

# The proposed conservation treatment of a late-Edwardian silk dress from the Rose Grainger Costume Collection

This year I began preparations for the conservation treatment of a late-Edwardian silk evening dress from the Rose Grainger Costume Collection. The collection is significant for its wide timespan and variety of textile objects, and this dress represents not only a wonderful opportunity to work within the collection, but also to apply a conservation technique not commonly used in conservation, especially in Australia. The dress, along with its matching evening bag and shoes, is a beautiful example of an Edwardian evening outfit. The dress itself is made of mushroom pink silk taffeta and is trimmed with twisted metallic rope braid. The bodice crosses over the bust and is secured with a variety of buttons and metal press-studs, and has a tulle modesty piece concealing the décolletage. The under-bodice is made of fine cotton with lace edging and comprises several fabric panels that conceal the centre fastenings. There is a double waistband that joins the bodice to the skirt, and a label stitched on to this from 'The Little Vanity Shop, Madison Avenue, New York'. The skirt is gathered under the bust and balloons out to a gathered and weighted hem. The dress is entirely hand-stitched.



Koehne, Chicago, Rose Grainger (age 59) wearing Indian necklace bought at Albuquerque, N. M., early May 1920, 29 July 1920, photogravure print, 25.3 x 20 cm, Print inscribed 'To my best-Beloved, Your devoted Mother, July 1920'. Grainger Museum Collection

The silk is in very poor condition, with many tears and splits, and the bottom hem of the dress, in particular, is almost completely shattered, made worse by the presence of

heavy fabric covered metal weights stitched into the hem. Because of the extreme delicacy of the object it will not be possible to repair or consolidate each individual area of damage and/or weakness. Consequently, it is proposed

that the dress will be entirely unstitched and removed from its current under-bodice and underskirt, and an adhesive lining applied to the silk in order to provide a flexible support. This lining will comprise a conservation grade textile which will be impregnated with a combination of two adhesives, and it will be affixed to the silk taffeta by means of heat setting. After lining, the dress will be reassembled by restitching, through the original holes as much as possible.

There is very little in the conservation literature on this kind of treatment, as such extreme interventive treatment is not commonly carried out in textile conservation, especially in Australia, although just such a treatment has recently been carried out by textile conservators at the National Gallery of Victoria on a mourning dress with spectacular results. The Rose Grainger evening dress is currently in such poor condition that it could not be displayed. This treatment will enable it to be exhibited and provide a solid support for it to prevent further deterioration in the future.

Bianca Di Fazio

Bianca Di Fazio is currently studying for a Masters degree in Cultural Materials Conservation at the University of Melbourne

# Hoard House

NEWS FROM THE GRAINGER MUSEUM

## Grainger Museum Architect's Report 8 December 2008

2008 is a special date for the Grainger Museum, as it marks the 70th anniversary of the building's official opening in 1938. Fittingly, most of the year has been spent in intensive preparations for the Museum building's repair and renovation. Lovell Chen Architects worked closely with Grainger Museum staff and stakeholders to come up with a detailed schematic design program for building works, in keeping with the stringent requirements demanded of a heritage-listed museum. Following is a progress report by architect Deirdre Heffernan.



Grainger Museum Rendered Landscape plan, provided by Lovell Chen Architects.

Construction will commence in January 2009 on the refurbishment of and additions to the Grainger Museum. The head contractor for the works is McCorkell Constructions. Exhibition installation will follow completion of the construction works in July 2009.

The project works comprise the conservation and refurbishment of the existing building for use as a museum and alterations and additions to the east curved gallery space to accommodate seminar rooms and a formal entry from a new café courtyard space on the east side of the building. The gallery spaces will be entered from the original main lobby which will feature a reception counter and merchandise display area. The new seminar spaces can operate as separate spaces or a single combined seminar or event space by opening new operable walls. New toilet and kitchenette facilities will be accommodated in the south strong room. A research and administration area is proposed for the north strong room.

Externally the landscaping will be altered to accommodate the previously mentioned courtyard café to the east side which will be bookended by two new pod structures on axis with the existing radial galleries to accommodate a store and the café food services at the lower levels respectively and the new mechanical plant space above. A curved steel canopy spans between the pod structures over the external seating area. Climbing roses are proposed, trained to grow up the canopy

supports and create a green edge to the Zoology Building forecourt further east. A stairway will link the café at the lower level with this forecourt. The existing paving and fixed seat benches in the existing central courtyard are to be removed and new paving installed.

New services will be installed throughout the building to meet museum quality

standards. Air conditioning to the radial and curved galleries and seminar rooms will be by means of air displacement through low velocity floor grilles along the spine of the spaces. The use of highly adaptable Erco light fittings and ceiling tracks maximises the flexibility of the lighting design for future exhibitions.

Deirdre Heffernan  
Lovell Chen Architects

### Project Consultants

- Project Manager Design Stage: Donald Cant Watts Corke (DCWC)
- Project Manager Construction: Property & Campus Services, University of Melbourne
- Architects & Heritage Consultants: Lovell Chen
- Building Surveyors: Philip Chun & Associates
- Landscape Architects: Oculus
- Structural & Civil Engineers: Mark Hodgkinson Pty Ltd
- Services Engineers: Simpson Kotzman Pty Ltd
- Quantity Surveyor: PlanCost Australia
- Food Service Consultants: FCA Pty Ltd
- AV Consultants: IPP Consulting

## Deagan Organ Chimes donated

It seems inevitable that Percy Grainger and John Calhoun Deagan would have crossed paths. Grainger had an investigative nature and sought out non-traditional instruments that could be incorporated into his compositions, whilst Deagan was a music-loving entrepreneur who invented and adapted many musical instruments, including the xylophone, marimba, organ chimes, vibraharp, and orchestra handbells.

Grainger corresponded with Deagan directly and their long-lasting professional relationship was based on mutual admiration and respect. In the Deagan office hung a photograph of Grainger with the dedication: 'To J.C. Deagan whose genius has given us the world's most perfect percussion instruments'.

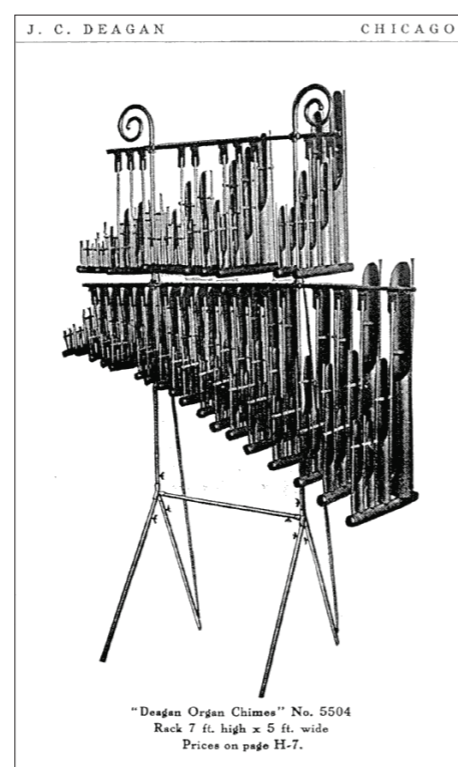
The company itself was not averse to making similar grand claims. The 'Musical Novelties Catalogue H' states that their Organ Chimes are 'universally conceded as being the greatest novelty instrument ever invented'. A set of these chimes, based on the Indonesian anklung, have recently been donated to the Grainger Museum by percussionist Graeme Leak. The Deagan Organ Chimes were passed on to Leak by Keith Humble, along with the story that a vaudeville performer had walked into the Grainger Museum from off the street and simply handed them over.

Grainger owned a number of Deagan instruments that are now in the collection, including the Staff Bells used in performances of *The Warriors* and the Nabimba, heard in the *In A Nutshell Suite*.

It appears that Grainger was aware of the Organ Chimes, with Deagan bringing them to his attention in a 1916 letter: 'the metal Bamboos you will find listed on pages H 24 to 27. They are very pretty in tone'. Intriguingly Grainger's composition 'Eastern Intermezzo' refers to 'Shaker' chimes which is another name used for the Deagan Organ Chimes, as they are played by striking or shaking.

It is with great pleasure that the Grainger Museum accepts this generous donation from Graeme Leak.

Monica Syrette



The catalogue displaying the Deagan Organ Chimes, 'greatest novelty instrument ever invented'. A set of these chimes was donated to the Museum by Graeme Leak.

## Return to Barstow

In April 1926 Percy Grainger was once more in Barstow, the small Californian town that had made such a deep impression on him six years earlier. He wrote a one-page note outlining his memories of the Casa del Desierto, the hotel he had stayed in with his mother. He recalled that Rose's room was decorated with a 'coloured photo of Venician [sic] canal & (Bridge of Sighs?) bridge. Repulsive looking loaferlike man on extreme left of photo (that we laughed at) & queer German looking spectacled thin man helping a lady from a gondola.'

This is just one of the many Barstow related items in the collection, ranging from watercolour paintings to Native American handicrafts, rocks, photographs and correspondence with local residents, the Crooks family. Grainger met the Crooks in the 1920s and kept in touch over the years. Their letters to Grainger detail farm life through the seasons: blooming desert flowers, the arrival of the meadow-lark, praying that hunters spare a few quail and cottontail rabbits, and pipes bursting as the water freezes.

In return Grainger wrote of his life as a professional musician travelling the world. He also sent recordings, photographs, books and newspaper clippings. The family was particularly touched by Grainger's gesture of



The Crooks family on the occasion of Clarence and LaVilla's 25th wedding anniversary, September 1938. Kindly donated to the Museum by Emma Crooks Bevan.

sending them four framed photographs of Clifford Crooks after he passed away in 1937.

In March 1938 Grainger received word from Marie Crooks of a devastating flood that had rendered many people in the area homeless. He visited the next month and Clarence Crooks showed him how it had dramatically altered the landscape. In a letter

to Ella he wrote that 'the lonely tree mother & I sat under (just where the road bent round before the lane to the Crooks's) is a lifeless clump of stumps. First the sand & wreckage piled up around it, choking it to death — filling up all its clefts, breathing gaps. Then men cut its top branches off, to help stem the river back into its old ruts ... Now the whole road from



When Grainger went back to Barstow in 1938 he documented every corner of the rooms he and Rose had stayed in at the Casa del Desierto, including artworks such as this view of Venice.

the bridge to Crooks' home up & vanished — just a wild waste!

During this stay Grainger also found himself in a position to verify his memories of the Casa del Desierto, recorded two years earlier. He wrote to Ella: 'what luck: only one room free in the hotel & that Nos 3 & 4 (together), the ones mother & I used in 1920.

All the eyegays (pictures) on the walls the same, roomgear looking unchanged.'

In July, just prior to sailing to Australia to work on the Museum, Percy and Ella travelled back to Barstow. During their short stay Grainger thoroughly documented rooms three and four of the Casa del Desierto. In one photograph can be seen the image of Venice

that had so amused he and Rose, propped on a table between the beds, with a hand-written card for identification. Grainger took photos of the old riverbed, his 'mother's tree' and 'Ella's pool'.

As well as photographing Barstow for the Museum collection Grainger made a visit to the Crooks' ranch, which was now covered in mud and silt. The house had been cut in two and jacked-up on to wheeled dollies for moving to a new location. Clarence's niece Emma Crooks Bevan described his visit that day: 'Percy played the piano and as usual he pounded out the lovely chords, causing the house to rock back-and-forth on the moving rollers, and we feared the house might "fall and crash", but no one really cared, for Percy's music was just what we needed that night — our spirits had been so low thinking of all we had lost.'

The Crooks family did not initially expect their friendship with the famous performer to be an enduring one due to the vast differences in their lifestyles. For Grainger, however, their relationship was forged in a place that was deeply significant to him. The landscape, architecture and people were all intrinsically linked and Grainger would remain a loyal and generous friend.

Monica Syrette

1 *Portrait of Percy Grainger*, by Malcolm Gillies and David Pear, University of Rochester Press, 2002.

## Piecing together the Lincolnshire Posy

The circumstances surrounding the creation and early performances of *Lincolnshire Posy* are both fascinating and revelatory. The story begins with a lost letter of invitation that Edwin Franko Goldman wrote to Percy Grainger on behalf of the American Bandmasters' Association. (I refer to this request as a 'lost letter of invitation' because I could not find specific information about a 'commission' in any published sources on Grainger). With the discovery of this letter in the Grainger Museum collection, along with additional relevant material — programs, reviews, correspondence, and Grainger's diary notes — one can construct with some accuracy the sequence of events that led to the creation and early performances of *Lincolnshire Posy*.

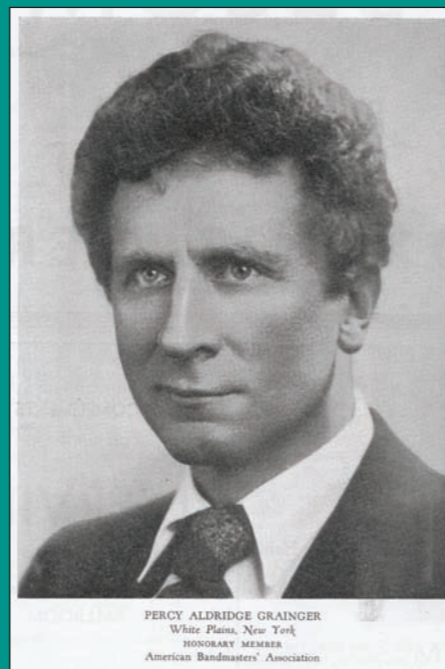
Dr Goldman and the American Bandmasters' Association asked Grainger to compose 'some new band numbers' for the 'Monster Concert' of their upcoming convention in Milwaukee. Grainger clearly relished the idea of writing again for band. With little more than five weeks to fulfil ABA's request for new music, he immediately set out to compose a *Lincolnshire Posy* on folk songs he gathered in Lincolnshire, England, mainly in the summers of 1905 and 1906, and to rescore a concert march he had written in 1905 — *The Lads of Wamphray*.

With very little time to fulfil Goldman's request for new

music, Grainger began work immediately and laboured feverishly to complete *Lincolnshire Posy* and *The Lads of Wamphray* in time for the 7 March Grand Concert of ABA. Grainger, being used to disciplined hard work, thrived on the challenge. He reported in letters to his friends that he composed three movements of *Lincolnshire Posy* in just four days, sometimes working through the night.

Grainger composed music with relative ease after mentally working out the details in his mind. His method was to write out the parts, then follow up with a compressed score (rarely a full score). This process worked well for him as he could continue to write music while travelling around the country. Amazingly, while intensely involved in writing two extensive musical compositions, Grainger embarked on a two-week concert tour (from the 5th to around the 22nd of February) travelling to Florida, Texas and elsewhere to conduct, perform and try out some of the new music he was writing.

When I first examined Grainger's diary entries I was surprised to read about what appeared to be the first public performance of an unfinished version of *Lincolnshire Posy* at Miami High School on 8 February, 1937. The program does not list *Lincolnshire Posy* but the reason for this is clarified in the glowing reviews of the concert that appeared in the Miami



PERCY ALDRIDGE GRAINGER  
White Plains, New York  
HONORARY MEMBER  
American Bandmasters' Association

newspapers on the following day. Henry Cavendish wrote the following review of the concert which appeared on the front page of *The Miami Herald* on 9 February, 1937:

**Surprise Numbers Feature Concert**  
Grainger Takes Old English Folk Tunes and Gives Them New Setting

Specially arranged by Percy Grainger during the last 10 days for initial performances here, three short English folk tunes were inserted into the program as the surprise feature of the concert given by the University of Miami Symphonic band, directed by Mr. Grainger as guest conductor, in the auditorium of Miami High school last night.

... Mr. Grainger told his audience that: 'Some time ago Mr. Sheaffer wrote me and said he wanted to have the second half of the program made up entirely of Grainger compositions. So I thought it would be best to write some new pieces for the occasion.'

The spontaneous laughter evoked by the remark was but a prelude to an amusing few minutes wherein the composer and

guest conductor related the circumstances under which the three English folk tunes were collected in Lincolnshire in England by means of phonograph recordings.

It is important to point out that this spontaneous yet formal concert performance of three movements of *Lincolnshire Posy* by the University of Miami Symphonic Band on 8 February, 1937, predates by one month the performance of the same three movements by the Milwaukee Symphonic Band at the ABA convention, 7 March, 1937.

Robert J. Garofalo

This is an edited extract of 'Folk Songs and Dances in *Lincolnshire Posy* by Percy Grainger', by Robert Garofalo, Whirlwind Music Publications, www.whirlwind-music.com, 2008

Left: Percy Grainger in the 1937 American Bandmasters' Association Convention program.