., Pittsburgh.
- V-1 Night Flowers (see #5 above). Marked "supplement." Unsigned, undated. Must go with the above, probably written at same time.
- W-1 Sonnet from the Portugese (No. IV). Unsigned, undated. Definitely Chester's writing and noting.
- X A Hamlet in the Hills. Five pieces; unsigned, only one dated
  - X-1 The Night Dancer
  - X-2 Haze (Grey Day)
  - X-3 The Pear Tree (Nocturne)
  - X-4 Linden Pine (Morning)
  - X-5 Smoke (Twilight). Dated October 1938
- **NO Y, Z**

3. **ADDITIONAL PIECES** from David Stock:

- Desert Cry - manuscript, dated March 1939 and photocopy of same
- Mignon's Song - manuscript, undated and photocopy of same

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**BOX 2 - Manuscripts, tapes, miscellaneous papers and photos**

1. Brown envelope (6X9) containing letters and four cassette tapes (and CD copies) of music by Chester MacKee in which he is the piano accompanist for tenor Robert Gearinger.
2. Folder of correspondence from Richard L. Fisher to Kathryn Logan. Includes photos of Chester MacKee and various friends.
3. Manuscripts:
  - March Night - unsigned, dated January 27, 1938

- To an Aeolian Harp - piano and voice; signed C. MacKee, December 8, 1957
- Deux Melodies: a) Aubade - unsigned, undated; and b) Sérénade - unsigned, undated
- An eine Aeolsharfe - (see 2 above); in German, unsigned, undated.
- Nights of Music - signed C. Mackee, 602 Grandview Ave., Pittsburgh, PA; undated
- My Harp Has One Unchanging Theme - unsigned; dated Pittsburgh January 7, 1937
- Musique sur L'eau - written in pencil; unsure if complete work; unsigned, undated
- The Rose of the Night - signed Chester MacKee, 602 Grandview Ave., Pittsburgh, PA, December 4, 1937
- White Hands - unsigned, undated
- Three Gay Little Songs:
  - a. Hi! Hi! Hi! On this Green Morning - unsigned, dated New York, September 12, 1917
  - b. A Song of Spring - unsigned, dated New York, June 1917
  - c. Fairy Song - unsigned, dated Pittsburgh February 5, 1937
- Ballade (Pour Prier Notre Dame) - unsigned, dated 10 Octobre, '38
- Rondel (Charles d'Orléans) - unsigned, dated 7 Octobre, '38
- The Isle of Lost Dreams - signed C. MacKee, 602 Grandview Ave. Pittsburgh, PA., undated
- My Harp has one unchanging Theme - unsigned, undated
- The Rose of Night - (see #8 above)
- Night Flowers - unsigned; dated Pittsburgh, February 4, 1937
- The Isle of Lost Dreams - (see #13 above); dated Pittsburgh, March 6, 1937
- The Rose of the Night - (see #8 & #15 above); unsigned and undated

- March Night - (see #1 above) - unsigned, dated January 2, 1938
- The Musical Box - unsigned; dated January 16, 1937

**BOX 3 -**

1. AO Les Elfes - instrumental; unfinished symphony. See complete description of this work as contained in the March 28, 2005, letter above (page 1) from Richard L. Fisher to Kathryn Logan.
2. Letter from Miles Groth about donating a photocopy of MacKee's song "Eily, Mo-Lenmar-a-Chree!"
3. Photocopy of MacKee's song "Eily, Mo-Lenmar-a-Chree!"

See also

- Baynham, Edward G. [\*A History of Pittsburgh Music, 1758-1958\*](#)
- [Pittsburgh Music Information File](#)
- ["Who's Who in Pittsburgh Music Circles"](#) - 5/10/42