

Grainger Exhibition at the National Library Moved to 2006

A collaborative exhibition between the Grainger Museum and the National Library of Australia (NLA) has been postponed again following a review of the NLA's public programs schedule. The NLA is mounting a major 'Treasures of the Collection'

exhibition in 2005 and it was considered appropriate to hold the large-scale Grainger exhibition — *Facing Percy Grainger* — in 2006, so that full resources could be contributed to this exciting national showcasing of the University's Grainger Collection.

Though the exhibition is still over 18 months away, Grainger Museum staff, NLA staff and Grainger scholar, David Pear, have already worked extensively together to establish a conceptual plan for the show and have chosen an object list.

Hoard House

NEWS FROM THE GRAINGER COLLECTION

Friends of the Grainger Museum



Six years ago the Friends of the Grainger Museum instituted two competitions to encourage student musicians to become more familiar with the work of Percy Grainger, as well as the collection in the Grainger Museum. The competitions were a Chamber Music Prize and a Composition Prize. Over the years one or the other (and occasionally both) competitions have been held annually, producing, in the case of the Composition Prize, some wonderful new Australian music, and superb performances in what is now known as the Performance Prize. Since 2001 the prize has been open to all residents in Australia under the age of 35.

On 20 October this year six entrants competed for the Performance Prize, which was held in Melba Hall in the University's Faculty of Music. Four pianists performed eight of Grainger's piano works, and two ensembles (a string quartet and an eleven-piece brass ensemble plus conductor) performed arrangements of his music. It was a wonderful evening and the appreciative



audience enjoyed every minute. It was the largest audience to attend the Friends' competition since its inception, due in no small part to the work of the administrator of the Prize, Victor Sullivan. Victor is completing an arts administration course in the School of Creative Studies within the Faculty of Arts, and the Grainger Competition fulfilled the work experience component of his course.

The adjudicator was Erich Fackert, Chief Conductor of the Victorian Concert Orchestra, Principal Conductor of the Melbourne City Opera, and Lecturer in Saxophone in the Faculty of Music.

The winner of the first prize of \$500 was ten-year-old Michael Byrne, a piano student of well known teacher and performer Glenn Riddle. The runner-up prize of \$150 was awarded to the Clarendon Quartet, all string

Left: 2004 Performance Prize winner Michael Byrne with competition judge, Erich Fackert.

Above: The Nutshell Brass Ensemble perform a playful arrangement of *Country Gardens*.

Photos by Brian Allison

students studying in the Faculty of Music. The latter prize is the gift of Mr Norman Florrimell, given in memory of his wife, Rosie Florrimell, a former Curator of the Museum.

The Friends are most grateful to Professor Warren Bebbington, Dean of the Faculty of Music, for his generous support of the Prize and to Lee Christofis, who heads the arts administration course through which we were able to acquire the services of our administrator, Victor Sullivan.

Ros McMillan

President, Friends of the Grainger Museum

Grainger Museum Maintenance Program

Grainger Museum staff are gradually becoming used to new routines following the successful relocation of the collection to temporary alternative storage areas. Following the realisation that the Grainger Museum is being affected by large-scale waterproofing problems that stem from the incomplete (and slightly eccentric) building design, the University's Property and Buildings Division decided that the only way to ensure protection of the collection during an extended period of building maintenance was to remove all items to secure storage areas.

Recognising that the building's problems are complex and interrelated, and that the repairs would be extensive, the University commissioned Heritage architects, Allom Lovell and Associates, to prepare a detailed conservation management plan that articulates clear guidelines for conservation works and any future building modifications. The document also provides a fine-detailed analysis of the building's cultural significance. This plan is being presented to the University's Heritage Committee and if passed, will be submitted to Heritage Victoria for endorsement.

Property and Buildings has outlined a schedule of works that when completed, will bring the Museum's storage and display environments in line with accepted international museum standards. This will include the complete air-conditioning of the building's interior. The overall cost has been estimated at 2.5 million dollars — a not insubstantial sum — which the University is presently trying to raise through philanthropic assistance.

The Museum's staff have been welcomed into their new homes in the Baillieu Library and effectively have become temporary members of the University's Archives and Special Collections, both of which provide research access for students and public researchers in the third floor reading room. And this space is where Grainger material is now presented to researchers on a 24 hour turnaround basis.

Brian Allison
Curator



INFORMATION DIVISION



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE



Harry Seitz Archive Acquired

The Grainger Collection has recently augmented its archives with the acquisition of a significant body of research material through a New York music antiquarian.

The Harry Seitz Collection of correspondence, manuscripts and ephemera dates from 1937 to 1958 when Seitz, a music educator at the Detroit Central High School, developed a strong professional and personal relationship with Percy Grainger.

Dr Harry Seitz (who was also a cellist) premiered a number of Grainger's choral works. The acquisition includes, for example, a copy of the printed choral score for Grainger's *Immovable Do* (1940). The score is inscribed 'With love to dear Harry from Percy in memory of the unforgettable 1st performance, June 16th, 1941'.



Assistant Curator Astrid Britt Krautschneider with the recently acquired Harry Seitz Collection.

Photo by Paul Richiardi

The letters to Seitz highlight a less well known aspect to Grainger's commitment to musical culture. Percy Grainger wrote extensively on the subject of music education, having become actively involved in the area when he took up a position as head of the music department at New York University during the early 1930s. Over the next

two decades he taught at the Interlochen music camps in New Hampshire, and his involvement with Harry Seitz and the Detroit Central High School during the same period would have undoubtedly been as pedagogue as well as visiting composer.

Grainger considered Seitz an innovator in the area of arranging and directing choral works, and

in his opinion the students were very well trained, sophisticated young choristers who could sight read scores like professional singers:

I love the way y[ou]r choirs sing. It sounds to me perfection — not merely the perfection of skills, but the deeper perfection of understanding.
(Percy Grainger to Harry Seitz, 7 December 1937)

The Grainger Collection already holds most of Seitz's letters to Percy Grainger — the other half of the correspondence. In addition to communication on many topics, the letters provide the reader with insights into the development of a compelling friendship between two creative minds over a period of many years.

To make an appointment to view the Seitz archive (or any other item in the Grainger Collection), please call 61 3 8344 5270 or email <grainger@unimelb.edu.au>.

McBurney's Dolls under the Spotlight

Some people believe that antique dolls induce nightmares, but I am completely fascinated by them, so it has been my good fortune to spend some time with a group of delicate miniature porcelain dolls in the Grainger Museum Collection.

The dolls belonged to Mona McBurney who was born in 1862 on the Isle of Man and migrated to Victoria with her family in the early 1880s. She attended the Geelong Ladies College and graduated from the University of Melbourne in 1896, becoming the first woman in Australia to obtain a Bachelor of Music.

McBurney was one of the founding members of the Catalysts' Society and the Lyceum Club, networks of women who had distinguished themselves in art, music, literature, philanthropy or public service. Her compositions were regularly performed in Melbourne and she was the first woman composer to have an opera performed in Australia. She was a groundbreaking pioneer, possessed of a determined spirit, whilst also being shy, gentle and modest.

A donation of her dolls, complete musical works in manuscript form, several of her published songs, programs and photographs was made to the Grainger Museum by the family of Mona's nephew, Archibald McBurney, through his widow Linda and son James.



As I look at these miniature dolls, some dressed in tiny replicas of the costumes created for the characters in her opera *The Dalmatian*, I wonder what purpose they served for McBurney. Did she position them on a scaled-down stage set to plan the performance? Or were they created afterwards, as mementos? The answer has proved elusive. As James McBurney notes, it is a pity that his father's recollections of Mona were never documented as he knew so much about her, having been raised by her sisters (Annie and Euphemia) after his mother died when he was two years old. Archibald would have seen the dolls in the 1890s when he visited his aunt as a boy. They made their way to him via his sisters Anne and Dorothy, both single women, as were Mona and her sisters. He treasured the dolls and kept them in a glass cabinet.

One document gives the dolls added poignancy. In 1926, through her Lyceum Club connections, a charity performance of

The Dalmatian was organised for the benefit of the Queen Victoria Hospital. This was the first full performance of her opera and the first by a woman composer in Australia; a proud occasion. Sadly the conductor Mr Alberto Zelman, according to the hospital's Annual Report¹, had an 'unfortunate breakdown' the day before and it had to be performed without an orchestra. Sympathy was

extended to ticket holders and McBurney was said to be 'grievously disappointed'. We do not know how long-lasting that disappointment was or what impact it ultimately had on her work but I cannot help but wonder if the miniature dolls came to represent not just the opera characters but also what might have been.

The Grainger Museum is looking forward to an upcoming visit from Lila Rait, author of *Through the Nursery Window: A History of Antique and Collectable Dolls in Australia 1788–1950*, who will provide her expert opinion on these rare miniature dolls.

Monica Syrette

Thanks to Faye Patton, Ann Southin and James McBurney for their assistance.

¹ Southern Monash Medical Centre Historical Collection.

Above: Three dolls from the Mona McBurney Collection.

Photo by Brian Allison

Donation of a Viol with a Fine Pedigree

During the 1970s, when I was obliged to make regular visits to Britain, I sometimes attended musical instrument sales at Sotheby's in London, though rarely to bid. In 1974 I bought a bass viol at the Early Music Shop in Bradford. Returning to London by train I noticed two elderly gentlemen in the next compartment, each carrying a viol case, and spoke to them on Paddington Station. They were Marco Pallis and his life-long companion, Richard Nicholson, founding members of the English Consort of Viols, both identifiable in a photograph of the Consort which Percy Grainger hung in his Museum. (Keen mountaineers and Buddhists, they had once carried viols over the Himalayas and introduced viol music to Tibetan monasteries.) Pallis had been a pupil, friend and supporter of Arnold Dolmetsch, and had helped him begin his instrument-making business at Haslemere. Pallis gave me some viol lessons, and became a friend.

Two years later I saw, in a Sotheby's catalogue for a sale of 'Important Musical Instruments' on 25 November 1976, item 297: 'The Property of M. Groser, Esq. A Good Treble Viol by Arnold Dolmetsch, Haslemere, 1929, No. 13, the body of guitar outline ... in wooden case'. Inside the case was a handwritten note on how to string the instrument, signed 'MP', later identified as his own work by Marco Pallis. I bought the viol for £300 — only \$445 in those happy days — and brought it home to Melbourne. I was aware of Grainger's interest in the viol, and that he had acquired an instrument from Dolmetsch for his Museum. Unfortunately it is not a true viol, but a viola d'amore rebuilt with



Professor John Poynter with the Dolmetsch Viol in front of a mural photograph of the Dolmetsch family.

Photo by Brian Allison

six strings. Since my Dolmetsch viol was made at the appropriate period, I can now redress this anomaly; it is a good little instrument, which I hope will from time to time be played as well as preserved in Percy Grainger's remarkable Museum.

Professor Emeritus John Poynter

Editor's note: The Grainger Museum thanks Professor Poynter for this delightful donation.

Alberto Zelman Manuscript Conserved



Paper conservator Louise Wilson from the University of Melbourne Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation, has just completed 97½ hours work on the Grainger Collection's piano trio manuscript by Alberto Zelman Sen. (1832–1907).

Zelman's manuscript is the earliest known piano trio composed in Australia and according to conductor Richard Divall, it is the third earliest known chamber music composition produced in Australia. It has been approximately dated at 1880 — nine years after Alberto Zelman arrived in Australia with the opera company of Lyster and Cagli, for whom he worked as a conductor.

Divall, who has research interests in Australian colonial music, believes the manuscript is particularly interesting given that it is the product of a mid-19th century middle European music education. It is representative of the vast influx of diverse cultural influences stimulated in the Australian east coast colonies by the gold rushes.

Prior to conservation the manuscript was in poor condition and showed extensive evidence of water staining, edge tears, adhesions of foreign material, finger marks, ink smudges and an overall build-up of surface dirt.

Wilson's painstaking work, which was funded through the Information Division's

Conservation Program (part-funded by the Friends of the Baillieu Library) involved repairing tears with Japanese tissue glued with wheat starch paste, and in some cases entire page corners had to be rebuilt. Substantial deposits of magic tape also had to be removed — a tricky procedure which never completely eliminates surface staining.

It is hoped that in the not-too-distant future, Zelman's piano trio will once again be performed in public.

Left: A page of the Zelman manuscript showing the corner rebuilt using Chinese tissue.

Photo by Louise Wilson