

# TWENTIETH CENTURY ART MUSIC

## ORCHESTRAL & PIANO THE PLEASURE DOME OF KUBLA KHAN

### MUSIC BACKGROUND:

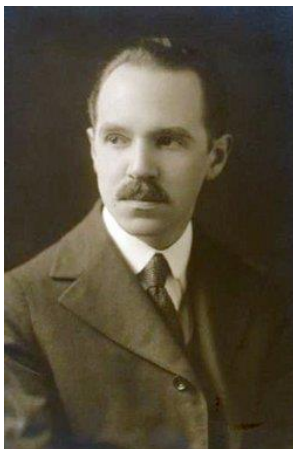
A symphonic poem inspired by Samuel T. Coleridge's poem, *In Xandu Did Kubla Khan*. The flyleaf of the score bears the following verses –

In Xandu did Kubla Khan  
A stately pleasure-dome decree:  
Where Alpha, the sacred river, ran  
Through caverns measureless to man  
Down to the sunless sea.  
So twice five miles of fertile ground  
With walls and towers were girdled round:  
And there were gardens bright  
With sinuous rills....  
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery....  
The shadow of the dome of pleasure  
Floated midway on the waves;  
Where was heard the mingled measure  
From the fountain and the caves.  
It was a miracle of rare device  
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!



Samuel T. COLERIDGE

This tone poem, considered Charles Griffes' most substantial large-scale orchestral work, was first introduced on Nov. 28, 1919 by the Boston Symphony under Pierre Monteux. It began as a piano piece written in 1912, but its definitive form is its orchestral version, completed in 1917. The piece “faithfully mirrors the poem's startling juxtapositions of imagery of sunniness and ‘caves of ice.’ In the music, we perceive both glitter and darkness, stateliness and reverie, languorousness and frenzy. That's a lot for ten minutes of music! In short, it is a seductively lovely piece. It sets interpretational problems for the conductor because of the sheer variety and number of its musical episodes.” (Stevenson 2016)



“The Pleasure Dome of Kubla Khan in its original piano incarnation, startlingly different from the orchestral version, is profitably approached on its own terms. It contains some of Griffes' most florid and colorful writing for the instrument. The work is written at a level of difficulty so high that there is ample music for four hands, but some exceptional pianists are able to manage it with two.” (Stevenson 2016)

Charles Tomlinson GRIFFES

In the past “if we did get Griffes' orchestral masterwork, *The Pleasure-Dome of Kubla Khan*, in concerts, it was likely to be with cuts made by Frederick Stock when he conducted the piece in Chicago shortly after the Boston premiere under Monteux. It was

with Stock's cuts that the work was initially published, and thus that Eugene Ormandy, back in his Minneapolis days, and Howard Hanson recorded it. Seiji Ozawa restored the cuts when he recorded *Kubla Khan* and other Griffes works for New World in the mid-1970s; Gerard Schwarz followed suit in Seattle for Delos." (Freed n.d.) Actually the first conductor to restore Stock's cuts was Charles Gerhardt in 1962 (see below [CT-PK3](#)).

The original piano score was performed by Michal Lewin and released in 2000 (see below [CT-PK7](#)).

With its verses, "caverns measureless to man" and "caves of ice," this poem is strongly cave-inspired. Many cave divers worldwide will remember Sheck Exley's classic, *Caverns Measureless to Man*, which took its title directly from this poem.

For spoken word recordings of Coleridge's poem go to the section Spoken Word – Adult Fiction – Poetry – English – *Kubla Khan*.

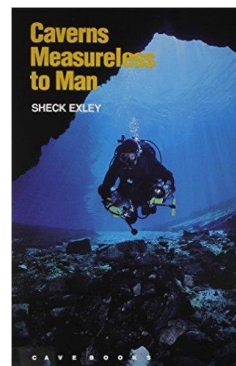
**Ref:** Charles Griffes, Bio, [Wikipedia](#)

Charles Griffes, The Pleasure Dome of Kubla Khan, Discography, [Allmusic](#)

Freed, Richard n.d., Charles Griffes, The Pleasure Dome of Kubla Khan, etc. CD, [soundstage](#)

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Bio, [Wikipedia](#)

Stevenson, Joseph 2016, Charles Griffes, The Pleasure Dome of Kubla Khan, History, [Allmusic](#)



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**CT-PK1** United States 1935

## THE PLEASURE DOME OF KUBLA KHAN

20<sup>th</sup> Century – Orchestral

**Comp:** Charles Tomlinson GRIFFES

**Perf:** MINNEAPOLIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

**Cond:** Eugene ORMANDY

**Prod. Co:** RCA Manufacturing Co. Inc.; Camden, NJ

**Rec. Date:** Jan. 17, 1934

**Time:** 8:30 or 8:40

1. Original **78:** Victor (Red Seal) 7957

12" 78rpm

2. Reissue on **CD:** THE ART OF EUGENE ORMANDY (2000)

Biddulph WHL 064/ 5 (2XCDs) (Disc 1 – Tk 11)

3. Reissue on **CD:** EUGENE ORMANDY – MAESTRO BRILLANTE (2001)

History 205235 (10XCDs) (Disc 4 – Tk 7)

**Notes:** The first known recording of this tone poem.

Eugene Ormandy served from 1931 until 1936 as conductor of the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra.

**Ref:** Eugene Ormandy, Bio, [Wikipedia](#)

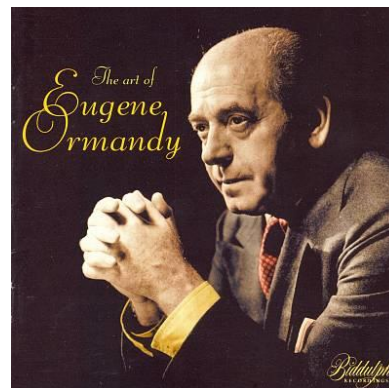
Eugene Ormandy, The Art of Eugene Ormandy CDs, [Allmusic](#)

Eugene Ormandy, The Art of Eugene Ormandy CDs, [classicalcdreview](#)

Eugene Ormandy, The Pleasure Dome of Kubla Khan, (8:30), [YouTube](#) (◀COMPLETE AUDIO SAMPLE)

Eugene Ormandy, Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, 78rpm, Penn Libraries, [upenn.edu](#)

Eugene Ormandy, Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, 78rpm, [Worldcat](#)



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**CT-PK2** United States 1956

## THE PLEASURE DOME OF KUBLA KHAN

20<sup>th</sup> Century – Orchestral

**Comp:** Charles Tomlinson GRIFFES

**Perf:** EASTMAN-ROCHESTER SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

**Cond:** Howard HANSON

**Prod. Co:** Mercury Records



**Rec. Loc:** Eastman Theater; Rochester, NY

**Rec. Date:** Oct. 28, 1954

**Time:** 9:41

A. American Releases:

1. Original **LP:** (Works by Griffes & Charles Loeffler)  
Mercury MG 50085 (mono)  
12" 33rpm (Sd 1 – Bd 1)
2. Reissue on **LP:** MUSIC OF MACDOWELL & GRIFFES (1964)  
Mercury SR 50422 (mono)  
Mercury SR 90422 (stereo)  
12" 33rpm (Sd 2 – Bd 1)

B. Dutch **LP:** (Works by Griffes & Charles Loeffler)

Mercury SRI 75090 (stereo)  
12" 33rpm (Sd 1 – Bd 1)



**Notes:** The vague, foggy opening passages suggest the sacred river running "through caverns measureless to man down to a sunless sea." The gardens with fountains and "sunny spots of greenery" are suggested. From inside come sounds of dancing and revelry, which increases to a wild climax and then suddenly breaks off. At the end there is a return to the original mood suggestive of the sacred river and the "caves of ice".

**Ref:** Ewen, David 1952, *The Complete Book of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Music*, New York, p. 152-155

Eastman-Rochester Orchestra, Music of Griffes & Loeffler LP, [Discogs](#)

Eastman-Rochester Orchestra, Music of MacDowell & Griffes LP, [Discogs](#)

Griffes, The Pleasure Dome of Kubla Khan, etc. LP, Mercury MG 50085, [microgroove.jp](#)

Howard Hanson, Bio, [Wikipedia](#)

**CT-PK3** United States 1962

## THE PLEASURE DOME OF KUBLA KHAN

20<sup>th</sup> Century – Orchestral

**Comp:** Charles Tomlinson GRIFFES

**Perf:** ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

**Cond:** Charles GERHARDT

**Prod. Co:** Reader's Digest Music

**Time:** 11:07

1. **LP:** GREAT AMERICAN COMPOSERS  
Reader's Digest (?)  
12" 33rpm (Sd 2 – Bd 5)
2. Reissue on **CD:** GREAT AMERICAN COMPOSERS (1994)  
Chesky 112 (Tk 11)



**Notes:** This performance together with Seiji Ozawa's performance with the Boston Symphony in 1976 (see below) were the first complete renderings of the original score that restored the Stock cuts.

Referring to selections on this album – "Two works of Charles Tomlinson Griffes, both slightly retouched by Gerhardt: *The White Peacock* and *The Pleasure-Dome of Kubla Khan*, in performances that make competing versions sound prosaic indeed. (R.E.B. 1999)

Another reviewer says – "Like the Coleridge poem which inspired it the work bathes in orientalism. Eros swims languidly among the warm rockpools and Sheherazade sings her seduction again. The music sways and shimmers in fluorescent colours... Hollywood and Hanson both owe Griffes a great deal. The strange tonalities of the closing pages also suggest a debt owed by Bernard Herrmann in the *Rosebud* sequence of *Citizen Kane*. (Barnett n.d.)

"In 1960, Gerhardt returned to RCA Victor and, together with Kenneth Wilkinson, produced a series of classical music albums that featured well-known artists for Reader's Digest... By 1964, Gerhardt had assembled, together with Sydney Sax, an orchestra they named the National Philharmonic, which brought together many of the finest musicians in London. With this group, Gerhardt created more than 600 albums for Reader's Digest over the next 12 years." (Tyranny 2016) Several of these with the National Philharmonic Orchestra were classic film scores.

**Ref:** Barnett, Rob n.d., Great American Composers CD, Review, [musicweb-international](#)

Charles Gerhardt (conductor), Bio, [Wikipedia](#)

Charles Gerhardt, Great American Composers LP, [hdtracks](#)  
Charles Gerhardt, Great American Composers CD, [Allmusic](#)  
Charles Griffes, The Pleasure Dome of Kubla Khan, National Philharmonic Orchestra, National Library of Australia, [nla.gov.au](#)  
R.E.B. 1999, Charles Gerhardt, Great American Composers, Review, [classicalcdreview](#)  
Tyranny, Gene 2016, Charles Gerhardt, Biography, [apple](#)

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**CT-PK5** United States 1976

## THE PLEASURE DOME OF KUBLA KHAN

20<sup>th</sup> Century – Orchestral

**Comp:** Charles Tomlinson GRIFFES

**Perf:** BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

**Cond:** Seiji OZAWA

**Prod. Co:** New World Records

**Time:** 10:31

1. **LP:** WORKS BY CHARLES TOMLINSON GRIFFES

New World 273

12" 33rpm (Sd 1 – Bd 10)

2. Reissue on **CD:** WORKS BY CHARLES TOMLINSON GRIFFES (1992)

New World 80273 (Tk 10)

**Notes:** "Seiji Ozawa restored the cuts when he recorded *Kubla Khan* and other Griffes works for New World." (Freed n.d.)

**Ref:** Freed, Richard n.d., Charles Griffes, The Pleasure Dome of Kubla Khan, etc. CD, [soundstage](#)

Seiji Ozawa, Bio, [Wikipedia](#)

Seiji Ozawa, Works By Charles Tomlinson Griffes LP, [Allmusic](#) (◀AUDIO SAMPLE)

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**CT-PK4** United States 1976

## THE PLEASURE DOME OF KUBLA KHAN

20<sup>th</sup> Century – Orchestral

**Comp:** Charles Tomlinson GRIFFES

**Perf:** ANDRÉ KOSTELANETZ & HIS ORCHESTRA

**Cond:** André KOSTELANETZ

**Prod. Co:** Columbia Records

**Time:** (?)

**LP:** SPIRIT O F '76

Columbia MG 33728

2X 12" 33rpm

**Notes:** A pops orchestra rendition. The third version of the piece to be released in 1976.

**Ref:** André Kostelanetz, Bio, [Wikipedia](#)

André Kostelanetz & His Orchestra, Spirit of '76 LP, [etsy](#)

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**CT-PK6** United States 1992

## THE PLEASURE DOME OF KUBLA KHAN

20<sup>th</sup> Century – Orchestral

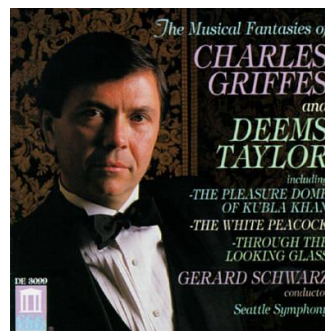
**Comp:** Charles Tomlinson GRIFFES

**Perf:** SEATTLE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

**Cond:** Gerard SCHWARZ

**Prod. Co:** Delos Records

**Time:** 10:51



1. **CD: THE MUSICAL FANTASIES OF CHARLES GRIFFES & DEEMS TAYLOR**

Delos 3099 (Tk 6)

2. Reissue on **CDs: ALL AMERICAN FAVORITES** (1994)

Delos 3184 (3XCDs) (Disc 3 – Tk 4) Time: 5:13

**Notes:** The reissue of this recording on the Delos label reduces the running time in half.

**Ref:** Gerard Schwarz, Seattle Symphony Orch., The Musical Fantasies of Charles Griffes CD, [Allmusic](#)

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**CT-PK7** United States 2000

## THE PLEASURE DOME OF KUBLA KHAN

20<sup>th</sup> Century – Piano – Instrumental

**Comp:** Charles Tomlinson GRIFFES

**Perf:** Michael LEWIN (piano)

**Prod. Co:** Naxos Records

**Time:** 9:14

**CD:** GRIFFES – THE COMPLETE PIANO WORKS – VOL. 2

Naxos (?) (Tk 1)

**Notes:** The only known solo piano rendition of the work as it was originally composed before Griffes composed the orchestral score (see above Music Background).

The 30-second [Allmusic](#) sample has a very lyrical section of the piece.

**Ref:** Griffes – The Complete Piano Works CD, [alibris.co.uk](#)

Griffes – The Complete Piano Works CD, [Allmusic](#) (◀AUDIO SAMPLE)

Griffes – The Complete Piano Works CD, [Amazon](#) (◀AUDIO SAMPLE)

Lewin, Michael n.d., Griffes – The Complete Piano Works, About This Recording, [naxos](#)

Michael Lewin, Bio, [michaellewin](#)

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**CT-PK8** United Kingdom 2004

## THE PLEASURE DOME OF KUBLA KHAN

20<sup>th</sup> Century – Orchestral

**Comp:** Charles Tomlinson GRIFFES

**Perf:** BUFFALO PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

**Cond:** JoAnn FALLETTA

**Prod:** Tim Handley

**Prod. Co:** Naxos Records

**Rec. Loc:** Kleinhans Music Hall; Buffalo, NY

**Rec. Date:** Feb. 2002

**Liner Notes:** Edward Yadzinski

**Time:** 12:29

**CD:** AMERICAN CLASSICS – CHARLES GRIFFES

Naxos 8.559164 (Tk 11)

**Notes:** This is in the full uncut version the work by the Buffalo Philharmonic as it is likely to be performed nowadays. (Freed n.d.)

“Yadzinski writes – “Griffes’ score offers a musical tableau of an emperor’s ‘please dome,’ hidden away in the enchanted wilds. A woman cries for her demon-lover and a sacred river erupts in violence before meandering into the dark caverns of a sunless sea.”

**Ref:** Charles Griffes, The Pleasure Dome of Kubla Khan, etc. CD, [Amazon](#) (◀AUDIO SAMPLE)

JoAnn Falletta, Biography, [joannfalletta](#)

JoAnn Falletta, Bio, [Wikipedia](#)

JoAnn Falletta, Charles Griffes, The Pleasure Dome of Kubla Khan CD, [Allmusic](#) (◀AUDIO SAMPLE)

JoAnn Falletta, Charles Griffes, The Pleasure Dome of Kubla Khan CD, [Naxos](#)

Freed, Richard n.d., Charles Griffes, The Pleasure Dome of Kubla Khan, etc. CD, [soundstage](#)



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