

Hoard House

NEWS FROM THE GRAINGER MUSEUM



Jon Drews, Glenn Riddle, Michael Piggott, David Beauchamp, Georgina Binns, Kay Dreyfus, Astrid Krautschneider, Warren Burt, Jennifer Hill, Patricia Begg, Jo-Anne Cooper, Thérèse Radic, Monica Syrette, John Poynter, Ros Macmillan, Brian Allison, Kerriane Stone. All photographs on this page by Clarissa Humennyj-Jameson.

News from the Manager's Desk

2013 was a particularly lively year for the Grainger Museum as it progressively celebrated the 75th anniversary of the opening of the Museum.

The last component of the Museum's 75th anniversary celebrations was the publication of a new book *Hoardings: Exceptional, exotic and commonplace*. Edited by Brian Allison and Dr Jennifer Hill, this handsome publication features forty photographs of some of the more intriguing items in the extensive collection, with accompanying short essays written by a broad range of contributors. *Hoardings: Exceptional, exotic and commonplace* was officially launched by Professor Gerard Vaughan, Gerry Higgins Professorial Fellow, AIAH, University of Melbourne on 12 December 2013.

This gala function was attended by many of the contributors, staff from the Library and Cultural Collections, and a large number of external supporters and admirers of the Museum. The book, which has been enthusiastically received, is now available for purchase from the Grainger



Professor Gerard Vaughan

Museum or the University Co-op Bookshop.

Building on the positive momentum of the last year we are working on a number of new initiatives to attract more people to the museum- both physically and on-line. These include the development of an exciting new interactive web-site, our own Facebook page, the launch of a Members Program and a proposal to extend our somewhat restrictive (and confusing) opening hours.

We are pleased to be included once again in *Open House Melbourne*, a curated public event that has brought many new visitors to the Museum since our first inclusion in the 2012 program. *Open House Melbourne* takes place on the weekend of the 26 and 27 July and overlaps with *Melbourne Rare Book Week*. I am happy to announce that the Grainger Museum will also be involved in this outstanding event for the first time. The Museum has a fascinating number of rare books in its collection. *Melbourne Rare Book Week* culminates in the Australian Antiquarian Book Fair which is held at the University of Melbourne in Wilson Hall.

We are also looking forward to our inaugural involvement in *Nite Art* from 6.00 p.m. to 11.00 p.m. on Wednesday 23 July earlier in that week. *Nite Art*, which is supported by Arts Victoria, is the shared

passion of a group of creative industry professionals wanting new ways to talk about and experience visual culture in Melbourne. Program details for *Melbourne Rare Book Week* and *Nite Art* will be available in April. We encourage you to check our website for details.

As a result of our involvement in the aforementioned programs we will be included in the extensive cultural program being put together and promoted by the City of Melbourne, for the benefit of the 25,000 international delegates and 2,500 international journalists that are visiting Melbourne to attend the 20th International Aids Conference – the largest ever held in Australia, between 20 and 25 July. We look forward to welcoming delegates looking for a rewarding cultural experience to the Grainger Museum.

Encouraging academics and students to use our fascinating collection for teaching and learning remains a key priority for Grainger staff who will, once again, present a component of the breadth subject *Knowledge Learning and Culture* in Semester One. We have also increased the number of interesting projects on offer for student interns and are working on initiatives to have more Melbourne Conservatorium of Music and VCA music graduates perform in the Museum courtyard in the warmer months.

Lastly, *Sidelights and cross references: 75 years of the Grainger Museum* will close on 30 June 2014. In July we launch our new exhibition *Mortimer Menpes: an Edwardian Artist in Japan*. Mortimer Menpes was born in South Australia in 1855 and was a very successful visual artist working in London when Percy and Rose Grainger first met him. The exhibition will feature items from our own collection as well as paintings and works on paper sourced from private lenders and the Art Gallery of South Australia. In the meantime if you still haven't seen *Sidelights and cross references*, please make the time to do so over the next few months! We would love to see you in the Museum.

Jo-Anne Cooper
Manager



New Australian Work Celebrates the Grainger Legacy

Andrew Robson's "A Day at the Fair"

On Sunday 20 October last year a special concert was held in the front gallery of the Grainger Museum. It was the debut performance of a song cycle that I had written called "A Day at the Fair". It featured some of Australia's finest jazz and improvising musicians performing music based on 12 English folk songs that had been collected by Percy Grainger during the early years of the 20th century.

Originally, this project had no connection with Grainger apart from my desire to work with traditional English folk melodies as Grainger had. I wanted to locate a related body of folk song, tunes that were in some way connected to one another, rather than tunes selected at random.

So my search began and the more I read and explored the English folk canon for songs on which to base my new work, the more the name Percy Grainger appeared.

It soon became clear that this Australian born musician—about whom I knew very little—had made a profound impact on the field of folk song collection in England. I also realised that Percy Grainger must have been an extraordinarily gifted musician as well as a particularly charismatic personality to do the things he did in his life. I wanted my new composition to be in part an acknowledgement of Grainger's work and also in some way, a celebration of the legacy of this remarkable Australian.

Grainger's interest in folk song was lifelong, but in England his work culminated with the publication of an article for the *Journal of the Folk-Song Society* in May 1908, "Collecting with the Phonograph" (Grainger, 1908). In this article Grainger presented his ideas about English folk song. A number of these were quite unorthodox for the time; reading his article today, we discover Grainger as a thoroughly modern musician and dare I say it—a thoroughly modern jazz musician.

Grainger's emphasis on recording the actual performance of the folk singer and then painstakingly transcribing and notating that single performance is precisely how jazz musicians learn their craft and as you can imagine, this idea resonated very strongly with me. Looking at Grainger's folk song transcriptions today it is immediately apparent that he is bringing a highly trained musical mind to the task.

In terms of my new composition, I now needed to find a collection of English folk repertoire with a connection to Percy Grainger and his folk song collecting work in England.

The Eureka moment came as I was rereading Grainger's 1908 article, when I noticed a footnote. It read:

I delight to say that the Gramophone Co. has started making records of genuine folk singers. They have begun with Mr Joseph Taylor, of Saxby-All-Saints and have recorded his renderings of the following songs, which will very shortly be available: "Brigg Fair" (Folk-Song Journal, Vol. II, No. 7), "Sprig of Thyme", "Died for Love" (No. 7), "Lord Bateman" (No. 10),



Andrew Robson sitting next to Sydney Conservatorium's Mustel harmonium believed to have been played by Percy Grainger. Photograph by Natalie Boog.

"Bold William Taylor" (No. 15), "Rufford Park Poachers" (No. 6), "The White Hare" (No. 8), "Georgie" (No. 9), "Creeping Jane", "Worcester City", "Maria Martin", "The Gypsy's Wedding Day" (No. 16).

Here was a list of 12 English folk songs recorded in 1908 by the same folk singer in a London recording studio (the sessions had been arranged by Grainger), but even better than that—the singer in question was Mr Joseph Taylor who had won the folk song section at Brigg Fair in 1905 with his rendition of "Creeping Jane". Taylor had also provided Grainger with the tune "Brigg Fair", which Grainger arranged for vocal chorus and which Frederick Delius later famously arranged for orchestra.

Luckily for me, 11 of these 12 recordings had been released on vinyl (Taylor, 1972) and were readily available online. As for the

elusive 12th piece "Georgie", I would like to thank the Grainger Museum and in particular Dr Jennifer Hill who managed to locate a copy of Grainger's original wax cylinder recording of Taylor on a cassette. This is the very same version that Grainger transcribed in 1908.

My song cycle now had its foundation, and just as Grainger had done more than 100 years earlier, I began to transcribe Joseph Taylor's beautiful recordings.

The concert last October featured a quintet that I assembled specifically for this project. I had worked with each of the musicians in numerous other projects over many years. I played alto saxophone in the band along with James Greening (trombone and pocket trumpet), Alister Spence (keyboard and Percy Grainger's harmonium), Brett Hirst (double bass) and Toby Hall (drums). My own background is deeply anchored in the jazz tradition and to be able to bring my musical language to this repertoire was indeed a challenge, a joy and a privilege.

The support of the Grainger Museum and in particular the Museum's Co-Curator Mr Brian Allison was pivotal to the success of this premiere performance. It was a great thrill and honour for us to be in Melbourne to premiere this piece in the Grainger Museum during its 75th birthday year, inside Grainger's very own Hoard House!

Andrew Robson is a professional saxophonist and composer currently completing a PhD in Composition at the University of Sydney. He has been invited to present a paper about this composition at the Centre for Musical Performance as Creative Practice (CMPCP) Conference at the University of Cambridge in July 2014.

Grainger, P. (1908). Collecting with the Phonograph. *Journal of the Folk-Song Society*, 3(12), 147-162.

Taylor, J. (1972). Unto Brigg Fair. On *Unto Brigg Fair* [Vinyl Record]. United Kingdom: Leader.



The Jazz Quintet. Andrew Robson, Toby Hall, Brett Hirst, Alister Spence playing Percy Grainger's harmonium, James Greening. Photograph by Brian Allison.



Percy Grainger with dog, and Cyril Scott at Pevensy Bay, Sussex, 1940s. Grainger Museum collection.

Cyril Scott and Percy Grainger: The Enduring Friendship of *Les Enfants Terribles*

Over the course of sixty-five years of friendship, through marriages and familial births and deaths, professional fortunes and misfortunes, transatlantic separation and two World Wars, Cyril Scott (1879-1970) and Percy Grainger corresponded almost monthly, with only a handful of brief periods that remain undocumented. Owing to Grainger's tendencies towards 'past-hoardery' (with which Scott only grudgingly cooperated) much of this correspondence is preserved in the Grainger Museum archives, offering an invaluable insight into the inner worlds of these two composers, and the historical forces that shaped their lives and work.

The significance of the letters lies in what they reveal about the inner structures of belief and understanding of these two sensitive Edwardian individuals who lived their lives very much in the spirit of art. The differences between Scott and Grainger in this respect were brought to the fore in a series of letters from 1922, which document one of the only serious points of rupture in their lifelong relationship.

Readers who are familiar with the chronology of Grainger's life will recognise the year of 1922 as the watershed year of his mother's suicide. Scott had visited Grainger and his mother only the previous year, during Scott's six-month tour of America. Scott's initial reaction to the news of Rose Grainger's death is not documented, but six months later on 16 October 1922 he sent a letter to Grainger in Amsterdam that was intended to 'do [his] duty and deliver a message':

Your mother has been to me a few times while I was with an initiate friend of mine who can see and hear. She (your mother) said 'ask Percy if he can remember an evening in which we sat by the water's edge (there was a very beautiful evening light) but the chief thing about it was that we had a very special conversation. You (Cyril) don't know anything about this, therefore if Percy can remember, he will know that the message must be from me.'

When I have your answer as regards this I will tell you other things she said.

Grainger's response to Scott's 'message' was swift and unequivocal. On 21 October he wrote:

It has made me very wretched that you have tried to deliver this 'message' to me in spite of what I wrote you of not wishing to receive any such messages from a 3rd person, because of my instinctive feelings about such things and my lack of belief in spirit messages. It isn't that I prize my disbelief higher than your belief. On the contrary I admire you deeply for your religious nature and for the time you have devoted to theories—your beliefs being what they are. But I don't share your beliefs and I cannot and will not have these things forced upon me. To receive a message that purports to come from my adored mother of the genuineness of which you are convinced, but of the genuineness of which I am not convinced is the greatest possible agony to me. My feelings about these things are strong and instinctive and I cannot allow myself to be

exposed to the display of the convictions of others if they seem to me (as regards matters between mother and me) unproven as far as I am concerned.

This matter will break up our old and lovely friendship if you don't exercise tolerance with my disbelief just as I exercise tolerance with your belief. If you will not promise me to avoid all occult subjects where my mother is concerned and to refrain from all messages from her by letter or by word of mouth when we meet I shall have to take the drastic step of not opening your letters and of avoiding your company wherever possible. That would be a terrible end to our [...] friendship and I think I am lonely and wretched enough as it is. But I cannot allow even you whom I love so dearly to force things upon me that I do not believe in [...], where my darling mother, and her memory, are concerned.

The altercation documented in these letters (and in others following this incident) is about far more than the contrast between Scott's occult beliefs and Grainger's scepticism. Rather, it suggests a crucial aspect of Grainger's personal, and perhaps also his aesthetic, mandate. Scott's system of spiritual belief and his sustained criticism of orthodox religion in many books and pamphlets was undoubtedly a manifestation of his identification as an *enfant terrible*—an ethos that Grainger clearly prized as a creative and critical attitude. For Grainger to prize the attitude that shaped Scott's unorthodox approach to spirituality at the same time as vehemently rejecting its practical outcomes speaks to his conception of the separation of attitude and practice. What Grainger valued then, was not a particular set of beliefs, or code of moral conduct, or artistic outcome, but rather an attitude of protest; of opposition to accepted norms.

The limits of Grainger's tolerance of Scott's beliefs may have been momentarily breached in this incident, but what remained consistent throughout their friendship and in their respective musical and literary work was a shared sense of a battle to be fought against convention—a battle waged with an *attitude* of critique and revolutionary creativity.

Sarah Collins is the author of *The Aesthetic Life of Cyril Scott* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2013). Her current research focuses on British music aesthetics and criticism in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.



Percy Grainger and Cyril Scott, 1899. Grainger Museum collection.

CD review

Percy Grainger: Works for Large Chorus and Orchestra

Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and Chorus

Sir Andrew Davis, conductor

Chandos CHSA 5121



Image reproduced courtesy of Music Direct, the Australian distributor for the Chandos label: www.MusicDirect.net.au

Since taking the reins of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra in early 2013, Sir Andrew Davis has been busy with several projects left incomplete by the untimely death of Richard Hickox in November 2008. One of these is a recent Chandos release of rare choral–orchestral music of Percy Grainger.

In 1996 Chandos launched its Grainger Edition, intending to record the entire Grainger catalogue. Fifteen years later, a 19 CD box set, some 24 hours of music, was released to commemorate the half-century since Grainger's death in 1961. Depleted of funds and perhaps energy, the Chandos project faltered, with major gaps still to fill.

In late August 2012, Andrew Davis led the MSO in a mostly-Grainger concert in the newly refurbished Hamer Hall. Several of those rarities for chorus and orchestra were recorded around the same time. All appeared under the watchful eyes and ears of Barry Peter Ould, whose updated editions and erudite program annotations ensure this CD is a must-have for all Graingerites.

These new recordings capture the kind of vitality and energy I found strangely missing in the live performances. They recall the raw fun factor that animated many of the memorable John Hopkins Proms performances several decades ago.

A word of warning to even the most ardent Graingerite. Listening to ten pieces

of unfamiliar Grainger in one sitting is quite a haul: after a while, the ear tires of his supercharged harmonies and convoluted melodies. The final work, the little known *Thanksgiving Song*, with its fade to black ending of aerated luminosity, provides aural relief.

No fewer than seven of the ten works on this CD are heard for the first time, either as freshly minted discoveries or in new editions.

Of the three works already recorded, *Tribute to Foster* comes off best, in terms of attention to detail and performance-gusto. It is good to be able to hear the sheen of those tuned wine glasses and the train clatters of Grainger's own tuneful percussion. Similarly, *The Bride's Tragedy*, premiered a month after the death of Rose Grainger, possesses a gravity and darkness rarely encountered in performances of Grainger's music.

Grainger's short setting of *Danny Deever* is nothing short of harrowing. In this *marche macabre*, the baritone Jose Carbo and male voices of the MSO Chorus make a good fist of enhancing the gut-wrenching quality of the Kipling text.

In *Marching Song of Democracy*, Grainger created one of his most baffling and unruly works. This new performance makes a strong argument, either for its celebration or suppression, or both. The listener will feel less equivocal about *Sir Eglamore*. Inspired by Grieg, with its echoes of *My Robin is to the Greenwood Gone*, it is tender and disarming.

Four other works entitled *King Solomon's Espousals*; *The Wraith of Odin*; *The Hunter in His Career* and *The Lads of Wamphray* make up the 73 minutes on this generously endowed CD.

There are subtle differences between the approaches of the two British conductors.

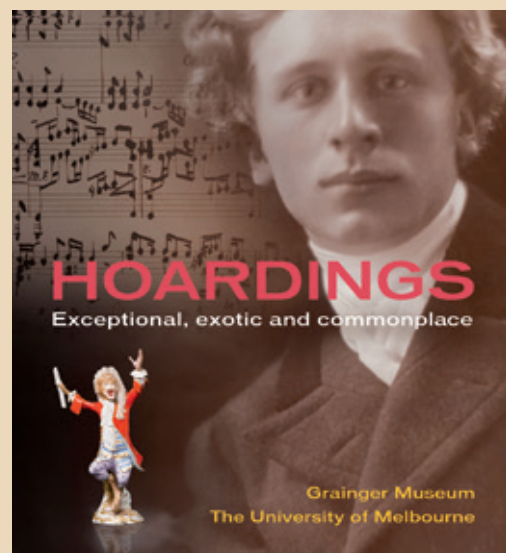
Too often, Richard Hickox seemed to be directing from the opera pit, subjugating orchestral detail to glorious quasi-operatic singing. Andrew Davis, on the other hand, appears to be conducting the Last Night of the Proms, such is the sheer jollity and gusto of his performances, despite some flagging choristers.

It's hard to believe that this could be the last of Chandos's complete Grainger recordings. In all his wild and diverse enthusiasms, Grainger presents a frustrating and delightful challenge for musicologists and performers, as well as audiences and record companies; just when you think there can't possibly be any more, another rarity appears.

No, surely, we have not seen the end of the Grainger road, by some miles.

Vincent Plush

Longtime and well known Graingerite, Vincent is back in hometown Adelaide where he has commenced a PhD exploring music in the life and work of Patrick White.



Hot Off The Press!

Hoardings: Exceptional, exotic and commonplace highlights forty collection items selected from the current exhibition *Sidelights and cross-references: 75 years of the Grainger Museum*, curated as part of the 75th year celebrations. At a price of \$24.95 this attractive and informative book is available for purchase from the Grainger Museum and the University Co-op Bookshop.

Melba Lunch Hour Series

Visit the Grainger Museum on Mondays during semester time and also enjoy the Melba Lunch Hour Series at 1.10 p.m. next door. Calendar of performances available at <http://vca-mcm.unimelb.edu.au/events>

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Sidelights and cross-references: 75 years of the Grainger Museum



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